



Construction Sector - Site Operating Procedures

Protecting Your Workforce (COVID 19) - Supplementary Requirements for Plant Occupations

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1. Introduction

The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) has produced guidance through a Site Operating Procedures (SOP) publication on protecting the workforce during the coronavirus-COVID 19 pandemic to minimise the risk of spreading the infection, based on the Government's latest recommendations on social distancing and workplace organisation.

The latest CLC SOP document can be downloaded from the following links:

<https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/news/site-operating-procedures-version-4-published/>

<https://builduk.org/coronavirus/>

<https://www.cpa.uk.net/cpalinksgovernmentindustryguidance/>

Further Government-issued sector specific guidance on working safely during coronavirus including construction, factories/warehouses, offices and vehicles can be downloaded at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

The sector-specific documents provide further information on when to use of PPE/RPE and face covering alternatives.

This CPA and SPOA publication should be read in addition to the CLC SOP and focusses on plant and equipment-based occupations and provides tailored guidance on how to comply with the required social distancing outlined in the CLC SOP.

Plant operations normally have exclusion zones between the machine and its operator from others around the machine. The exception being platforms for transportation or accessing (MEWPs, Hoists etc.) which are covered within the CLC SOP.



2. Scope of Occupations

For the purposes of this document, the following listed plant occupations are covered:

- Plant operator/operative;
- Supporting workers e.g. slinger/signaller, 'banksman', traffic marshal; rescue personnel;
- Maintenance personnel e.g. mechanic, fitter, inspectors/examiner, installer;
- Plant delivery/collection personnel e.g. 'low-loader' driver.

3. Preparing the Machine for Work

For all plant operations, there should be where possible a policy of a dedicated operator for each machine, minimising potential contamination within the cab/platform area.

Where a change of operators needs to take place, then a thorough cleaning/sanitising procedure described within the cleaning section of the CLC SOP needs to be carried out each time. Normal handwashing procedures should be undertaken before approaching the machine.

Where a machine is used by more than one operator during the working day, a daily briefing should be undertaken to remind each user of the need to clean between operator exchanges and/or the responsibility for regular cleaning passed to a designated person.

Touch point components for accessing the cab/platform such as steps, handrails, handles, latches etc. should be treated as potentially contaminated and cleaned/sanitised using appropriate products e.g. sanitisers/wipes/detergents etc. before entering both the cab/platform and areas required to conduct pre-start checks. This is particularly important where others have accessed the machine.

Handles, levers, controls, steering wheels, switches, data screens, seat adjusting mechanisms, arm rests etc. within the cab/platform should further be cleaned/sanitised before starting and operating the machine. If gloves have been worn outside of the machine, they should be removed first before cleaning/sanitising takes place and only re-worn after the operator has left the machine.

4. Operating the Machine

Normal exclusion zone requirements apply meaning that direct supporting workers e.g. 'banksman' are clear of all moving parts of an operational machine, with non-supporting outside of the designated exclusion zone.

Where workers need to approach the cab/platform, once permitted to enter the exclusion zone by the operator, they should maintain the required distance (minimum of 2 metres) and not touch, lean or stand on any part of the machine during the conversation. Hand signals or radio communication should be the main communication method in maintaining segregation and distancing. See section 6 – Communications.

Passengers should not be carried in or on the cab/platform unless an integral part of the operation e.g. direct support operative or hoist/MEWP activities. If this is the case, then actions such as the minimum distance being maintained between any seating or standing position, minimising where possible the time spent within the same area, the wearing of face coverings and the cleansing/sanitising of touch points carried out on a regular basis should be considered. This should be in line with the hierarchy of controls outlined in the CLC SOP.

During break periods, if the operator leaves the cab, hand washing procedures should be carried out before going back to their machine.



If gloves are or need to be worn when leaving the machine, they should not touch controls, handrails etc. and removed when approaching the machine. If other workers entered the cab/platform, cleaning/sanitising procedures as outlined in section 3 should be carried out.

5. Direct Support Activities

Gloves will routinely be used to handle equipment such as lifting chains, loads, machine components etc. during work and this should be maintained. The condition of gloves should be regularly checked and where skin is exposed, the gloves should be changed with cleaning/sanitising procedures undertaken before wearing the new gloves.

Communication with an operator or driver by marshals, signallers, support staff etc. should be in accordance with the advice on section 6: communication.

If an operation requires the use of a second-person and is being supplied by the plant owner/supplier, they should avoid where possible travelling in the same vehicle to and from the site. If they need to, then the guidance in the CLC SOP needs to be followed.

6. Communications

To maintain an effective exclusion zone and personal distancing, hand signals or two-way radio communication should be employed at all times.

If radios are to be used, each radio needs to be thoroughly cleaned using sanitising products, particularly around the microphone area, by the user both before and after use as the operation of a radio requires it to be close to the users' face. For this reason, radios should not be shared during the working day and ideally, a radio should be assigned to one person only for the project.

Support workers working directly with the machine e.g. slinger working with an excavator undertaking lifting operations should use hand signals instead. During briefings e.g. for lifting operations, minimum social distancing of 2 metres should be maintained.

7. Ceasing of Operations and Shut Down

More than ever, cab/platforms should be isolated and secured, preventing unauthorised access to the operating station during out-of-service periods or at sites where they could be subject to intruder break ins.

8. Maintenance, Installation and Inspection Activities

Visiting maintenance, installation and inspection workers should ensure that their vehicle, tools and equipment are cleaned/sanitised prior to leaving the depot or travel start point. If several maintenance workers are required for a particular activity, they should aim to travel separately to the work location and if not, comply with the travel to work requirements within the CLC SOP.

On arrival at the site, they should find out where the authorised hand washing locations are and other special procedures being implemented by the site.

High-risk maintenance/installation-type work should be either prevented or re-scheduled as emergency service availability may be compromised.

Before working on any machine, maintenance, installation or inspection personnel should follow the cleaning/sanitising advice described in section 3, including cleaning/sanitising panel access handles, latches, support struts etc. where they are to work.

Where harnesses are being used for working at height e.g. by installation staff, they should be restricted to one wearer – one harness.

Gloves would normally be worn by maintenance staff but should be regularly checked to ensure that they are in a sound condition and are regularly replaced.



Tools should ideally not be shared, even with other maintenance staff unless unavoidable and if this is the case, then they need to be considered as a touch point and regular cleaning procedures followed.

Workers carrying out installation activities e.g. fitting jibs to cranes may require co-workers to be within 2 metres of each other to carry out the activity. Where the risk assessment requires additional PPE such as face coverings to minimise the risk of transmission to or from each individual, then consideration must be given so that the wearing of any required PPE does not compromise the workers visibility, dexterity etc. to work safely and allow the PPE to remain fully functional.

On completion of maintenance or inspection activities, tools, equipment should be cleaned/sanitised before being returned to storage with hands washed or sanitised before the vehicle is entered.

9. Loader/securer Operations

Clean/sanitising procedures as described in section 3 should be undertaken by drivers to their vehicle prior to leaving the depot. If delivering a machine or equipment, the cab/platform or touch points of the equipment need to be cleaned/sanitised as well.

If additional workers are required to assist with the loading/unloading activity, they should aim to travel in separate vehicles. On arrival at the site, drivers may be asked to stay in their vehicle unless they need to be involved in the loading or unloading. If so, they should find out where the authorised hand washing locations are and other special procedures being implemented by the site.

Before loading, a repeat undertaking of the cleaning/sanitising procedures should be done on each machine or equipment to be loaded. Gloves should be worn whilst handling the vehicle body or trailer, securing equipment and any materials being used for loading/unloading but removed prior to entering the cab.

During loading/unloading activities, other workers should not enter the vehicle cab or handle any of the securing equipment unless part of the operation.

On completion of loading or unloading activities, cleaning/sanitising procedures should be followed before the driver enters their vehicle.

10. Rescue Operations

Difficult-to-reach cab/platforms such as tower cranes or MEWPs, or where plant is being installed or de-rigged mean that consideration needs to be taken in ensuring rescue operations can meet the requirements of the CLC SOP. Where rescue workers need to wear PPE/RPE/face coverings etc., consideration should be given so that the wearing of any additional equipment does not compromise a rescue worker's ability to work safely and allow the equipment to remain fully functional.

Consideration must take into account the availability of a full complement of rescue team personnel and/or equipment, either the emergency services or dedicated response teams, particularly where injury or potential infection to the operator has occurred. With ongoing pressures on the emergency service resources, the availability or timing of professional medical help may be compromised as outlined in the CLC SOP.

Alternative methods of work or other equipment should be considered as a temporary alternative to reduce resultant issues arising from needing to carry out a rescue operation at height.



11. Documentation Handling

Documentation such as operator's manuals, delivery notes, tare sheets, risk assessments and method statements etc. should be dealt with as any touch point, as paper-based reading material is able to harbour COVID-19 for a certain length of time and should be subject to any normal touch point sanitising procedures. However, this may not be practicable for paper-based products.

Therefore, consideration should be given to eliminating the handling of paper-based documentation in lieu of using electronic platforms e.g. PDF-based files, and forwarded to a recipient's personal phone or tablet, extracting and sending either key pages or the complete document. Electronic platforms also allow the accessing and downloading of relevant data direct from a suppliers or manufacturers website - for example, CPA technical publications such as technical information notices and safe use publications can be downloaded in the PDF format free of charge from the CPA website.

For the delivery and collection of plant and equipment, electronic or photographic methods of recording data and signatures should be considered, with a number of specialist platforms now on the market that allow digital-based signature collection.

Where electronic versions of documents are not available, specific pages or complete documentation should be printed off and passed to each recipient, preferably in a plastic wipeable folder, along with the instructions not to share with others. Where communal manuals, such as workshop manuals, or other documentation need to be shared, they should be viewed as potentially contaminated, with each user sanitising relevant parts of the document as is practicable and/or using gloves to handle the document.

Generic information, risk assessments, work instructions etc. can be posted on temporary or permanent notice boards to minimise handling by others.

Where a paper-based operator's manual or instructions accompanies, or is fixed within, a machine to be hired out, then these need to be included within the on-hire and off-hire touch points cleaning regime.

12. Sources of Information

Sector-specific guidance on social distancing in the workplace:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses>

Guidance of non-medical cleaning and disinfection:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings> and <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>

Health and Safety Executive Guidance

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm#>

NOTE: Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the material contained within this publication, no liability is accepted by the Construction Plant-hire Association and the Scottish Plant Owners Association in respect of the information given.