HSE urges businesses to become COVID-secure

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is calling for businesses in Great Britain to make sure they're COVID-secure as more sectors open their doors this weekend.

Inspectors are out and about, putting employers on the spot and checking that they are complying with health and safety law. Being COVID-secure means being adaptable to the current guidance and putting measures in place to control the risk of coronavirus to 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 in line with HSE guidance
- 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.

Philip White, Director of Regulation at HSE said: "Becoming COVID-secure should be the priority for all businesses. By law, employers have a duty to protect workers and others from harm and this includes taking reasonable steps to control the risk and protect people from coronavirus. It's important that workers are aware of the measures that will be put in place to help them work safely.

"Ensuring workplaces are COVID-secure will not only reassure and increase confidence with workers, but also customers, partners and the local community. Nobody wants lockdown measures to be reversed and the Government has made clear that it will not hesitate to do so if the virus is not properly controlled."

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

Some of the most common issues that HSE and local authority inspectors are finding 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.

HSE will support businesses by providing advice and guidance; however 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.

Philip continued: "All sectors and business of all sizes are in scope for inspections and we will ask questions of duty holders to understand how they are managing risks. We understand that the vast majority of employers want to make their workplaces secure and are doing everything they can to keep people and their business safe and healthy.

"Ultimately, becoming COVID-secure benefits the health of our nation; the health of our communities, of businesses and the health of the UK economy. As a nation, we can't afford not to become COVID-secure."

For the latest information and relevant safer workplaces guidance, see www.gov.uk

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