

HSE urges Blackburn businesses to take five steps to become COVID-secure

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is out and about talking to businesses in Blackburn and the surrounding areas to ensure they are COVID-secure to help tackle the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

To support the understanding of any patterns in the confirmed coronavirus cases in the area, HSE is working alongside Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council in the regulation of workplace health and safety and alongside local public health authorities. Inspectors are out visiting businesses across Blackburn and surrounding areas, putting employers on the spot and checking that they are complying with the latest guidance.

To be COVID-secure means businesses need to put in place workplace adjustments, keep up to date with the latest guidance and put measures in place to manage the risk and protect workers and others. There are [five practical steps](#) that businesses can take to do that:

- Step 1. carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment
- Step 2. develop increased cleaning, hand washing and hygiene procedures
- Step 3. take all reasonable steps to help people work from home
- Step 4. maintain 2m social distancing where possible
- Step 5. where people cannot be 2m apart, manage transmission risk

Francine Cheney, HSE construction head of operations said: “The number of confirmed cases of the disease are currently high in the area. We are talking to local businesses and inspecting sites in and around Blackburn to understand how they are managing risks in line with their specific business activity.

“Becoming COVID-secure needs to be the priority for all businesses to tackle the rise in the number of cases in the area. It is a legal duty for employers to protect their workers and others from harm and this includes taking reasonable steps to control the risk and protect people from coronavirus. This means making workplace adjustments to become COVID-secure. We advise employers to work with their employees when implementing changes, to help increase confidence with workers, customers and the local community.”

As inspections across the country are ongoing, HSE has been utilising a number of different ways to gather intelligence and reach out to businesses across Blackburn with a combination of site visits, phone calls and through the collection of supporting visual evidence such as photos and video footage.

HSE and local authority inspectors are finding some common issues across a range of sectors that include: failing to provide arrangements for monitoring, supervising and maintaining social distancing, failing to introduce an adequate cleaning regime – particularly at busy times of the day

– and providing access to welfare facilities to allow employees to frequently wash their hands with warm water and soap.

To support businesses, HSE are providing advice and guidance to manage risk and protect workers. Where some employers are not managing the risk, HSE will take action which can range from the provision of specific advice, issuing enforcement notices, stopping certain work practices until they are made safe and, where businesses fail to comply, this could lead to prosecution.

Sally Nicholson, HSE head of operations in Lancashire said: “All businesses are in scope for inspections, that means any size business in any sector can receive an unannounced inspection to ensure they are COVID-secure. By making sure that businesses have measures in place to manage the risks, we can benefit the health of the local community as well as support the UK economy.”

For the latest information and relevant Safer Workplaces guidance, see www.gov.uk

Ends

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk
2. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
3. For HSE’s working safely guidance see <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

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