

British Occupational Hygiene Society

Guidance for Members

**CONDUCTING OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE SURVEYS DURING THE
EXTENDED COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

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Document Status

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1.1	18/6/20	First issue

1 INTRODUCTION

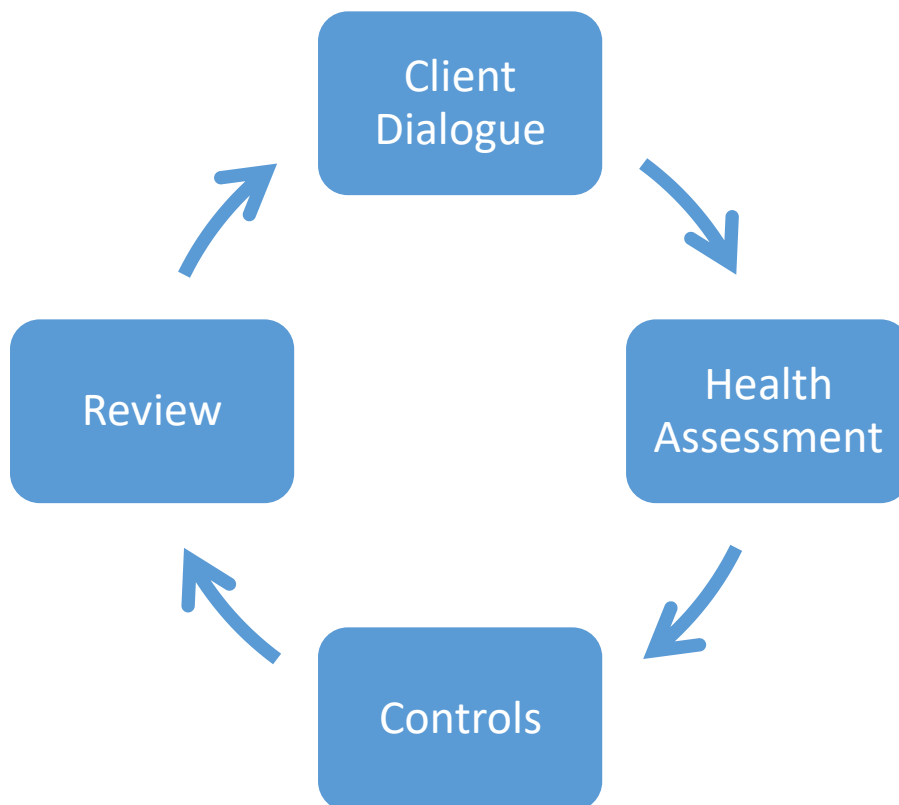
This document has been produced by the BOHS Working Group on Return to Work Issues in the Context of the COVID-19 epidemic. The aim of the document is to provide guidance for members on how to undertake occupational hygiene surveys during the extended COVID-19 outbreak.

The Health and Safety Executive is maintaining its regulatory functions during the outbreak. Obligations on employers and duty holders to manage and control workplace risks have not gone away, occupational hygiene remains essential (see <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/hse-regulatory-activity-during-coronavirus.htm>). In fact, access to occupational hygiene advice is more important than ever to address the risk and challenges posed by the pandemic.

The guidance has been produced by a group of volunteers BOHS members with donations of information from organizations that they have associations with. The speed of publication does not allow for full acknowledgement of named individuals and organizations.

2 A RISK BASED APPROACH

The society advocates a risk-based approach along the lines of the flow diagram given in the diagram below.



Client Dialogue	Assess the local controls	<p>Prior to conducting a site survey, you should assess the local controls which have been introduced to limit COVID-19 transmission. This would normally be achieved by having a teleconference with the site owner.</p> <p>Whilst ensuring compliance with the local controls you should also be assessing whether they are suitable.</p> <p>Sample questions for this assessment are given in Appendix I.</p>
	Decide on your controls	<p>Based on the information you receive you will need to assess how the work will be carried out and which control measures you need to employ. A list of relevant controls is given in Appendix II.</p>
	Inform site of your controls	<p>You should inform the site of the control measures that you intend to use. We should be conscious that the workers have varying and changeable attitudes towards the threat of Covid-19. Some workers may be overly concerned about the risk whilst others may have allowed their social distancing controls to slip.</p>
Health Assessment	Assess the health of hygienist	<p>On the day of a site visit the hygienist undertaking the work should self-assess their own health.</p> <p>A suggested self-assessment form is given in Appendix III.</p>
Controls	Site visit with controls	<p>You should ensure that you carry out the site visit in line with the control measures that you have identified. However, there will need to be an element of dynamic risk assessment as circumstances change during the visit.</p>
Review	Review	<p>Occupational Hygiene with social distancing is new to everyone. You should reflect after each site survey and decide whether the controls employed were effective and how they could be improved.</p>

3 RISK ASSESSMENT AND METHOD STATEMENT

It is expected that a written COVID-19 specific risk assessment should be compiled which covers the risks from infection and the control measures to be employed. Further guidance on assessing the risks can be found at: <http://www.bohs.org/coronavirus-hub>

Consultancy clients may also require the provision of a method statement. Whether or not this is required by their client, the society advocates that members should prepare one. A method statement sets out the procedures required to carry out work safely and the order in which they should be undertaken. COVID-19 means that we will be undertaking familiar work in an unfamiliar way. The use of a method statement to check our actions against can help us comply with the new procedures we introduce.

Face Coverings

Face coverings are not considered to be personal protective equipment and therefore should not be included in your health and safety risk assessment, as they will not protect the wearer from the risk of COVID-19. There is some evidence that face coverings will offer marginal benefit to others in close proximity to the wearer by reducing the droplets expelled from the wearer which may be deposited on nearby surfaces. If the client has local site rules requiring the need to wear a face covering whilst on site, then it would be reassuring to workers if you complied. It would be beneficial for you to question the site rule on face coverings to ensure that they are not being used as a substitute for good social distancing measures. Ensure that the face covering you wear is clean and that you follow the hand washing guidance before putting it on.

2 Meter Distancing

Whilst the UK government has introduced the concept of "1m+" distancing, 2m distancing still represents good practice. At a distance of 2m individuals cannot come into physical contact and the risk from inhalation of droplets is half of that at 1m. In the vast majority of cases 2m distancing can be applied for occupational hygiene surveys and as such is part of the process which reduces the risk to as Low As Reasonably Practicable.

4 APPENDICES

Appendix I – Pre-visit visit assessment.

Appendix II – Examples of controls used to prevent virus transmission

Appendix III – Example of a pre-visit health assessment questionnaire

Appendix I – Example Pre-visit Assessment Questions.

- What is the preferred site access route?
- Are there specific arrangements for vehicle access and parking?
- Can work be completed with 2m distancing in place?
- What are the arrangements for entering the site?
- Are suitable handwashing and toilet facilities available?
- Are there any no-go areas?
- Is there a suitable temporary working area?
- Do other arrangements need to be made for activities which would previously have been conducted on site, e.g. post survey meeting by video-conference?

Appendix II – Examples of controls used to prevent virus transmission

Activity	Control Measure
Arriving at site	Comply with local rules regarding COVID-19. You should already be aware of most of them through your pre-visit assessment. However, there will need to be an element dynamic risk assessment.
Site survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimise the equipment you take on site to items you can carry in your pockets (e.g. pen, notebook and camera). ▪ Do not put equipment down on surfaces – put it back in your pocket. ▪ Stand up as much as possible to avoid using chairs and tables (e.g. do your introductions standing up). ▪ Avoid doing paperwork on site. Return to your vehicle to complete paperwork unless you have been allocated an unoccupied well-ventilated room. Ensure that you have washed your hands before returning to your car. Do not return to your car before removing any contaminated workwear or PPE. ▪ Avoid looking at paperwork and where possible request electronic or scanned copies. ▪ Carry some multipurpose cleaning wipes to use where you need to.
Bringing and removing equipment to and from site	Equipment should be cleaned before and after use with detergent and/or disinfectant.
Donning and Doffing personal sampling equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct the activity at a distance of >2m in an area which allows the safe transfer of equipment. E.g. Outside or in a large meeting room. • Visually demonstrate how to fit the sampling equipment to workers so that they can put it on themselves. • Reassure workers of the cleanliness of the equipment and that you have washed your hands. • Use visual aids for workers on how to wear personal sampling equipment. The

	<p>use of laminated plastic cards which can be cleaned and reused is preferable to paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow staff to fit equipment themselves under supervision. • Do not put sampling equipment on the worker yourself, instruct them on how to do it for themselves.
Direct Reading Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where measurement near breathing zone is required ?? • From a distance of >2metres; Inform the workers at the beginning of the survey what you need to do; • Instruct them to step away from their work space for a moment whilst you assemble the equipment to enable you to take a direct reading instrument from a safe distance, when they perform their task. • Use a tripod or stand to mount the instrument, set it recording, put it in place and then step away to a safe distance to observe the task.
Measurement technique	<p>Select techniques that facilitate distancing and minimal contact with staff, e.g. diffusive badges minimise complications (such as regular flow rate checks) and time required to fit personal sampling equipment.</p>
Temporary work area	<p>Desk or table surfaces used as temporary work areas should be cleaned before and after use with detergent (household cleaner and paper towelling) or disinfectant wipes.</p> <p>Consider locating your temporary working area outside or within the largest and least occupied well ventilated indoor space.</p> <p>If you use your vehicle as a temporary working area take precautions to avoid cross contamination.</p>
Contingency	<p>Risk assessments should anticipate and describe measures an event of unexpectedly having to come within a 2m distance of a worker to progress the survey.</p>

Appendix III – Example of a pre-visit health assessment questionnaire

Name:			
Do you have a fever?	Yes	No	
Do you have a new continuous cough?	Yes	No	
Do you have a loss or change to your smell or taste?	Yes	No	
Have you come into close contact with a known or suspected case of coronavirus in the last 14 days?	Yes	No	
If answer to any of the above is 'Yes' then do not conduct survey work and seek further medical advice.			
Signature:			
Date:			