



NATIONAL HEALTH
LABORATORY SERVICE



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service



Preparing the Workplace for Coronavirus



Construction sector: Return to work Procedures and Workplace preparedness in COVID-19 era

Dr Odette Volmink

Occupational Medicine Specialist

NIOH

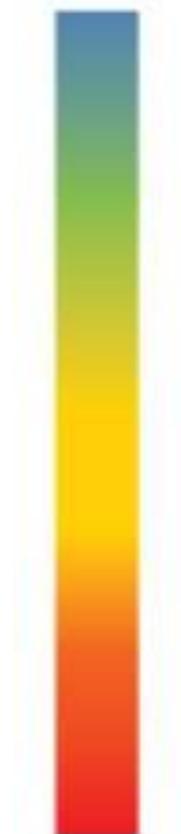
Office: + 27 (0) 11 712 6400

Email: info@nioh.ac.za

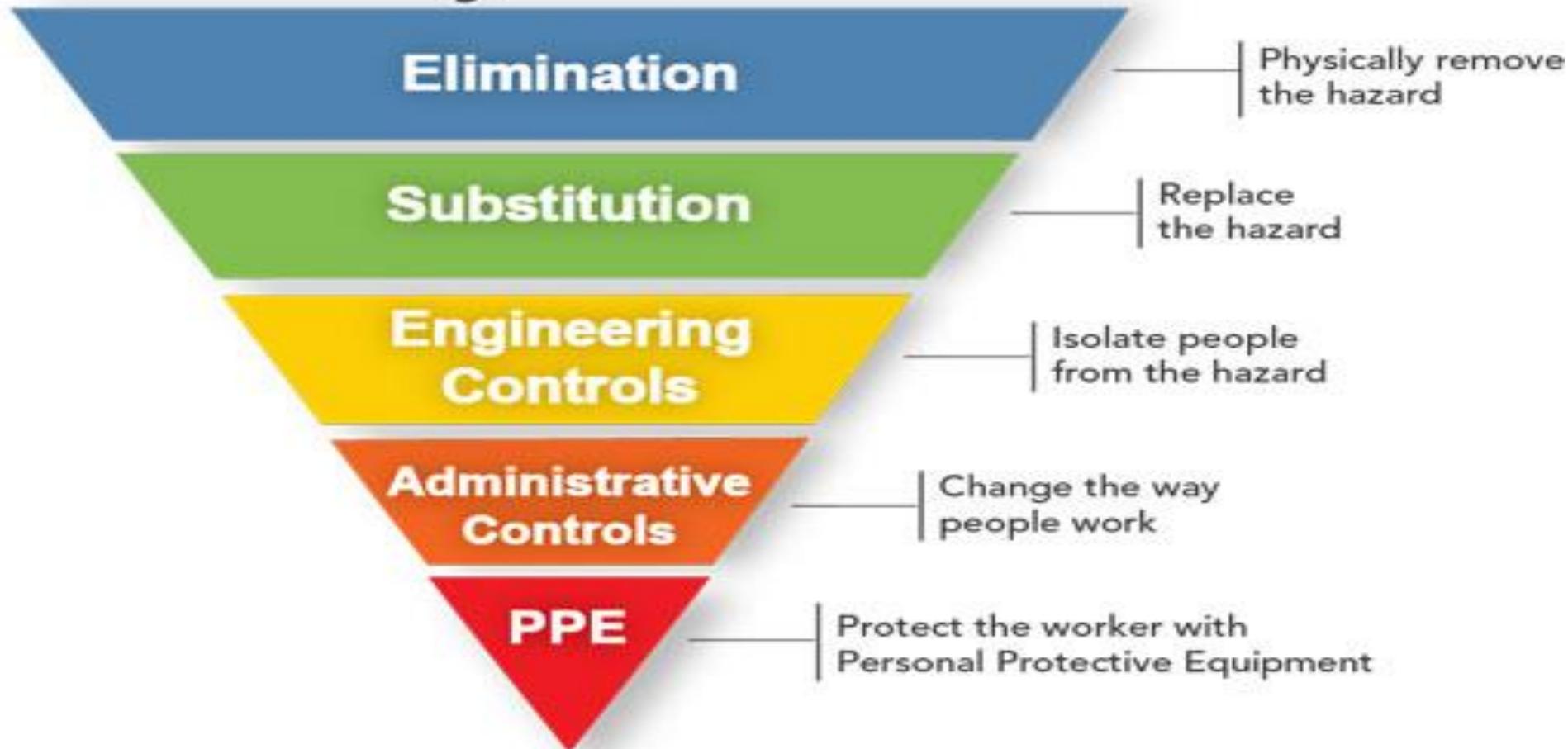
Website: <http://www.nhls.ac.za>; <http://www.nioh.ac.za>; <http://www.nicd.ac.za>

Hierarchy of Controls

Most effective



Least effective



Hierarchy of controls

- Reduce or eliminate worker exposure

- Key principle in the workplace: to use a combination of strategies starting with the most effective

- Hierarchy of controls: an approach moving from most effective to least effective protective measures

- Engineering controls: increasing ventilation, Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other.



Admin Controls: A workplace Plan of action



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- Develop a **contingency** and **business continuity** plan for an outbreak in your community or workplace
 - Prepare your organisation for the **possibility of an outbreak of COVID-19 in the workplaces** or community.
 - **How to keep your business running even if a significant number of workers, contractors and suppliers cannot come**
 - **Engage with your workers and their representatives as well as your contractors** about the plan
 - **Emphasise the importance of staying away from work** even if they have only mild symptoms
 - Address **sick leave arrangements, mental health** and **social consequences** of a case of COVID-19 in the workplace
 - For **small and medium-sized businesses** without in-house occupational health support, consult the information available **public health and labour authorities in advance of any emergency. Consult any guidance given by your sectoral organisations** (employers' associations, chambers of commerce, sectoral social services).
 - Where feasible, **promote teleworking** across your organisation and allow workers to work flexible hours to minimise crowding the workplace.

Other administrative controls

- Clear **infection prevention and control** and standard precautions
- **Occupational health policies**
- **Controlled access** to the workplace- screening procedures
- Ensure **proper signage**
 - that encourage staying home when sick
 - cough and sneeze etiquette
 - hand hygiene
- **Cleaning and disinfection procedures for the workplace**
- **Ensure safe waste management** practices and procedures
- The occupational health or infection control personnel should establish points of contact between the organisation, personnel and local health authority
- Established **public health reporting procedures** should be swiftly followed
- A **blame free working environment** needs to be provided
- Establish and ensure workers have access to **employee assistance programmes** for **mental health support**
- **Appropriate and updated travel policies to ensure safety of staff**



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Educate and inform employees (risk communication)

- Give people facts about how the disease is transmitted
- Infection prevention and control including hand and respiratory hygiene practices
- Correct donning and doffing and disposal of PPE
- Advise workers on self-assessment, symptom reporting and sick leave policies if exposed
- Influenza vaccinations to prevent possible co infection with influenza
- Clear policies regarding sick leave.
 - Don't punish people for staying away for 'flu'
 - Make it possible to work from home where possible
- Understand travel risks and make informed decisions re risk-benefit of travelling



Protecting people at increased risk!

Vulnerable workers

- Age greater than 60
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes mellitus
- Chronic respiratory disease
- Chronic renal disease
- Obesity
- Cancer on treatment
- Pregnant workers
- Employees on immunosuppressive therapy i.e. systemic corticosteroids
- HIV diagnosed HCWs who are virally unsuppressed

May need to be accommodated:
Work from home
Safest available on-site roles, enabling them to stay 2m away from others

The level of vulnerability needs to be assessed by a medical practitioner

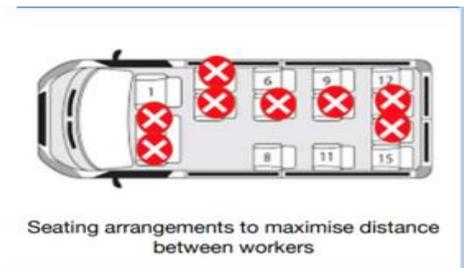
Social distancing in the workplace

- Should have a **policy** for the workplace
- Employees should be **trained** regarding this
- Plan for the **minimum number of people to be on site** to operate safely and effectively
- Arrange the workplace to ensure **minimal contact between employees**
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using '**fixed teams or partnering**' (so each person works with only a few others).
- Don't forget the **common areas**
 - outside the immediate workplace – entrances and exits
 - within the workplace such as canteens, break rooms and lavatories.
 - groups or staggering break-times to avoid the concentration of workers in common
- This can also be done by workers **changing shift arrangements- staggering break times and starting times.**



Travel to work

- Wherever possible workers should **travel to site alone using their own transport**.
- If workers have no option but to share transport:
 - Journeys should be **shared with the same individuals** and with the minimum number of people at any one time
 - **Good ventilation** (i.e. keeping the windows open) and facing away from each other may help to reduce the risk of transmission
 - **Avoid sitting face to face**
 - The vehicle should be **cleaned regularly** using gloves and standard cleaning products, with particular emphasis on handles and other areas where passengers may touch surfaces
 -
- Sites should consider:
 - **Parking arrangements** for additional vehicles and bicycles
 - Other means of transport to avoid public transport
 - Providing **hand cleaning facilities** at entrances and exits.
- Where public transport is the only option for workers, you should consider:
 - Changing and staggering site hours to reduce congestion on public transport
 - Avoid using public transport during **peak times** (05:45 - 7:30 and 16:00 - 17:30)



Work related travel



- Minimize person to person contact during deliveries to other sites
- Maintain **consistent pairing** when 2 person delivery is essential
- Minimize contact during **payments or document exchange**- do this electronically
- Ensure **hand sanitizers** are available
- **Clean vehicles** regularly
- Revising **pick-up and drop-off collection points, procedures, signage and markings.**

Hand washing and toileting facilities



- Allow **regular breaks** to wash hands
- Provide **additional hand washing facilities** (e.g. pop ups) to the usual facilities, particularly on a large spread out site or where there are significant numbers of personnel on site, including plant operators
- Ensure **adequate supplies of soap and fresh water** are readily available and kept topped up at all times
- Provide **hand sanitiser** (minimum 60% alcohol based) where hand washing facilities are unavailable
- **Restrict the number of people using toilet facilities at any one time** (e.g. use an attendant) and use signage, such as floor markings, to ensure 2 metre distance is maintained between people when queuing
- **Wash or sanitise hands before and after** using the toileting facilities
- Regularly **clean the hand washing facilities** & Enhance the cleaning regimes for **toilet facilities**, particularly door handles, locks and the toilet flush
- Portable toilets should be avoided wherever possible, but where in use these should be cleaned and emptied more frequently
- Provide suitable and **sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels** with regular removal and disposal

Site Access points



- **Stop all non-essential visitors**
- Consider introducing **staggered start and finish times** to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- **Plan site access points** to enable social distancing – you may need to change the number of access points, either increase to reduce congestion or decrease to enable monitoring, including in the case of emergencies
- Allow **plenty of space between people waiting** to enter site
- Use **signage**:
 - such as **floor markings**, to ensure 1.5m distance is maintained between people when queuing
 - reminding workers not to attend if they have **symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19)** and to follow guidelines
- **Screening** visitors and workers for symptoms of COVID-19 on arrival at work
- **Remove or disable entry systems that require skin contact** (e.g. fingerprint scanners) unless they are cleaned between each individual use
- Require all workers to **wash their hands for 20 seconds using soap and water when entering and leaving the site**
- Regularly **clean common contact surfaces** in reception, office, access control and delivery areas e.g. scanners, turnstiles, screens, telephone handsets and desks, particularly during peak flow times
- Where **loading and offloading** arrangements on site will allow it, **drivers should remain in their vehicles.**
- Where drivers are required to exit their vehicle, they should **wash or sanitise their hands** before handling any materials
- Consider arrangements for **monitoring compliance.**

On site



- **Reducing movement** by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings and sites. -encouraging use of telephones where permitted, and cleaning them between use.
- **Reducing job rotation and equipment rotation**, for example, single tasks for the day.
- Implementing **one-way systems** where possible on walkways around the workplace.
- Using **signage** such as **ground markings** or being creative with other objects to mark out 1.5m to allow controlled flows of people
- **Reducing occupancy of vehicles** used for onsite travel
- Separating sites into **working zones** to keep different groups of workers physically separated as much as practical.
- Reducing the number of people in attendance at **site inductions** and **consider holding them outdoors** wherever possible with social distancing.
- **Regulating use of high traffic areas** including corridors, lifts, turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing.
- Changing layouts to allow people to work further apart from each other.
 - Only where it is not possible to move workstations further apart
 - arranging people to work **side by side or facing away from each other** rather than face-to-face
 - **screens to separate** people from each other
 - Using a **consistent pairing system** if people have to work in close proximity



Meetings

- Use other methods to avoid face to face contact
- Only absolutely necessary participants should attend a meeting
- Avoid sharing pens and other objects
- Provide hand sanitizer in meeting rooms
- Hold meetings outdoors or in well ventilated rooms
- Use floor signage to ensure 1.5m distancing is maintained



Canteens and rest areas

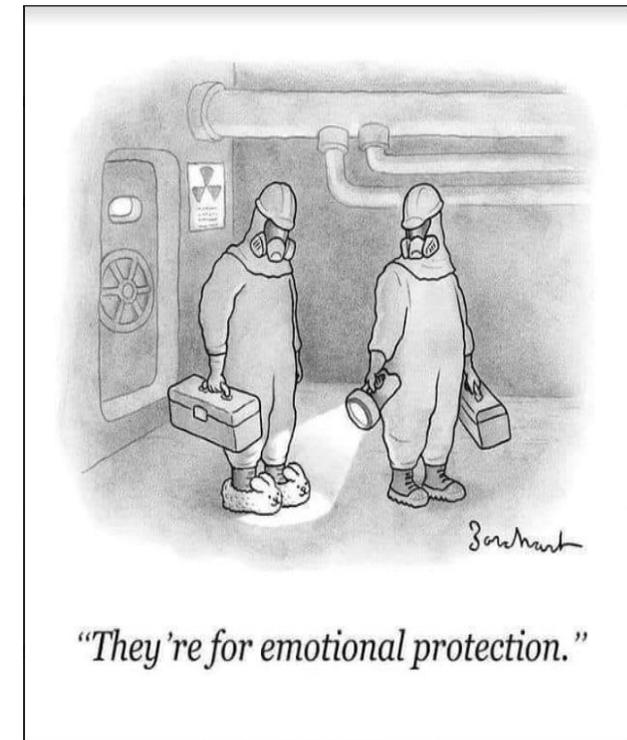
- workers should be encouraged to **bring their own food**.
- Workers should be encouraged to **stay on site once they have entered it** and avoid using local shops.
- Where there are no practical alternatives, workplace canteens may remain open to provide food to staff with appropriate adjustments for social distancing.
- **takeaway service** providing pre-prepared and wrapped food only.
- Consider **increasing the number or size of facilities** available on site if possible
- The **capacity of each canteen or rest area should be clearly identified at the entry** to each facility
- **Break times should be staggered** to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- **Frequently clean surfaces that are touched regularly**, using standard cleaning products e.g. kettles, refrigerators, microwaves
- **Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser** should be available at the entrance to any room where people eat and should be used by workers when entering and leaving the area
- All **rubbish should be put straight in the bin** and not left for someone else to clear up
- **Crockery, eating utensils, cups** etc. should not be used unless they are **disposable** or are **washed and dried between use**
- **Payments** should be taken by **contactless card** wherever possible
- **Canteen staff should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food**
- Consider arrangements for **monitoring compliance**.
- Using **safe outdoor areas** for breaks.
- Reconfiguring seating and tables to maintain spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.

Cleaning and disinfection

- Enhanced cleaning procedures should be in place across the site,
- particularly in communal areas and at touch points including:
 - Taps and washing facilities
 - Toilet flush and seats
 - Door handles and push plates
 - Hand rails on staircases and corridors
 - Lift and hoist controls
- Machinery and equipment controls
 - buckets
 - site equipment
 - control panels
- Telephone equipment
- Key boards, photocopiers and other office equipment
- Rubbish collection and storage points should be increased and emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- PPE is an effective measure within a **complete package of mitigation and control strategies**
- Appropriate PPE should be informed by the risk assessment- safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses
- Ensure adequate and appropriate PPE is available.
- N95 masks should be reserved for HW
- Used PPE should be **considered contaminated and discarded in accordance with safe practice**
- **Surgical masks** should be available for **patients with respiratory symptoms**
- PPE should be used by one person only and not shared.
- Need to align with the regulations of the country



Cloth masks

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a cloth mask on, and after removing it.
- Avoid touching your face or cloth mask , as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- Continue to wash your hands regularly.
- Should cover the nose and mouth completely;
- Should not be lowered when speaking, coughing or sneezing;
- Change, wash and iron your cloth mask daily.
- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste.
- Practise social distancing wherever possible.

Mental Health support

- Ongoing mental health risk
 - increased demands at home due to caring responsibilities
 - concerns about finances and job security
 - changing workload and work location
 - bereavement
 - anxiety related to the fear of COVID-19 itself.
- A whole systems approach will be key and will need to focus on:
 - Support
 - Maintenance
 - Prevention
- There is a close link between workforce wellbeing and organisational resilience and productivity.
- Employment assistance programmes

Workers exposed in the workplace

- close contact
- within 1 metre
- for >15 minutes
- without PPE /
- failure of PPE /
- direct contact with respiratory secretions

Worker living with a confirmed case



Non essential worker

- Workplace investigation done and exposure assessed as high risk
- Confirmed by the line manager

- Self quarantine for a minimum of 14 days
- Enable workers to work from home where applicable
- Ensure mental health support

- Cleaning initiated
- Reporting
 - To the necessary gvt depts

- Return to work on day 15 if no symptoms occur

Symptoms develop

Refer for testing

Worker exposed to low risk in the workplace

Workplace investigation done and exposure assessed as low risk

The risk is confirmed by the line manager

Continues to work but self monitors temperature and symptoms daily for 14 days

Symptomatic

Refer for testing

- >1 metre away from a COVID-19 confirmed case
- for <15 minutes OR
- within 1 meter but
 - wearing PPE
- Also consider lower risk if COVID case was wearing a surgical mask (source control).

Necessary steps to follow in the workplace when a worker is diagnosed with COVID-19

A worker with a confirmed/positive COVID-19 test

Ensure reporting is done

DOH
Department of
Employment and
Labour (Inspectorate
and Compensation
Commissioner if
appropriate)

Isolate the employee

Provide a surgical
mask for the worker
Ensure that the
employee has been
treated
Ensure the employee
has mental health
support
Ensure appropriate
sick leave is issues

At the workplace

Do a workplace
investigation
Ensure contact tracing
is done
Ensure appropriate
cleaning of the
workplace is carried
out

On recovery

Mild cases: 14 days
after symptom onset
Severe cases 14 days
after clinically stability
(No symptoms or
stopping of critical
medical interventions)

Out of the
workplace

Workplace



Workplace restrictions on return to work

- All employees on returning to work after isolation or quarantine period, should follow general work restrictions that include:
 - undergo medical evaluation to confirm that they are fit to work
 - wearing of surgical masks at all times while at work for a period of 21 days from the initial test
 - implement social distancing measures as appropriate
 - adherence to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette
 - continued self-monitoring for symptoms
 - seek medical re-evaluation if respiratory symptoms recur or worse

Minimise risks of transmission in the workplace – MUST BE SAID AGAIN!

- Communication and awareness important- tool box talks
- Review the HRA and the hierarchy of controls
- Minimise risks in the workplace.
 - Social distancing
 - Promote regular and thorough handwashing by employees, contractors and customers
 - Respiratory hygiene
 - Avoid touching your face, especially while working.
- Clean frequently handled surfaces such as amenities, plant, equipment, tools, materials which may be, or have been touched by others.
- Advise workers on self-assessment, symptom reporting and sick leave policies
- Screening and identification of potentially affected employees, limit contact and movement and appropriate referral for testing promptly
- Encourage / insist that symptomatic persons stay away / self isolate
- Have occupational health input to manage the program internally



- <https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Site-Operating-Procedures-Version-3.pdf>
- <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb961bfe90e070834b6675f/working-safely-during-covid-19-construction-outdoors-240520.pdf>
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