

THE IRISH HERITAGE SCHOOL / IRISH ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD SCHOOL SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR COVID-19



Coronavirus **COVID-19**



Wash

your hands well
and often to avoid
contamination



Cover

your mouth and nose
with a tissue or sleeve
when coughing or
sneezing and discard
used tissue



Avoid

touching eyes, nose,
or mouth with
unwashed hands



Clean

and disinfect
frequently
touched objects
and surfaces



Distance

yourself at least
2 metres (6 feet) away
from other people,
especially those who
might be unwell

By Stephen Mandal & Denis Shine

The Irish Heritage School / Irish Archaeology Field School Safe Operating Procedures for COVID-19

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the Irish Heritage School (also trading as the Irish Archaeology Field School) (IHS) Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) for work on the field programs during the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic.

At IHS, health and safety is a top priority. We work closely with our partners and their health and safety teams to ensure that the programs we manage are always carried out in accordance with health and safety legislation, regulations and best practice. We also prepare site-specific health and safety risk assessments and plans for all programs. IHS is committed to protecting our students, partners and suppliers, and minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19.

IHS management will monitor the implementation of these Standard Operating Procedures in tandem with site-specific health and safety procedures and remind staff and students at every opportunity of their key responsibility to protect themselves, their colleagues, their families / homestay families and the wider Irish population.

Health and Safety Documentation

IHS constantly reviews and updates its Company Safety Statement and associated Risk Assessment Method Statements (RAMS) as best practice and currently also specifically with regard to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This SOP has been prepared with reference to Government of Ireland, HSE, HSA, CDC and WHO guidance and guidelines.

Coronavirus/COVID-19

What is Coronavirus

COVID-19 is a new disease that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a new (novel) coronavirus called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Viruses can be easily spread to other people and patients are normally infectious until all the symptoms have gone. COVID-19 may also survive on surfaces for up to 72 hours. A combination of good personal hygiene and management of social distancing can protect from infection.

Symptoms of Coronavirus

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms of coronavirus to appear. They can be similar to the symptoms of cold and flu. The symptoms for COVID-19 include a cough, shortness of breath, breathing difficulties,

fever (high temperature) or chills and can range from mild to severe (Table 1).¹

Table 1: Symptoms of COVID-19/Coronavirus in comparison to the flu and cold (Source: HSE.ie).

Symptoms	Coronavirus – Symptoms range from mild to severe	Flu – Abrupt onset of symptoms	Cold – Gradual onset of symptoms
Fever or Chills	Common	Common	Rare
Cough	Common – usually dry	Common – usually dry	Mild
Fatigue	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Aches and Pains	Sometimes	Common	Common
Sore Throat	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Headaches	Sometimes	Common	Rare
Shortness of Breath	Sometimes	No	No
Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Sometimes	Common
Diarrhoea	Rare	Sometimes in children	No
Sneezing	No	No	Common

If Symptoms Develop/Testing for Coronavirus

Should any IHS staff or students develop symptoms, they will need to self-isolate and phone their doctor (GP) or HSELive on **1850 241 1850**. If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, you will need to behave as if you have the virus and isolate yourself to help stop the spread of this disease. **Self-isolation** means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people.²

People in your household will need to restrict their movements. **Restricted Movement** means staying at home and **not** going to work, using public transport, having visitors to your home, visiting others even if you usually care for them, keeping away from vulnerable people (older people, anyone with long-term medical conditions and pregnant women) and not going to the shops or pharmacy unless it's absolutely necessary – where possible, groceries should be ordered online or family/friends should drop them off. You can still go outside to exercise briefly by yourself, but only within 5 kilometres of your home, and keeping 2 metres distance from other people.³

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. The GP will assess you over the phone.

If your GP decides that you do not need to be tested, you will be asked to stay at home and self-isolate for 14 days. The people in your household will need to restrict their movements.

¹ <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms-causes.html> [Accessed April 2020].

² <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html> [Accessed May 2020].

³ <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/if-you-live-with-someone-who-has-coronavirus.html#restrict> [Accessed May 2020].

If your GP decides that you **need to be tested**, they will arrange a test for you. You will need to self-isolate while you wait for your test. The people in your household will need to restrict their movements.⁴

It is essential that we all follow the advice given by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and our local GPs/doctors. Your GP should be the first port of call if you have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Only stop self-isolation when both of these apply to you:

- You have had no fever for 5 days
- It has been 14 days since you first developed symptoms

IHS On Site Control Measures

IHS has instigated a number of control measures, critical to slow the spread of the disease and reduce the pressure on doctors, nurses, hospitals, test centres and the HSE (see Figure 1 below).

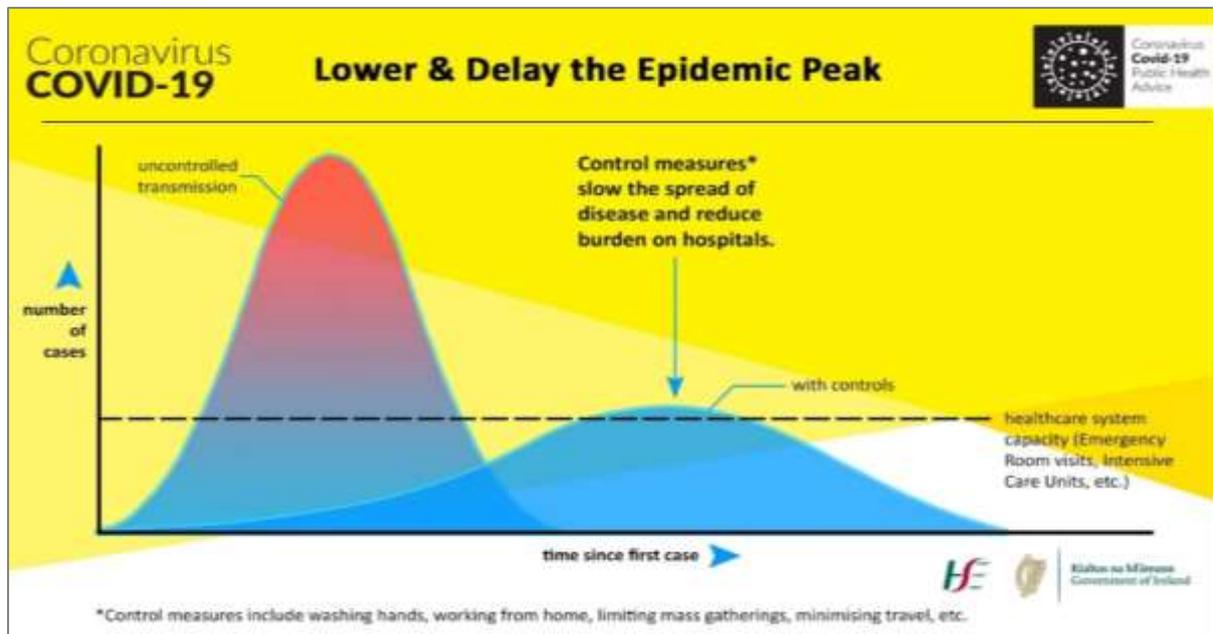


Figure 1: Effects of appropriate control measures on COVID-19 – ‘flatten the curve’

The control measures are as follows:

- Persons arriving to the island of Ireland should refer to national advice issued by the HSE (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/advice-for-people-returning-from-affected-areas.html>) and the Department of Foreign Affairs.⁵
- IHS will ensure no person with COVID-19 symptoms attends site. Persons displaying symptoms must self-isolate and not attend site for 14 days. Also, any person living with someone who is self-isolating or waiting a COVID-19 test must restrict their movements for 14 days. It should

⁴ <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing.html> [Accessed April 2020].

⁵ <https://dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/coronavirus/> [Accessed April 2020].

be noted that recent studies have also suggested that COVID-19 may also be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

- Staff and students will be instructed to restrict their movements if they do not have symptoms of coronavirus but: (1) live with someone who has symptoms but they themselves feel well, (2) are a close contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus or (3) returning to Ireland from another country. Staff will also have to stay at home and self-isolate: (1) if they have symptoms of coronavirus, (2) before they get tested for coronavirus, (3) while they wait for test results (4) if they have had a positive test result for coronavirus, (5) if they have any cold or flu like symptoms such as a sore throat, runny nose, blocked nose, cough or wheezing.⁶



Plate 1: Maintaining social distancing on site.

- **Social distancing**, or physical distancing, is a set of interventions or measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by maintaining a physical distance between people and reducing the number of times people come into close contact with each other. It involves keeping a minimum 2m (6ft) space between you and other people (e.g. see Plate 1 below). IHS staff and students will therefore not shake hands, will avoid crowding together (particularly in confined spaces) and will avoid making close contact with people. IHS will ensure workers maintain the recommended 2m social distancing insofar as possible while working, and when using toilets, canteens, drying rooms etc. The size of work parties will be reduced where possible to maintain social distancing. IHS also strongly encourages social distancing when travelling to and from work (public transport, cars etc.), and in daily life, in order to limit exposure.
- Staff and students will be instructed to practice **good hygiene** – wash their hands properly and often; cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or their sleeve when they cough and sneeze; put used tissues into a bin and wash their hands; clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

⁶ <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction.html#self-isolation> [Accessed April 2020].

- Transfer/sharing of **tools and equipment** between personnel will be carefully controlled and all tools and equipment will be disinfected on a regular basis. Site-specific task rotas will be developed and implemented involving designated tasks for staff members (e.g. mattocking, shovelling, emptying wheelbarrows etc.) to minimise transfer of tools/equipment. These tasks can be rotated once tools and equipment are disinfected.
- Handling of **finds and samples** will be kept to a minimum; and similar to measures for the site paper record a 'quarantine' system will be implemented prior to their transfer to the post-excavation facilities. In this instance the recommended period will be at least 3 days.⁷ Further specific control measures are outlined in the 'Finds and Samples' section below.
- IHS will implement regular temperature taking of staff should Public Health advice recommend it.
- Each site facility is equipped with anti-bacterial handwash and anti-bacterial spray; each employee and student will be advised to spray door handles before they touch them and to wash hands before they have their breaks.
- Each site facility contains posters detailing symptoms of the virus, how it is spread, HSE guidelines and correct handwashing procedures, as well as phone numbers of local doctors.
- Staff and student breaks will be staggered where necessary.
- IHS staff will ensure that all frequently touched objects and surfaces on site are regularly cleaned and disinfected.

Site Management

The IHS Site Management Team will oversee and instruct site staff and students with regards to the various control measures and ensure compliance. The Site Management Team must be flexible as new information frequently becomes available (often on a daily basis) and this may require changes in approaches to procedures, processes and PPE. The Site Management Team must ensure that the most up-to-date Health and Safety Documentation is available, that this documentation is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, and that it accurately assesses various work scenarios to ensure that all key requirements, such as staff distancing, hygiene and PPE controls are being implemented.

It is vital that each staff member and student knows how to work safely during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and understands the requirements/responsibilities of their task specific RAMS. The Site Management Team shall regularly coach and guide staff members and students during the workday to ensure that they are fully compliant with the requirements. IHS will ensure that a designated COVID-19 Compliance Officer ('C-19 Compliance Officer') is appointed for each program in line with the Government's recommendations and will communicate to all on-site staff members and students details of the appointed C-19 Compliance Officer(s) (see 'C-19 Compliance Officer' section below for further details).

⁷ *Ibid.*

Site Commencement

The following measures will be implemented prior to opening a site/commencing work:

- Each member of staff and students will be required to complete the CIF 'COVID-19 Online Induction' video prior to mobilisation/commencing on site, if they have not already done so. Details will be provided by IHS on how/where to access this prior to site reopening.
- Each member of staff and student must complete a **pre-return to work form** at least 3 days in advance of returning to work. This form should seek confirmation that the worker, to the best of their knowledge, has no symptoms of COVID-19 and also confirm that the worker is not self-isolating or awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.⁸
- A deep clean of each welfare unit and appropriate work-space organisation to accommodate specific on-site COVID-19 control measures outlined in this document (in particular those relating to site recording, finds, sampling etc.) will be carried out by each respective Site Director prior to the arrival of staff on site.

Hygiene Controls/Protecting Yourself and Others

Information about how to protect yourself and others can be found at the following link:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself.html>

Do

- Wash hands properly and often. Hands should be washed:
 - After coughing or sneezing.
 - Before and after eating.
 - Before and after preparing food.
 - If you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing).
 - Before and after being on public transport.
 - Before and after being in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd).
 - When you arrive and leave buildings, including your home or anyone else's home.
 - Before having a cigarette or vaping.
 - After toilet use.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze.
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Additionally, in certain situations, a face covering is advisable/required by law – further details with regards to this can be found in the next section 'Face Coverings'.

⁸ <https://dbe.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf> [Accessed May 2020].

Don't

- Do not touch your eyes, nose, mouth if your hands are not clean.
- Do not share objects that touch your mouth - for example bottles, cups.
- Do not wear disposable gloves in place of washing hands. The virus can get on gloves in the same way it gets on hands. Also, hands can become contaminated when gloves are taken off.

REMEMBER

Figure 2: Remember – Wash your hands often

Face Coverings

By law you have to wear a face covering when you use public transport. You should also wear a face covering:

- In shops, shopping centres and all retail spaces.
- When staying 2 metres apart from people is difficult, for example where there is an unavoidable need for more than one person to excavate a sensitive archaeological feature/find.
- In a healthcare setting – this includes hospitals, GP surgeries, care settings, nursing homes and dental practices.
- When visiting anyone who is more at risk from coronavirus – such as people aged 70 or over or people who are medically vulnerable.
- In an enclosed indoor space with other people.

Further information pertaining to face coverings, including how to make, how to correctly use, how to wash, and how to dispose of face coverings are available at the following link:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-masks-disposable-gloves.html>

Prevention of Cross Contamination

The potential for cross contamination is higher at site entry and exit points and where there are high levels of surface contact points such as in welfare areas, site walkways, stairs access etc.

Specific Cross Contamination Control Measures

- Work start times/finishing times will be staggered if necessary.
- Staff and student breaks will be staggered where feasible.
- All persons entering site will be directed to wash their hands and additional hand washing stations will be provided where possible.
- Touch points will be minimised with a “handsfree” approach where possible.
- Common contact surfaces in reception, office, access control and delivery areas will be regularly cleaned.
- The number of people in attendance at site inductions will be reduced and these will be convened outdoors wherever possible.
- As an extra precaution, enhanced cleaning procedures will be in place across all sites to prevent cross contamination, particularly in communal areas and at touch points including: taps and washing facilities, toilet flush and seats, door handles, handrails on staircases, machinery and equipment controls, food preparation and eating surfaces, communications equipment, keyboards, photocopiers and other office equipment.

Communal and Welfare Areas

Office Areas

- All non-essential site personnel will be encouraged to work from home where possible.
- Personnel working in site offices will be dispersed so there is always a distance of 2m.

OFFICE SPACE



Figure 3: Social distancing in the office (Source: CIF, cif.ie)

- All non-essential visitors will be restricted from entering/attending offices.
- Workstation surfaces will be kept clear and wiped with disinfectant regularly.
- Hand sanitizers will be made available at main entry and exit points.
- Main doors will be kept open where possible to reduce persons touching door handles etc and to provide ventilation.

- Cleaning regimes will be augmented including a wipe down of door handles, stair rails etc. at regular intervals throughout the day with disinfectant.

Toilet Facilities

- The number of people using toilet facilities at any one time will be restricted and social distancing of 2m will be maintained while using the toilet facility.
- Soap and hand washing pictorial guides will be in a form, manner and language understood by all and will be clearly visual.
- Cleaning regimes for the toilet facilities will be augmented, particularly with regard to door handles, locks, and the toilet flush handle.
- Suitable and sufficient rubbish bins will be provided for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

Canteen

- Staff members and students using site canteens will be advised where possible to bring a packed lunch and flask to help eliminate transmission points on microwaves and water pour points etc.
- Break times will always be staggered to reduce congestion and contact.
- Site personnel will be encouraged to wash their hands before eating.
- Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser will be available at the entrance and exit of any room where people eat and will be used by all personnel when entering and leaving the area.
- A social distancing seating arrangement will be implemented where workers sit at least 2 metres apart from each other whilst eating and avoid all physical contact with co-workers.
- Tables will be cleared when finished eating.
- Tables will be cleaned between each use and sitting based on a rota.
- All rubbish will be disposed of in a suitable bin.
- All areas used for eating will be thoroughly cleaned after each use, including chairs, door handles, vending machines and payment devices etc.
- Illustrations of 2 metre spacing will be provided to clearly demonstrate social distancing.

Drying Room

- Staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact at all times.
- Enhanced cleaning regimes of all drying room facilities throughout the day and at the end of each day.
- Based on the size of each drying room facility, it will be determined how many people can use it at any one time to maintain a distance of 2 metres.
- Suitable and sufficient rubbish bins will be provided in these areas with regular removal and disposal.

Tools, Equipment and Plant

- All tools and equipment will be properly sanitised to prevent cross contamination.

- Arrangements will be put in place for one individual to use the same tool, equipment and plant as much as possible. This can be reinforced through a system of colour coding of tools using electrical tape with a different colour for each individual.
- Surveying, photographic, and drone equipment etc. will be assigned to dedicated staff members and will not be used by any other employee.
- Cabs and touch points of site vehicles and plant (MEWPS, Excavators, Cranes, etc.) must be thoroughly cleaned and a cleaning regime by plant operatives should be maintained daily thereafter.
- A review will be undertaken as to whether the provision of stickers for tools, equipment and mobile plant is required as a reminder/to encourage appropriate disinfection.

Travel to and from site

The suggested arrangements are as follows:

- Where single occupancy is not possible individuals should sit as far apart as the vehicle allows (see Figure 4 below).

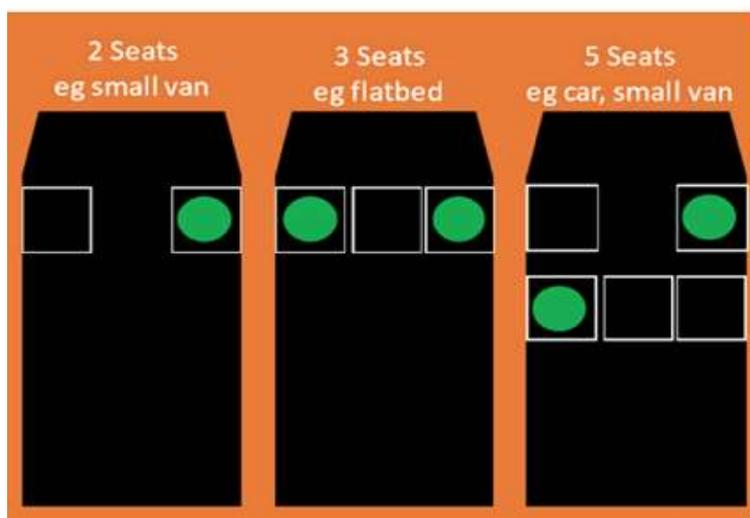


Figure 4: Maximum vehicle occupancy (Source: CIF, cif.ie)

- IHS will try to ensure the same crew members travel and work together day after day.
- Where a shared vehicle is used for traveling to site the driver should clean all common areas that are liable to be touched including the external door handles, keys and other internal furnishings – steering wheel, gearstick, handbrake, radio, steering column, elbow rests, seat position controls, door frame.
- Wiping/cleaning down of contact points should be done using antibacterial wipes or a wet cloth with soap application, or equivalent.
- Disposal of used wipes/cleaning materials should be in a designated bin/sealed bag and hands should then be washed for at least 20 seconds.
- Windows should be kept at least partially open.
- Personal items (PPE, clothes, lunch boxes etc.) should be kept separate.

- If availing of public transport, it is recommended to sit down to minimise contact with frequently touched surfaces, handles, roof straps, isolation bars etc.
- It is also recommended to carry hand sanitiser (at least 60% alcohol) and use it regularly throughout your journey.

Close working

Close working will be avoided/eliminated. Following a detailed assessment, in the event that close working in a given situation is deemed unavoidable CIF guidelines set out in their *Construction Sector C-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedures*⁹ will be strictly adhered to.

C-19 Compliance Officer

A COVID-19 Compliance Officer ('C-19 Compliance Officer') will be installed for archaeological sites of all sizes and for the Office/Post-ex facility in line with the Government's recommendations to monitor social distancing and hygiene. IHS Site Directors will undertake the role of C-19 Compliance Officer on their respective sites. Should the Site Director be off site a Supervisor will step in as C-19 Compliance Officer. The Senior Archaeologist will undertake the role of C-19 Compliance Officer for the IHS office and Post-excavation facility in Strokestown.

Role of the C-19 Compliance Officer

- The role of the C-19 Compliance Officer is to monitor day-to-day site activities to ensure social distancing and hygiene rules are being maintained to protect health and reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- These key personnel should be clearly identifiable on-site with a distinguishable high viz vest with 'C-19 Compliance Officer' printed on it.
- The person undertaking the role must receive training in what the role will entail.
- The C-19 Compliance Officer must not put themselves at risk while carrying out their duties.
- The C-19 Compliance Officer must have a structure or framework to follow within the organisation to be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19. This structure must be regularly audited and managed to ensure it works and protects all staff members on-site. Failure to take it seriously could result in an outbreak of COVID-19 on-site.



Responsibilities of the C-19 Compliance Officer

- 1) Proactive day-to-day activities (see below for further details).

⁹ <https://cif.ie/2020/04/15/new-operating-procedures/> [Accessed April 2020].

2) Reactive emergency duties (see below for further details).

Proactive day to day duties of the C-19 Compliance Officer

- Being a constant on-site presence to monitor compliance with social distancing of 2 metres between all personnel on-site (with the exception of planned close working). In instances where there is non-conformance with social distancing the C-19 Compliance Officer is to intervene.
- Maintain a log of regular monitoring of COVID-19 controls on site.
- Ensure there is sufficient up-to-date signage erected on-site to educate all personnel about the COVID-19 controls on site.
- At all times promote and coach good hygiene practises to all personnel on-site.
- Ensure regular cleaning of welfare facilities, handrails, door handles, etc. is undertaken.
- Ensure hand wash liquid/soap and hand sanitisers are replenished as required.
- Check hot water and hand drying facilities are available on-site.
- Make representations to site management with regards any COVID-19 concerns raised by site personnel to the C-19 Compliance Officer.
- Ensure site personnel are adhering to staggered break time schedules and limiting numbers in canteens, drying rooms and smoking areas cognisant of the 2-metre social distancing guideline.
- Ensure site personnel leaving site at designated breaks remove their site PPE and continue to adhere to social distancing guidelines.
- Report any areas of non-compliance to site management and ensure these are addressed.
- Consider provision of additional controls for exceptional circumstances.
- Keep up to date on HSE guidelines.

Reactive C-19 Compliance Officer duties

- Informing site management if there is a confirmed case or if they have been made aware of an individual with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Isolating an individual with symptoms in an isolation room/segregated area away from other personnel.
- Following site protocol for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms (i.e. send home, inform them to contact their GP).
- Assisting in contact tracing should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Meetings

All meetings, where possible, are to be conducted virtually using on-line systems for remote meetings unless it is absolutely necessary to meet face-to-face. In these circumstances, the numbers attending will be kept as small as possible ensuring the mandatory 2m distance apart. The meeting duration will also be kept to a minimum. Specific physical meeting control measures include:

- Only 'absolutely necessary' meeting participants should attend.
- Rooms should be well ventilated/windows open to allow fresh air circulation.
- Consideration to be given to hold meetings in open areas where possible
- Attendees should be 2m apart from each other.

First Aid Responder Guidelines

IHS currently has 1 First Aid Responder (Alan Danaher) covering the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project.

First Aid responders should make themselves familiar with the symptoms of COVID-19 (Table 1) and only one First Aid Responder should attend any incident.

While administering first aid treatment, there is a risk of spreading infection or transfer of the virus through contact with mucous membranes (mouth, nose and eyes) most likely through contaminated hands (including contaminated gloved hands).

As per the CIF guidelines,¹⁰ in order to reduce this risk, the First Aid Responder should avoid close contact where possible, minimise hand contamination, avoid touching their face and wash hands regularly.

Appropriate PPE will be provided to all First Aid Responders including:

- Disposable nitrile gloves
- FFP3 or FFP2 face masks
- Disposable plastic aprons
- Enclosed eye protection

It is essential that hand washing with soap or an alcohol-based hand gel is undertaken before and after providing any first aid treatment, including before putting on and after taking off PPE.

COVID-19 Suspect/Confirmed Case

Suspected COVID-19 Case at Work

If an employee or student becomes unwell and believes they have been exposed to COVID-19 at work the C-19 Compliance Officer shall be informed so they can assist with the case. Further steps to be taken are:

- If someone becomes unwell in the workplace with symptoms such as cough, fever, difficulty breathing, the unwell person should be removed to an area or room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, such as a staff office/canteen area of the welfare unit. If it is

¹⁰ <https://cif.ie/coronavirus/> [Accessed April 2020]

possible to open a window, do so for ventilation. Request that the individual wears a face mask to prevent contamination of the area and close by personnel.

- The individual who is unwell should call their doctor and should outline their current symptoms. Whilst they wait advice, ideally, they should be in isolation or as a minimum remain at least 2 metres from one other people. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket then throw the tissue in the bin. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. If they need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if available.
- Once the unwell individual has left the waiting area, this area should be deep cleaned prior to any other employee entering.
- Closure of the workplace is not recommended unless otherwise instructed by the HSE.
- The management team of the office or workplace will be contacted by the HSE to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.
- A risk assessment of each setting will be undertaken by the HSE with the lead responsible person. Advice on the management of staff and members of the public will be based on this assessment. The HSE will also be in contact with the individual directly to advise on isolation and identifying other contacts and will be in touch with any contacts of the individual to provide them with appropriate advice.

Confirmed COVID-19 Case/Cases in the Workplace

Response to an isolated case of COVID-19 on a site

When a case of COVID-19 is identified, the case (employee or student) will be contacted by the Public Health Contact Tracing team who will:

- Inform the case of their diagnosis.
- Identify and collect contact details of all close contacts from the case, including community contacts and workplace contacts.
- Collect details of any congregate settings identified which may be contacts; this would include any sites a worker may have worked on during the time period that they would be considered infectious. The case will be asked to provide contact details for their line manager.

The contact tracing team will then contact all close contacts and organise testing for them according to guidelines, and advise them to restrict their movements for 14 days from the date of last contact with the case. This will include not attending the workplace during this 14 day period, regardless of the result of their test.

In the case of a workplace, the manager will receive a call from Public Health, who will discuss workplace practices, undertake a risk assessment and provide advice.

What to do if an employee informs you that they have tested positive for COVID-19

If a manager is informed by their employee or student that they have tested positive for COVID-19, the line manager should proceed as follows:

- Reassure workers and students that all close contacts will be contacted by Public Health and appropriate follow up arranged.
- If any workers or students at the site are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 they should be advised to self-isolate and to contact their GP to arrange testing, however testing of asymptomatic co-workers is not required unless they have been identified as close contacts by Public Health.
- It is not necessary to close a site or part of a site in response to an isolated case of COVID-19, unless it is not possible to continue operating – for example in a situation where an entire team have been deemed to be close contacts and therefore will need to restrict their movements, thus necessitating closure due to insufficient staffing levels.
- The manager of the case should expect to receive a call from the Public Health contact tracing team if their workplace is deemed to have been exposed to the case during their infectious period.

What to do if there are multiple confirmed cases of COVID-19 amongst employees

If a manager is informed of multiple confirmed cases of COVID-19 on their site and has concerns that there may be a cluster of cases linked to the site:

- The manager should contact Occupational Health or their local Public Health Department in a situation where multiple laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 occur on a site.

Note: Close contact is currently defined by the HSE as spending more than 15 minutes face-to-face contact within 2 metres of an infected person or living in the same house or shared accommodation as an infected person.

Return to Work Process

In the event of a staff member or student either being a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or a known “close contact” with a confirmed or suspected case, the below protocol must be followed to ensure they are fit to return to work. It is only when an individual is symptom-free that they will be deemed fit to return to work. The key criteria are:

- 14 days since their last “close contact” with a confirmed/suspected case and have not developed symptoms in that time, or
- 14 days since the onset of their symptoms and 5 days since their last fever (high temperature), or
- They have been advised by a GP / healthcare provider to return to work.

The employee’s or student’s manager will confirm the relevant criteria above with the individual and write down their responses. An individual must only return to work having coordinated with their manager.

Additional Reading

HSE:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/>

Travel Advice:

www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/coronavirus

WHO:

www.who.int

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control:

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en>

Health and Safety Authority:

www.hsa.ie/eng/news_events_media/news/news_and_articles/coronavirus.html

Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf>