



COVID-19 Guidance for Supply Chain workers

16 March 2020

Introduction

The public health policy of imposing restricted movement for 14 days on those entering Ireland who have been to affected areas has implications for the maintenance of the Irish supply chain. Affected areas are those designated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as Avoid Non-Essential Travel or Do Not Travel, for reasons of COVID-19.

The purpose of this guidance is to:

- Help protect supply chain workers in carrying out their essential work;
- Help to maintain the supply of medicines, equipment, food and other essential goods; and
- Help to mitigate the economic impact on business in Ireland of necessary public health measures.

Transport workers in the freight and haulage sector, the maritime sector and in aviation are essential workers in ensuring the supply of essential goods. They should be able to transport goods internationally, while their health and safety is protected to the greatest extent possible.

Both the essential workers themselves and their employers have very important roles to play in ensuring the continuity of our supply chains. This guidance aims to ensure that essential workers in the transport sector (along with their employers) know what they must do to protect themselves and others while carrying on the extremely important freight operations to keep Irish supply chains functioning.

This guidance applies to hauliers, maritime staff, pilots and aircrew, ground staff, port staff, maintenance staff, engineering staff and all others involved in the maintenance and repair of critical infrastructure to allow freight operations in and out of Ireland to continue.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Department of Health, the HSE and stakeholders across the transport sector have developed the guidance to outline good practice in prevention and social distancing measures, guidance that must be adhered to.

Many transport operators already have comprehensive advice and protocols in place to deal with the threats from infectious diseases. More recently, many have introduced further protocols in relation to the ongoing threat posed by COVID-19, not just to their business but also to their staff. Implementation of those protocols should continue.

Background

Ireland has advanced plans in place as part of its comprehensive preparedness to deal with public health emergencies such as the one we are now experiencing in relation to Covid-19 (Coronavirus).

Everybody can take measures to help protect themselves and others. People are urged to take a few minutes to familiarise themselves with the available advice. Simple steps such as proper hand washing with soap and water and covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough and sneeze, binning the tissue and washing your hands are very practical things everybody can do to help minimise the spread of the virus. Keeping your hand away from your face is also important.

The most up-to-date and relevant advice that should be followed by everybody is available on the websites of the HSE at <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/> and the Health Protection Surveillance Centre at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>.

Key principles for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace

Adherence to standard precautions with all individuals at all times:

- Early identification of potential cases
- Promotion of respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette, hand washing and social distancing
- Provision of up to date information about the virus (available from HSE.ie).

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection:

- Cough
- difficulty in breathing
- fever.

While younger people can also get very ill, generally COVID-19 can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

How COVID-19 is spread

From what we know about other coronaviruses, spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres or less) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

Respiratory secretions produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes containing the virus are most likely to be the main means of transmission.

There are two main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:

- infection can be spread to people who are nearby (within 2 metres) or possibly could be inhaled into the lungs; and

- it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching door knob or shaking hands then touching own face)

There is currently scientific debate about the role of asymptomatic transmission from someone who is incubating the virus, but has not yet developed symptoms. This is why it is important to keep your distance from everyone, not just those with symptoms.

What to do if an essential worker becomes unwell and believes they have been exposed to COVID-19

If someone becomes unwell in the workplace with recent onset of fever or chills and/or symptoms of respiratory tract infection, which includes cough, the unwell person should be removed to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people. If possible find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door, such as a staff office. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation.

The individual who is unwell should call their doctor and explain which country they have returned from in the last 14 days and outline their current symptoms.

Whilst they wait for advice, they should remain at least 2 metres from other people. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket then throw the tissue in the bin. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

If they need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if available.

Closure of the workplace is not recommended until a risk assessment is undertaken by a doctor. Further action will then be undertaken by the HSE in the event of a positive test. Further information in this regard is available in the COVID-19 Guidance for the Business and Retail Sector available from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/businessguidance/>

Freight and Haulage Sector

Drivers are alone for significant portions of time when driving a HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle) long distances but they do come into contact with others given the nature of their work.

Essential workers, such as drivers of freight vehicles, should familiarise themselves with the guidance from the HSE (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>).

Drivers should ensure that they know what to do and who to contact if they feel ill while travelling.

Drivers should be aware of and monitor themselves for symptoms.

While engaged in the transport of goods abroad, drivers should comply with any instructions from local authorities where they are travelling.

Drivers should follow social isolation guidelines. This applies both when they are abroad and also in Ireland. This means they should limit their contact with others to the greatest extent possible both during work time and when not working. If contact with others is unavoidable, leave a distance of at least 2 metres.

Business/factories/distribution centres in Ireland should limit or remove the physical handover of paperwork to/from drivers (e.g. businesses should move to email/electronic sharing of documents, insofar as is possible).

Drivers should maintain social distance by having no, or very limited, contact with others at factories, distribution centres or other delivery points. For example, when backing up or parking a HGV at a distribution centre, drivers could park (key taken out of cab, put into bag) and open the back of the vehicle if/as required, aiming to keep minimal contact with others. **This requires the cooperation of all elements of the supply chain.**

Where feasible and safe to do so, drivers are advised to remain in their cab.

Business/factories/distribution centres should make sanitary facilities available for drivers (e.g. hand washing facilities, hand sanitiser etc.) and should make sure that hand-washing facilities, including soap and disposable towels, are well maintained.

Drivers should

- wash their hands properly and regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- cover mouths and nose with a tissue or their? sleeve when coughing and sneezing
- put used tissues into a bin and wash their hands
- do not touch your or their? eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

Drivers should carry alcohol hand rub for occasions when facilities for hand washing with soap are not available.

Drivers should at all times have fully charged mobile phones.

EU Member State emergency contact details should be available to all international haulage operations. Each driver should be given contact details and instructions before travelling.

In particular, drivers should wash their hands according to the guidelines available from the HSE, before returning to their vehicle. An alcohol-based hand rub can be used if washing facilities are not available.

If drivers are away from their vehicle while away from home, they should avoid using public transport.

In the event that a driver has to stay anywhere (away from the vehicle/cab) overnight while abroad, they should eat in their hotel room (e.g. using room service).

When travelling on a ferry, drivers should

- try to avoid sitting in close proximity to others
- try to avoid queuing if possible
- essential workers should be accorded priority for single occupancy cabins (alternatively a reclining seat 2m away from other people, maintaining social distancing)
- staff of the ferry should manage seating arrangements in line with social distancing requirements and drivers should adhere to these guidelines
- If possible, drivers should be allowed to bring their dinner/lunch to their cabin.
- if a cabin is available, stay in it for the duration of the voyage if it is practicable to do so.

Important: if an essential worker feels unwell and is showing symptoms of fever (high temperature), cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, the person should remove themselves from work immediately and contact the emergency services in the country you/they are visiting.

Maritime/Shipping

Essential workers should familiarise themselves with the guidance from the HSE (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>). (Essential workers to include ship's crew, ship management and persons involved in the maintenance or repair of critical infrastructure onboard ships or at ports.)

Crew should follow social isolation guidelines. This applies both when they are abroad and also at home. This means they should limit their contact with others to the greatest extent possible both during work time and when not working.

Operators should make sanitary facilities available for crew and passengers (e.g. hand washing facilities, hand sanitiser etc.).

Crew should follow handwashing and respiratory hygiene advice:

- wash their hands properly and regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- cover mouths and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing and sneezing
- put used tissues into a bin and wash their hands
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

While at sea, crew and passengers (if any) should remain apart if it is practical to do so.

Ferry operators should consider ensuring that crew wear protective gloves that are changed regularly when handling money (or cash transactions should be stopped) or when serving food.

If it is possible to do so, crew should avoid going onshore in continental Europe – they should remain on the ship.

If an essential worker feels unwell and is showing symptoms of fever (high temperature), cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, the person should remove themselves from the workplace,

inform their line manager and be taken to an appropriately equipped isolation room and immediately contact the emergency services in the country of the next port of call.

Aviation

Essential workers should familiarise themselves with the guidance from the HSE (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>).

If an essential worker feels unwell and is showing symptoms of fever (high temperature), cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, the person should remove themselves from work immediately and contact the emergency services in the country you are visiting.

Crew should follow social isolation guidelines. This applies both when they are abroad and also at home. This means they should limit their contact with others to the greatest extent possible both during work time and when not working.

Operators should make sanitary facilities available for crew (e.g. hand washing facilities, hand sanitiser etc.).

Crew should follow handwashing and respiratory hygiene advice:

- wash their hands properly and regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- cover mouths and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing and sneezing
- put used tissues into a bin and wash their hands
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

During flights, crew should minimise interaction with passengers (if any) to the greatest extent possible other than for essential safety briefings. Crew and passengers (if any) should remain apart if it is practical to do so.

Some airlines already have detailed measures in place to respond to suspected cases of infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and to deal with the handling of symptomatic passengers. Crews should follow the guidance issued by their airline.

Ends.