

# COVID-19 Work Safely Protocol

## Employer Checklist No. 9 – Returning to the Office

These checklists have been prepared to help employers, business owners and managers to get their business up and running again in a way that will help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Checklist No. 9 will help you to prepare for re-opening the office and the return of workers to it.

Further information can be found at [gov.ie](http://gov.ie), [hse.ie](http://hse.ie), [hpsc.ie](http://hpsc.ie) and [hsa.ie](http://hsa.ie).

No.	Control	✓Yes	✓No	Action Required
	<b>Preparing for re-opening the office: The office building</b>			
1	Have you reviewed and updated your safety statement? Have existing risk assessments been reviewed to take into account new work methods, including new or updated control measures, where required? Are existing safety, health and welfare legislation, fire safety, building regulations and food safety regulations continuing to be complied with?			
2	Have you reviewed your COVID-19 Response Plan, and updated it where necessary? Is this signed and available to workers and visitors in the office? See <a href="#">Response Plan Template</a> .			
3	Have you considered entry and exit zones to the office building? Is it possible to have separate entry and exit points? Can arrival and departure times be staggered to avoid crowding?			
4	Is it possible to put one-way systems in place in the office, in particular where there is a lot of movement of people or where there may be narrow spaces (e.g. corridors), where physical distancing may be difficult?			
5	Where lifts are used, are measures in place to ensure that maximum use occupancy is clearly sign-posted?			
6	Is cleaning carried out at regular intervals? Has a system of thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces been organised, e.g. door handles, coffee machines, vending machines, photocopier buttons, intercom system etc.?  Note: If disinfection is required this must be carried out in addition to cleaning, and never as a substitute for cleaning.  See <a href="#">HSA Checklist No. 5 Cleaning and Disinfection</a> .			

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7	Is hand sanitiser available at entry/exit points, and is it checked and replenished when required? Note: Where alcohol based hand sanitiser is used it must have a minimum alcohol content of 60%, and be stored safely.			
8	Are appropriate measures in place to ensure the workplace is ventilated? See <a href="#">Checklist No. 8 - Ventilation</a> for further guidance.			
9	Are ventilation and extraction systems cleaned and maintained before the office re-opens and at set intervals? Have you measures in place to ensure they are used properly?			
10	Are COVID-19 posters displayed in key areas of the workplace, e.g. entry /exit points, canteen, general office area, and staff notice boards?  See <a href="https://hsa.ie/covid19">hsa.ie/covid19</a> for a list of HSE-HPSC and other gov.ie posters and video resources, including ones on hand hygiene, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, ventilation, and taking breaks.  See translated COVID-19 resources from <a href="#">HSE</a> and <a href="#">HSA</a> .			
11	Have you made First Aiders aware of <a href="#">PHECC COVID-19 Advice</a> ?			
<b>Preparing for re-opening the office: Workers</b>				
12	Have you a system in place to keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 advice from Government and to pass that advice on to workers?			
13	Have you provided a <a href="#">COVID-19 Pre-Return to Work form</a> to workers before they return to the office? Has each worker completed and submitted these forms to you?			
14	Has COVID-19 induction training been provided to workers before they return to the office so that they know and understand the controls in place in your offices? See <a href="#">Checklist No. 3 Induction</a> to help with this process, and the <a href="#">Work Safely Induction</a> online course?			
15	Where a person(s) is unable to return to the workplace due to COVID-19 have you reviewed the <a href="#">Interim Guidance for Employers on Fitness for Work following COVID-19 Absence</a> , and put alternative measures in place for the individual(s)? Have you informed them about the <a href="#">Fitness for Work Guidance for workers</a> ?			

No.	Control	✓Yes	✓No	Action Required
16	Has a Lead Worker Representative(s) been appointed, and have you provided their details to workers, including details of the role of a LWR?			
17	Did you inform the LWR about HSA <a href="#">Checklist No. 7</a> , the <a href="#">online course</a> and poster for Lead Worker Representatives, to help them with their role? These resources are free and available at <a href="https://hsa.ie/covid19">hsa.ie/covid19</a> . Have you involved the LWR in planning for a phased and staggered return to the workplace?			
18	Are support systems in place for workers? Do they know where to find information on managing health and wellbeing during COVID-19, e.g. <a href="#">HSA podcast and videos</a> ?			
19	Is there a system in place for keeping contact logs, for contact tracing purposes? Note: it is important to keep up-to-date information on all workers (full-time, part-time, contract and agency) in the workplace. Such information should include at a minimum the name, address, date / time and contact phone number of the individual worker.			
<b>Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs)</b>				
20	<p>If setting up a Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Testing (RADT) regime for the office, have you reviewed the measures outlined in the <a href="#">Work Safely Protocol</a> (Section 3.D13)? Have you completed a written risk assessment of this new work activity, and specific risks? Have you taken account of public health recommendations and the manufacturer’s instructions in doing so?</p> <p>See <a href="#">Health Products Regulatory Authority website</a> and <a href="#">Checklist No. 10</a> on RADTs</p> <p>Note: The key reason to use such tests is as an aid to public health in “identifying” cases of COVID-19. Even if RADTs are introduced, other infection prevention and control measures, such as vaccination, physical distancing, face coverings, good hand and respiratory hygiene, staying at home if feeling unwell and ventilation all still need to be adhered to.</p>			

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21	<p>Have you discussed and agreed the implementation and administration of the RADT regime with your workers and their representatives beforehand? This can be done as part of the implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and should include involvement of the Lead Worker Representative(s) and the Safety Representative(s).</p> <p>Note: Workers participation in RADTs is voluntary and they do not have to participate in it if they so wish.</p>			
<b>Working in the office:</b>				
22	<p>Has staggered working arrangements (alternate days, staggered start / finish times) been considered?</p>			
23	<p>Have you provided information and advice to workers on physical distancing, good hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and the importance of good ventilation?</p>			
24	<p>Are measures in place to ensure physical distancing both in the office and in public access areas such as reception areas / foyers? Are additional measures in place, where required, e.g. face coverings worn by workers in crowded areas or when moving through the workplace (e.g. to toilets, photocopiers, on stairwells, prior to eating and after eating in canteens or when using canteen equipment such as boilers or toasters.)?</p> <p>Are other protective measures in place e.g. screens, where necessary, both in the office between desks and at reception desks where physical distancing of 2m is not possible?</p> <p>Where used, are screens cleaned regularly with detergent and water?</p>			
25	<p>Are work desks spaced well apart? Are workers using fixed desks and not sharing them with others or where hot desks are used are these made available to identified staff and are appropriate cleaning materials in place for workers to clean the area before and after using?</p>			
26	<p>Are measures in place to help workers with additional needs to comply with workplace procedures e.g. clear markings on floor areas highlighting physical distancing spaces, communication tools such as signs or clear, easy to understand announcements to convey health and safety messages?</p>			

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27	<p>Can workers work comfortably in the ventilated workspace?</p> <p>Note: Desk or ceiling fans should not be used in poorly ventilated areas as they may only recirculate virus droplets. Fans should only be used in areas where there is a single occupant.</p>			
28	<p>Have workers been provided with cleaning materials such as wipes as well as waste bins / bin bags?</p> <p>Have they been advised to clean their own personal work equipment, e.g. telephone hand sets, and not to share phones, pens, or other items with their co-workers?</p>			
29	<p>Are work meetings organised in a way that ensures physical distancing? Are meetings kept to short durations, and minimum numbers? Is there good ventilation in the meeting room?</p>			
	<p><b>Isolation procedures:</b></p>			
30	<p>Have workers been informed that they are not to attend the office if they have <a href="#">signs and symptoms of COVID-19</a>, or if they feel unwell?</p>			
31	<p>Have workers been informed about the procedures to follow should they develop signs or symptoms of COVID-19 at work, or if they feel unwell or are a <a href="#">close contact</a> of a confirmed case of COVID-19?</p>			
32	<p>Has an isolation area(s) been identified and sign-posted in advance, for dealing with a suspected case(s) of COVID-19 in the office? Is there a COVID-19 response manager and team in place to deal with such cases? See Section 3.D5 of the <a href="#">Work Safely Protocol</a>.</p>			
33	<p>Is the designated isolation area(s) away from the main office, and behind a closed door? Where a closed door is not possible is the designated area well away from workers and others?</p>			
34	<p>Has the isolation area(s) a window that can be opened for ventilation? Are necessary items provided, e.g. PPE, masks, tissues, wipes, waste bin / bags?</p>			
35	<p>Is there a system in place for managing waste disposal, in particular COVID-19 contaminated or suspected COVID-19 contaminated waste? See <a href="#">Checklist No.5 Cleaning and Disinfection</a> and Section 3.D10 of the <a href="#">Work Safely Protocol</a>.</p>			

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<b>Canteen and welfare facilities:</b>				
36	Are workers organised into teams / pods for taking breaks – See Section 3.D8, <a href="#">Work Safely Protocol</a> for general advice on teams / pods? Are team numbers kept small?			
37	Where possible is there a different access / egress point for persons using the canteen? If not, are breaks timed so that workers are not arriving/departing at the same time?			
38	Are tables and chairs far enough apart to ensure physical distancing? Where physical distancing is not possible are other control measures in place e.g. screens in place?			
39	Are frequently touched surfaces in the canteen cleaned regularly and thoroughly e.g. door handles, fridge door, kettle, taps, etc.?			
40	Have workers been advised not to share utensils, cups, food, drinks etc.? This will help to prevent the virus spreading.			
41	Are toilets and handwashing facilities cleaned regularly, paper towels provided, and a system in place for checking and replenishing stocks?			
42	Is maximum use occupancy for toilets / locker / changing rooms clearly sign-posted?			
<b>Travelling to, from or for work:</b>				
43	Have you advised workers travelling on public transport to and from work that they must wear a face covering, to follow physical distancing guidelines, and to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser before and after being on public transport?			
44	If using their personal cars for work, have you advised workers that they should be accompanied by a maximum of one passenger, seated at a safe physical distance and wearing a face covering or mask in line with public health advice? Have you advised them to partially open car windows on opposite sides to improve ventilation, and not to set ventilation systems to recirculate air, which could spread the virus? See Section 3.D8 of the <a href="#">Work Safely Protocol</a> .			

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45	Where an office worker is travelling for their job have you provided them with cleaning materials (e.g. wipes, hand sanitiser) to clean their hands and vehicle, in particular frequently touched surfaces, before and after use of the vehicle? Have you provided them with face coverings, where required in line with public health advice?			
46	Have you advised workers they must wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before entering or leaving the office?			
47	Where overseas work-related travel is taking place, do you regularly check <a href="http://gov.ie">gov.ie</a> for updated information on travel restrictions and requirements and advise workers to do the same?			
<b>Visitors and contractors to the office:</b>				
48	Are measures in place for visitors or contractors to the office, e.g. health declaration, specific times? Have they been advised of procedures before entering the workplace?			
49	Where essential maintenance work is required could this be reasonably done out of office hours, to minimise contact with other workers?			
50	Are details of visitors / contractors maintained for contact tracing purposes, in line with the Work Safety Protocol and Public Health advice?			
<b>Other:</b>				
51	Have you reviewed GDPR requirements and advice from the Data Protection Commission on <a href="#">Data Protection and COVID-19</a> ? Are you complying with this advice?			
<b>Additional Information</b>				

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*The information contained in this checklist is for guidance purposes only and is non-exhaustive. It is not intended to provide legal advice to you, and you should not rely upon the information to provide any such advice. We do not provide any warranty, express or implied, of its accuracy or completeness. The Health and Safety Authority shall not be liable in any manner or to any extent for any direct, indirect, special, incidental or consequential damages, losses or expenses arising out of the use of this checklist.*