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Covid-19 Forestry Worksite Safe Operating Procedures -

Protecting the Workforce

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Introduction

The forestry, wood processing and tree nurseries sector takes its responsibilities seriously during this current outbreak. The planting, management and harvesting of trees is a largely rural industry, as is the growing of young trees in forest nurseries. There is limited interaction with other people, and the forestry sector is committed to working safely in accordance with government guidelines for employers and businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19), including social distancing and hygiene measures, and in accordance with all existing health and safety standards

The forest industry supplies products and services, such as wood for energy, to clients within key industries who are themselves supplying essential services to the waste wood recycling process, the food chain, and generating energy for the National Grid, as well as supplying the fuel to support the running of biomass boilers for premises such as hospitals.

However, not all forestry activity may seem to relate directly to the supply of key products, but it is important for society in many other ways, not least in tackling climate change. This includes those growing young trees in nurseries and planting new forests and woods. In the longer-term, those young trees will be needed to help many businesses get back on their feet and to support our ongoing climate change objectives. In the short term, failure to utilise trees produced for this year's planting season will lead to many having to be destroyed and wasted. Operating safely and responsibly we can deliver important benefits for society – carbon sequestration, rural employment, places for people to walk and wildlife to live, and much more.



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Responsible Actions

These are exceptional circumstances and the industry must comply with the latest Government advice on Coronavirus at all times.

Forestry work sites operating during the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic must ensure they are protecting their workforce and minimising the risk of spread of infection.

This guidance is intended to deliver a set of consistent measures on sites of all sizes in line with the Government's recommendations on [social distancing](#).

For the purpose of this guidance Forestry worksites are defined as the following activities, Timber harvesting operations, biomass recovery operations, forest road construction and maintenance, cultivation of new planting and restocking, planting of trees and all subsequent maintenance activities required to enable the successful establishment of the young trees.

Generally, most forestry work sites are large scale, covering several hectares and rural and often remote locations, where social distancing, keeping more than 2 meters apart, will not be a problem. The numbers of workers on an individual site can be variable but would usually be a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10.

The health and safety requirements of any forestry activity must not be compromised at this time. If an activity cannot be undertaken safely due to a lack of suitably qualified personnel being available or social distancing being implemented, it should not take place.

We are aware that emergency services are also under greater pressure and may not be in a position to respond as quickly as usual.

Managers and supervisors should remind the workforce at every opportunity of the Site Safety Operating Procedures which are aimed at protecting them, their colleagues, their families and the UK population.

If a Forestry work site is not consistently implementing the measures set out below, it may be required to shut down.

Site Work Management Guidelines

Site Risk Assessments should be revised to reflect the Covid-19 safe working guidelines set out below and how they will be implemented taking account of the particular circumstances at each worksite.

In each case a revised written site risk assessment taking account of the Covid-19 guidelines must be jointly agreed by the contractor and the forestry works manager.



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Self-Isolation

Anyone who meets one of the following criteria should not come to site:

- Has a high temperature or a new persistent cough - follow the guidance on self-isolation
- Is a vulnerable person (by virtue of their age, underlying health condition, clinical condition or are pregnant)
- Is living with someone in self-isolation or a vulnerable person.

Procedure if someone falls ill

If a worker develops a high temperature or a persistent cough while at work, they should:

- Return home immediately
- Avoid touching anything
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

They must then follow the guidance on self-isolation and not return to work until their period of self-isolation has been completed.

Travel to Site

Unless living in the same household workers should travel to site alone, using their own transport.

Those organising work sites need to consider:

- Parking arrangements for additional vehicles
- Other means of transport to avoid public transport
- Ensure that hand cleaning facilities are available on the site. This should be soap and water wherever possible, or hand sanitizer if water is not available
- How someone taken ill would get home.



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Site Access

- Stop all non-essential visitors
- Monitor site access to ensure social distancing guidance is complied with.
- Require all workers to wash or clean their hands before entering or leaving the site
- Allow plenty of space (two metres) between people on all work sites.
- Regularly clean common contact surfaces in welfare units.
- Reduce the number of people in attendance at site inductions and consider holding them outdoors wherever possible
- Drivers should remain in their vehicles if the load will allow it and must wash or clean their hands before unloading goods and materials.
- Ensure that visitors to the site are aware of the social distancing and hygiene rules.

Welfare Units

Hand Washing

- Ensure that the welfare units have hand washing facilities and that the workers on site have their own hand sanitisers in their own vehicles.
- Ensure soap and fresh water is readily available and kept topped up at all times
- Provide hand sanitiser where hand washing facilities are unavailable
- Regularly clean the hand washing facilities and check soap and sanitiser levels
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

Sites will need extra supplies of soap, hand sanitiser and paper towels and these should be securely stored.

Toilet Facilities

- Restrict the number of people using toilet facilities at any one time.
- Wash hands before and after using the 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.



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General Principles

- Non-essential physical work that requires close contact between workers should not be carried out
- Work requiring skin to skin contact should not be carried out
- Plan all other work to minimise contact between workers
- Re-usable PPE should be thoroughly cleaned after use and not shared between workers
- Single use PPE should be disposed of so that it cannot be reused
- Increase ventilation in enclosed spaces
- Regularly clean the inside of vehicle cabs and between use by different operators.

Avoiding Close Working

In most forestry work scenarios it is possible to keep workers a minimum of 2 metres apart.

The following general rules should apply in all circumstances.

- Meetings should be restricted to only those absolutely necessary.
- Attendees should be two metres apart from each other
- Welfare unit should be well ventilated / windows opened to allow fresh air circulation
- Consider holding meetings in open areas where possible.

Cleaning

- Enhanced cleaning procedures should be in place on the worksite, particularly in welfare units and at touch points including:
 - Taps and washing facilities
 - Toilet flush and seats
 - Door handles and push plates
 - Machinery and equipment controls
 - Food preparation and eating surfaces
- Rubbish collection and storage points should be increased and emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day