

Crucial support for the Sellafield mission

News story

We're sharing stories of people working on the Sellafield site during the coronavirus pandemic. Today we feature Mitie OneFM Operations Manager Sara Hammel.



"It's been a team effort" said Operations Manager Sara Hammel.

Keeping Sellafield running, even with a reduced workforce, requires a range of support services.

Throughout the lockdown operations like laundry, cleaning, and postal services have continued.

Sara Hammel is part of the team who make sure these vital tasks are done safely.

She said:

Considering no-one has experienced anything like this before, I think we've managed it pretty well.

It was difficult at first. People were struggling with social distancing and needed to be reminded a lot. Like the rest of the country, we had issues obtaining certain materials like hand sanitisers.

We had some difficult conversations to begin with. People were naturally very concerned and wanting to stock up.

Our role was to educate people and inform them of the increased demands over the whole site. We worked to prioritise and manage the distribution to ensure each area had sufficient. Thankfully we were

always able to ensure that everyone had the materials, including hand sanitiser, that they needed.

We very quickly got past those early issues. We've all been learning together. It's been a real team effort. My employer Mitie have been very supportive and Sellafield Ltd as a client have been great. We've had regular briefings with all of the information we need to keep our teams safe.

Of course, people will be apprehensive about returning to work, but they shouldn't fear coming back onto site. It's a different way of doing things but measures have been put in place to ensure you can carry out your job safely. And, despite the media headlines, we've had sufficient PPE throughout.

Sara's responsibilities include looking after buildings and managing laundry and changeroom operatives.

She added:

We've put our staff on a rota to reduce our footprint on the site at any one time and to allow social distancing.

Laundry and changeroom workers are working on a four-on, four-off shift pattern so they can work safely and still carry out business as usual.

We've focused on potential touch points and hard surfaces, making sure these are managed safely, and our operatives have been offered additional PPE.

The management team is also working split shifts – one week on-site, one week off – so we can maintain social distancing also.

Sara has spent more than three decades working at Sellafield but admits she's never seen anything like the current situation.

This is by far the weirdest time I've known in 30 years on site.

Seeing the site virtually empty every day has been bizarre.

I've personally never felt worried about coming to work. I genuinely haven't given it a second thought.

My wife's a police officer so we're used to accepting risk as part of everyday life. It's one of those situations where you just get on with it and get the job done.

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