

## **Working in the pandemic - more safety and health at work**

The Corona (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic affects social and economic life equally, employed, and unemployed. This pandemic situation is a danger to the health of an undetermined number of people and at the same time to public safety and order. It has a significant impact on everyone's life. It affects all economic activity and therefore the whole world of work. Safety and health protection and the start-up of the economy can only work in unison if a stop-and-go effect is to be avoided. The special occupational health and safety measures described below aim to protect the population by interrupting the infection chains, to safeguard the health of employees, to restore economic activity and, at the same time, to create a flat infection curve in the medium term. The order of priority from technical to organizational and personal protective measures must be observed.

### **Special technical measures**

#### **1. Workplace design**

Employees should keep enough distance (at least 1.5 m) from other people. Where this is not possible through work organization measures, alternative protective measures must be taken. Transparent partitions must be installed for public traffic and have also to be used to separate workplaces with an otherwise non-existent safety distance.

If possible, office work should be done in the home office. Otherwise, free space should be used for office workplaces and the work must be organized in such a way that multiple occupancy of rooms can be avoided or there are sufficient protective areas.

#### **2. Sanitary rooms, canteens, and social rooms**

Skin-friendly liquid soap and towel dispensers must be provided for cleaning the hands. Adequate cleaning must be provided, and the cleaning intervals may need to be adjusted. This applies to sanitary facilities and common rooms. Regular cleaning of door handles and handrails also helps to prevent infections. Enough distance must be ensured in break rooms and canteens, e.g. B. by the fact that tables and chairs are not too close together. It is important to ensure that there are no queues when returning food and dishes or at the cash register. Possibly the canteen and meal delivery times must be extended. The closing of canteens should also be considered as the ultimate ratio.

### 3. Ventilation

Regular ventilation is good for hygiene and promotes air quality, since the number of pathogens in indoor air can increase in closed rooms. Ventilation reduces the number of the finest droplets that may be in the air.

Special notes on ventilation and air conditioning systems:

The overall transmission risk via HVAC can be classified as low. Switching off the HVAC, especially in rooms in which infected people are treated or handled with infectious materials, is not recommended, as this can lead to an increase in the aerosol concentration in the room air and thus to an increased risk of infection.

### 4. Infection

Protection measures for construction sites, agriculture, field and delivery services, transports, and journeys within the company

Even with work-related (customer) contacts outside of the business premises, distances of at least 1.5 m must be maintained as far as possible. The work processes for these activities must be checked to determine whether isolated work is possible if this does not result in additional hazards. Otherwise, teams that are as small and firm as possible (e.g. 2 to 3 people) should be provided in order to reduce changing contacts within the company employees during journeys and work assignments outside the company site. In addition, facilities for frequent hand hygiene near the workplaces must be created for these activities.

Furthermore, provide additional equipment in the company vehicles like utensils for hand hygiene and disinfection and with paper towels and garbage bags. When journeys are required for operational reasons, the simultaneous use of vehicles by several employees should be avoided as far as possible. In addition, the group of people who use a vehicle together - simultaneously or in succession - should be limited as much as possible, e.g. B. by assigning a vehicle to a specified team. Interiors of company vehicles must be cleaned regularly, especially when used by several people. Trips to the procurement of materials and deliveries should be reduced as far as possible, route planning must be optimized accordingly.

In the case of transport and delivery services, options for using sanitary facilities must be considered when planning tours, as hand hygiene is only possible to a limited extent due to the current closure of many publicly accessible toilets and washrooms.

## **5. Infection protection measures for collective accommodation**

Small, permanent teams that work together must be set up for the placement in collective accommodation. If possible, these teams should be provided with their own common facilities (sanitary rooms, kitchens, common rooms) in order to avoid additional burdens due to shift-by-layer use and necessary cleaning between uses by the individual teams. Basically, single occupancy of bedrooms must be provided. Multiple occupancy of bedrooms is generally only permitted for partners or close family members. Additional rooms should be provided for the early isolation of infected people. Accommodation rooms must be ventilated and cleaned regularly and frequently. Dishwashers are to be provided for in-house kitchens, as disinfecting the dishes requires temperatures above 60 ° C. Washing machines are also to be provided or a regular laundry service must be organized.

## **6. Home office**

If possible, office work should be done out in the home office, if office space would have to be used by several people with insufficient safety distances. Home office can also contribute to enabling employees to fulfil their childcare responsibilities (e.g. children or relatives in need of care). Recommendations for employers and employees on using the home office must be prepared by the management so employees know the rules (e.g. core working times are from 8 a.m. – 16 p.m. and keep your home office ventilated).

## **7. Business trips and meetings**

Business trips and face-to-face events such as meetings should be reduced to an absolute minimum and, as far as possible, alternative technical alternatives such as telephone or video conferences should be made available. If face-to-face events are necessary, there must be enough distance between the participants.

## **Special organizational measures**

### **8. Ensure adequate protective clearances**

The use of traffic routes (e.g. stairs, doors, elevators) must be adjusted so that a sufficient distance can be maintained. Where experience has shown that there are crowds of people (time recording, canteen, tool and material expenses, lifts, etc.) be marked with tape. Even if several employees work together, e.g. during assembly, the minimum distance between employees of 1.5 m should be guaranteed. Where this is not technically or organizationally guaranteed, alternative measures (wearing mouth-nose covers) must be taken.

### **9. Work equipment / tools**

Tools and work equipment are to be used as personally as possible. Where this is not possible, regular cleaning should be provided, especially before handing it over to other people. Otherwise, suitable protective gloves must be used when using the tools, unless this creates additional dangers (e.g. detection by rotating parts).

Limits of the gestation period and the individual disposition of the employees (e.g. allergies) must also be considered.

### **10. Working hours and breaks**

Occupancy of work areas and shared facilities must be reduced by means of time equalization measures (shifted working and break times, possibly shift work).

When drawing up shift plans, in order to further reduce in-house personal contacts, care should be taken to divide the same people as possible into common shifts. At the beginning and end of working hours, suitable organizational measures must be taken to avoid that several employees come together closely (e.g. when recording time, in changing rooms, washrooms and showers, etc.).

### **11. Storage and cleaning of work clothing and PPE**

Particularly strict attention is to be paid to the personal use of all personal protective equipment (PPE) and work clothing. The personal storage of work clothing and PPE separate from everyday clothing is to be made possible. It is important to ensure that work clothing is cleaned regularly. If there is no possibility that additional risks of infection and / or hygiene deficiencies (e.g. due to pollution) will arise and thereby internal contact with people can be avoided, employees must be able to put on and take off their work clothes at home.

## **12. Access by non-company personnel to workplaces and company premises**

Access to outside companies should be kept to a minimum where possible. Contact details of external persons as well as the time of entering / leaving the place of work / the premises must be coordinated and must be documented if possible. Persons outside the company must also be informed about the measures that currently apply in the company about infection protection before SARS-CoV-2.

## **13. Instructions for suspected cases**

Operational regulations for the rapid clarification of suspected cases of COVID-19 disease must be made. Fever, cough and shortness of breath can be signs of infection with the coronavirus. For this purpose, a fever measurement that is as contactless as possible must be provided during operation.

Employees with the corresponding symptoms must be asked to leave the company premises immediately or to stay at home. Until the suspicion has been clarified by a doctor, the employee's incapacity to work must be assumed. The persons concerned should immediately contact a doctor or the health department for clarification by telephone. The employer should make provisions in the company pandemic plan to identify and inform those persons (employees and, where possible, customers) of confirmed infections who are also at risk of infection through contact with the infected person.

## **14. Minimize mental stress caused by corona**

The corona crisis not only threatens and unsettles companies, it also creates great fears among many employees. Other aspects to be considered regarding psychological stress include possible conflicting discussions with customers, long-term high work intensity in systemically relevant industries as well as requirements of social distancing. These additional psychological stresses should be considered in the risk assessment and appropriate measures taken based on them.

## Special personal measures

### **15. Mouth-nose protection and personal protective equipment (PPE)**

In the event of unavoidable contact with other people or if the protective distances cannot be maintained, mouth-nose coverings should be made available and worn in particularly vulnerable work areas.

### **16. Instruction and active communication**

Comprehensive communication in the company must be ensured about the preventive and occupational safety measures that have been initiated. Instruction by the managers ensures security of action and should run as centrally as possible. Single contacts should be available, and the flow of information should be ensured. Protective measures are to be explained and instructions are to be made understandable (also by means of signs, notices, floor markings etc.). Attention must be drawn to compliance with the personal and organizational hygiene rules (distance requirement, "cough and sneeze label", hand hygiene, PPE). The information provided by the WHO or your local Center for Health Education is also helpful for instruction.

### **17. Occupational health care and protection of particularly vulnerable people**

Occupational health care must be made possible or offered to employees. Employees can get individual advice from the company doctor, including on dangers due to a previous illness or an individual disposition. Fears and psychological stress must also be addressed. The company doctor knows the workplace and proposes suitable protective measures to the employer if the normal occupational safety measures are not enough. If necessary, the doctor of the affected person recommend a change of job. The employer will only find out about this if the person concerned expressly consents to it.

Occupational health care can be done by phone; some company doctors offer a hotline for employees