

## RETURNING TO WORK IN COVID-19 TIMES

This Cefic Bulletin is a collection of common practices listed from various trusted sources including large Corporations and National Federations member of the Cefic family to prevent the spread of COVID19 at chemicals workplace.

The Bulletin includes, in addition, information gathered from many official sources e.g. World Health Organization (WHO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Agency for Health and Safety at work (EU-OSHA), European Center for Disease Control (ECDC), European National Authorities Agencies and Cefic Members (<https://cefic.org/about-us/membership/>). Sources are attached in the Annex to the Bulletin.

We would like to thank Cefic Safety, Occupational Health and Responsible Care Professionals who have contributed to the Bulletin.

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## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION ON COVID-19<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 What it is?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The most recently discovered coronavirus has caused the coronavirus disease COVID-19. This new virus and disease, unknown before the outbreak, began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (according to the WHO).

### 1.2 Symptoms

Currently, the incubation period of COVID-19 is assessed to be between 2 and 14 days. This means that if a person shows no symptoms 14 days after contact with someone with a confirmed coronavirus, they have not been infected. The most common symptoms are:

- dry cough;
- sore throat;
- difficulty in breathing;
- tiredness;
- fever.

Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

### 1.3 How it is spread?

The spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (2 meters or less) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person. Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes are the main means of transmission.

There are two main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:

- infection can be spread to people who are nearby (within 2 meters) such that droplets could be inhaled into the lungs.
- it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with

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<sup>1</sup> Sources used are : EU-OSHA (<https://osha.europa.eu/en>), ECDC (<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en>) and WHO (<https://www.who.int/>)

respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching doorknob or shaking hands then touching own face).

#### 1.4 How long it can survive?

Under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to decrease significantly over 72 hours. We know that similar viruses are transferred to and by people's hands. Therefore, regular hand hygiene and cleaning of frequently touched surfaces will help to reduce the risk of infection.

## 2. GENERAL PRACTICES APPLIED FOR PROTECTING WORKERS AT WORKPLACES

Our way of working must be adapted to minimize exposure to the Corona virus. This is a complex matter that requires both compliance and coordination at corporate levels and many accompanying measures implemented at local operational levels.

Members who contributed have adopted social distancing as the norm across our industry. Distances range from 1,5 meter to 2 meters apart.

Facial coverings, either reusable cloth or disposable surgical/medical /FFP2 masks, are complementary protective measures when social distancing is difficult or cannot be put in place.

Frequent hand disinfection along with a strict sanitation of shared facilities, like meeting rooms, canteens, open spaces etc., have become necessary steps while performing jobs at our chemicals' facilities in COVID19 times.

Many European National Authorities have declared working from home the "new norm" for businesses when home working is compatible with the job to be accomplished. Most of Cefic Corporate and National Federations Members have tiered their Staff personnel into "essential" and "non-essential" functions, for whom working from home is widely in place as recommended by National Authorities.

Almost all Cefic Members have declared a ban on non-essential business meetings and travel across the EU and abroad to avoid spreading the virus and have reduced their staff exposure.

At chemicals sites level, site policies for Contractors and Visitors have been put in place to follow EU National Authorities recommendations and/or ECDC recommended practices to protect workers against COVID19 exposure.

Yet, very few European National Authorities have declared body temperature screening a *mandatory* measure for businesses. Some have set *non-binding recommendation*

regarding temperature screening and the majority have not taken position yet. Accordingly, contributing Members have shown diverging positions on adopting this measure at the workplace. When body temperature is taken, privacy preservation rules are in place.

In addition, there are many **precautionary measures** in place at Corporate, national and local levels to avoid cross-contamination. For instance:

- Setting up maximum occupancy for shared spaces to ensure social distancing;
- Any Employee with declared symptoms must not come to work. Instead he/she shall stay confined and follow Authorities guidance in place in case of declared COVID19 symptoms. Employees are requested to declare their symptoms to their Company supervisor(s) to help facilitate the tracing of people who may have met been in contact prior to the symptoms outbreak;
- Setting up recommended practices for Employee using public transportation to come to work;
- Establishing occupancy rules in lifts or hallways;
- Placing plexiglass screens at front desks;
- Displaying practical information on how to keep workplaces clean and sanitized all the time e.g. all contributing Members have put in place *ad-hoc* periodical sanitization of shared equipments, such as, but not limited to: keyboards, screens, mouse and common areas, cafeteria, restrooms, maintenance toolkits. Employees are also encouraged to clean their own workspace after usage.
- Special attention should be placed to locker rooms usage since the virus may survive on fabrics and may be passed on by contact between clothes. A strict separation between work and personal clothing should be maintained.
- Sites rules are commonly in place at sites levels for a safe use of canteens and cafeterias. Eating on shifts with limited Staff occupancy and social distantiation are the new norms.

### 3. ACCESSING THE WORKPLACE FOR EXTERNAL SUPPLIERS, CONTRACTORS AND VISITORS

Members asked confirmed the following practices are in place with their logistics suppliers, engineering, procurement, construction (EPC) and maintenance Contractors and Visitors able to access their production sites:

- Respect social distancing.
- Respect ground markings defining spacing and follow the indicated walkways.
- Implement visual controls.
- Conduct self-disclosure questionnaires when applicable

- Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), like facial masks, gloves, when transferring and handling documents for signature.
- If possible, transporters should not leave their vehicle. For loading and unloading goods, the protective distance should be always respected.
- Translate the regulations for truck traffic (inflow-outflow) into the main languages- German, English, French, Turkish, Spanish and Portuguese-. These regulations include “behavioral instructions” such as washing hands, etc.

#### 4. MANAGING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

**Internal communication is a fundamental feature** to keep the employees informed through “intranet portal” on “behavioral instructions”. Contributing Members have posted video messages from the management, instructions for those coming back from high risk areas, counseling offers from the Occupational Health center, changed access regulations, teleworking regulations/working time regulations, Q&A, etc.

**External communication** is equally important to keep Stakeholders (and community) informed of measures being taken to avoid spreading the virus. Some Members post “behavioral instructions” on the website (similar content of the internal communication), few others have created a special page on the website with a free pandemic training, provide information for suppliers, partner companies (behavioral instructions, management of employees) and customers.

#### 5. RESOURCES and USEFUL LINKS

How to wear a mask: [WHO Guidance on how to wear a mask](#)

### HOW TO PROPERLY WEAR A SURGICAL MASK:

- 1** Wash your hands thoroughly with both soap and water before touching a mask.


- 2** ENSURE THE COLORED SIDE OF THE MASK FACES OUTWARDS.
- 3** Pinch the bendable portion of the mask around the bridge of your nose so it fits snugly.


- 4** Fit the mask to your face and under your chin. The bottom edge of the mask should reach under your chin.
- 5** Dispose the mask after use. Do not recycle!


- 6** Touch the straps and not the outside of your mask when removing.



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Illustration below shows how to correctly wear a FFP2 mask:



**1** Hold the mask in your hand with the head straps hanging down.



**2** Position the mask under your chin and over your nose. Slip the first strap over your head to the back of your neck.



**3** Pull the upper strap into position at the back of your head, ensure the strap sits above your ears.



**4** Adjust the nose clip to minimize leakage

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How to use gloves (OSHA): <https://www.who.int/gpsc/tools/Infsheet6.pdf>

#### Key resources used :

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 (OSHA),
- Pratiques des entreprises de la Branche Chimie pour préserver la santé et la sécurité des salariés et organiser la continuité de leur activité dans le contexte du Coronavirus (France Chimie),
- Recomendaciones para la protección de la salud de los trabajadores frente al COVID-19 en la industria química (Feique),
- Protocollo condiviso di regolamentazione delle misure per il contrasto ed il contenimento della diffusione del virus Covid-19 negli ambienti di lavoro » (Italian Government)
- Concept 1,5 meter Protocol-VNCI-April 2020
- Safe Work-General Recommendations EMEA for CoViD 19 pandemic management » (BASF)
- CORONA-PANDEMIE Handlungs- und Entscheidungshilfen für Chemieparks / Chemiestandorte » (VCI)
- DOW Return to work (public part)
- McKinsey-COVID19 Briefing note-Global Health Crisis Responses-March 2020
- American Chemistry Council-ACC- Guidance for managing suspected or confirmed cases at your facilities-April 2020

**Official sources of information on COVID-19 include:**

- World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>)
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19-pandemic>)
- European Commission ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response_en))
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (<https://osha.europa.eu/en>) (OSHA)
- FEB-VBO (Belgium). Travailler en securite- Business Start-Guide generique pour lutter contre la propagation du COVID19 sur les lieux de travail-Mars 2020

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