

COVID-19 AND WASTE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Sheet 3

(Examples of good practice)

The information contained in this document is time sensitive. It was first produced on 3 April 2020 and reviewed on 9 April 2020. Subsequent Government advice may change.

You should first always follow the latest Government advice

(<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>).

Government advice specific to the waste and recycling sector is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#waste-management-businesses>

Government activity on COVID-19 is being led by the Department of Health and Social Care and PHE in conjunction with the devolved administrations. In Northern Ireland the Public Health Agency (PHA) are taking the lead and co-ordinating all advice and information. Their website can be accessed via the link below and should contain the most up to date local information and guidance:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>

This document takes account of advice published on the HSENI website:

(<https://www.hseni.gov.uk>)

HSENI has also provided advice on RIDDOR reporting of COVID-19:

(<https://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/covid-19-frequently-asked-health-and-safety-questions>)

Please note that the intent of this document is to provide basic waste industry related advice on COVID-19. It is not a comprehensive 'one-stop-shop' for advice on COVID-19. You should also read and understand the freely available Government advice (as detailed in the addresses located above) and use this in conjunction with this document.

[Advice is available from WISH GB also. They have updated their advisory document info13 on dealing with COVID-19](#)

What are the recommended precautions for dealing with COVID-19?

HSENI has provided the following advice to businesses:

- Encourage their employees to work at home, wherever possible;
- Have systems in place to ensure that if someone becomes unwell in the workplace with a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature, they should be sent home and advised to follow the advice to stay at home, see WISHNI COVID-19 information sheet 2;
- Employees should be reminded to wash their hands regularly throughout the day for at least 20 seconds on each occasion, and to sneeze into tissues and dispose of the tissues promptly – **Catch it, Bin it, Kill it.** (suitable washing facilities with soap, **hot** and cold water or warm water or hand sanitisers must be provided);
- Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using standard cleaning products.

Additional means of protection

Where social distancing cannot be achieved within the normal working environment additional means of protection must be considered.

For example:

- Reduce number of workers on site at any one time;
- Relocating workers to other tasks to minimise employees within a particular area;
- Redesigning processes to allow for social distancing;
- Put in place temporary barriers between staff on picking lines (Introducing temporary barriers does not negate the need to reduce numbers of staff on picking lines or similar tasks);
- Utilise technology such as teleconferencing instead of face to face meetings;
- Adjust workflow or production line speeds.

There are many good ideas currently being used within the Northern Ireland Waste and Recycling Sector.

As a group, please share best practice information through our LinkedIn page and also on sources of PPE, RPE and cleaning materials

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/wishni/>

WISHNI Ambassadors have provided the following examples of what compliance looks like in practice.

Examples of social distancing measures are identified below.

- Make regular announcements to remind staff and/or customers to follow social distancing advice and wash their hands regularly
- Provide additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities if possible
- Providing soap, water, hand sanitiser and tissues and encourage staff to use them
- Where it is possible to remain 2 metres apart, use floor markings to mark the distance, particularly in the most crowded areas (for example, where queues form)

Social distancing

Additional government guidance on social distancing is available at;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#social-distancing-in-the-workplace---principles>

Picking lines



Clear Perspex screens have been installed to prevent face to face aerosol spread and the distance between operatives increased to 2.0m

Photo courtesy of Bryson Recycling Limited

Site entrance



Staff queuing system in operation at entrance to premises which maintains the 2 m separation distance.

Photo courtesy of Regen Waste Ltd

Welfare facilities

Welfare facilities may need to be extended and/or used in rotation by staff. It may be necessary to introduce a one in - one out system. Prevent staff queuing to use the facilities and only place one chair per table to prevent social gathering.

Regular cleaning must take place with particular attention to commonly touched items such as door handles.

Information to employees.

As the situation is currently very fluid it will be necessary to manage change effectively and frequently. Regularly brief staff on the latest developments.

Below is a toolbox talk, one of a number produced by Bryson Recycling Ltd and used by kind agreement:-

Example Toolbox Talk: Coronavirus

To further reduce the opportunity of cross-contamination:

- All staff should bring a cold packed lunch where possible. This is to avoid touchpoints such as the microwave and fridge.
- All staff should bring in a cold drink or a flask with a hot drink. Again, this is to avoid touchpoints such as the kettle.
- When arriving on-site before your shift begins, please put on PPE and go straight to your work station. Do not congregate in groups. Remember it is important to practice social distancing at this time.
- Practice social distancing in the smoking area.
- No more than three people at a time should be in the locker room.
- Practice social distancing at break and lunchtimes. We have new canteens that should be used. Ensure the two-metre social distancing rule is not broken. You should also consider eating lunch in your car.

Transport

The use of HGV's is widespread in the waste industry. Normally these have a single occupant, the driver. In some cases, such as refuse collection, a loading crew also occupy the cab, reducing the possibility of maintaining social distancing. In the current emergency it will be necessary to reduce the numbers travelling in cabs. Where risk assessment shows it is as safe as is reasonably practicable to carry out the task using a driver plus a single crew member this should be done. It may be necessary to have additional crew members travel in a separate vehicle.

In refuse collection situations, additional bin side refuse should be collected and members of the public discouraged from approaching the crew or assisting in placing items in the loading compartment.

It has come to the attention of WISHNI that members of crews are being subject to abuse by members of the public who may be acting ill advisedly. This behaviour is disgraceful at any time, but all the more so at this time of increased difficulty.

Employers will have strategies in place to deal with abuse and violence to staff and are encouraged to seek assistance from PSNI if necessary.

Some WISHNI members are reporting increased presence of used tissues in kerbside collections. It is the responsibility of members of the public to double bag used tissues. Some members are assessing each lift separately and if not satisfied with the containment provided for possibly infectious materials are leaving the bins or stacker boxes without emptying them.

Information kindly researched for WISHNI by Belfast City Council staff highlights a study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Professor C Machamer has reported in the New England Journal of Medicine that COVID-19 can remain viable in aerosol form for up to 4 hours, on cardboard for 24 hours and other hard surfaces, such as stainless steel for 72 hours. While Prof Machamer states that the concentration of active virus at these timeframes is very low, she advises that they should form a good basis for precautions. Source NEJM.org 17.3.2020.

Cleaning procedures

Cleaning procedures should be of a high order on any waste site for basic hygiene reasons. Government advice on this is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Managers should reinforce cleaning arrangements and consider the following:

- Ordinary cleaning will kill any virus, e.g. soap and water, alcohol sprays, normal cleaning agents or disinfectant;
- Cleaning of crockery and utensils can be conducted using hot water and detergents;
- Damp dusting should replace any dry dusting;
- Telephones and computer equipment should also be cleaned with wipes or by other means by following Government guidance;
- If an employee has gone off sick with COVID-19, their workstation, including telephone and keyboard, vehicle cab etc should be cleaned using normal cleaning materials and methods;
- Where a vehicle is believed to be contaminated it should be left for 72 hours before cleaning;
- Techniques are available to deep clean vehicles and are illustrated overleaf. The effectiveness of these techniques should be assessed and of course a COSHH assessment will be required.



Deep cleaning of vehicles

Photo courtesy of Regen Waste Ltd

Disclaimer and WISHNI

The Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISHNI) Forum in Northern Ireland exists to identify, devise and promote activities to improve industry health and safety performance. WISHNI operates an Ambassador scheme where member companies are recognised for their innovation and use of best health and safety practice. Some of the Ambassadors, Belfast City Council, Bryson Recycling Ltd and Regen Waste Ltd have kindly provided the examples in this document.

This information document has been prepared by health and safety practitioners associated with WISHNI to assist health and safety improvements in the waste management industry. It is not formal guidance and represents good practice, which typically may go beyond the strict requirements of health and safety law.

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