

COVID-19

STEARN COVID 19 RISK ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Our key objective is to keep our staff, customers, suppliers and everybody else with whom we interact safe from COVID 19. We will do this whilst maintaining existing standards of health and safety in everything we do and complying fully with Government guidance.

What have we done?

We have appointed at least one COVID 19 champion at each site whose responsibilities include promoting good practice and dealing with staff concerns.

Each of our Sites has completed a detailed risk assessment and checklist covering all activities and these are reviewed at least once a week by the managers and COVID 19 champions.

All of our sites meet the requirements of the Government COVID 19 Secure guidelines and display the COVID- 9 Secure poster with pride.

- We have carried out COVID 19 risk assessments and shared the results with our staff and others who need to know.
- We have cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with the guidance.
- We have taken all reasonable steps to help people work from home.
- We have taken all reasonable steps to maintain a 2M safe distance in all our workplaces.
- In the small number of instances where people cannot be 2M apart, we have done everything possible to manage the transmission risk and this has been documented.

Detail.

Consultation, advice and communication.

Our staff continue to be widely involved in the planning and implementation of our COVID 19 strategy. This has been achieved through our regular consultation and dedicated consultations specifically in relation to the pandemic.

We have the benefit of advice from our in-house health and safety professional and internal audit team. Our approach to COVID 19 is overseen by the Operations Development Director with the direct involvement of the CEO and other directors.

We are planning real-time audits and workplace inspections to make sure high standards are being maintained. Once it is safe to do so we will introduce face-to-face visits and other methods to provide reassurance.

All staff are given a COVID 19 induction and are kept apprised with a range of best practice guides, regular updates at least weekly, and other less formal methods such as toolbox talks and online meetings. These provisions apply equally to staff returning to the workplace after an absence.

Whistleblowing.

All staff are made aware of our whistleblowing policy and posters are prominently displayed at all locations. The whistleblowing line can be anonymous and all calls are handled at director level and is also available and open to third party visitors and customers.

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Protecting sick and vulnerable people.

Robust policies are applied to make sure staff do not travel to work if they have symptoms and visitors are reminded on arrival via posters. These policies also cover staff falling sick whilst at work.

Vulnerable people are protected and shielded in line with Government guidance.

Getting to work.

Staff have been made aware of the recent Government guidance on travelling safely and we make every effort to accommodate individuals' requirements. We have reviewed car parking arrangements to ensure safe distancing and where there is demand we have facilitated bike storage and additional parking spaces.

Hygiene.

We have significantly increased our cleaning regimes covering all areas, vehicles, and equipment. Staff are actively required and encouraged to maintain high standards of hygiene.

- Cleaning materials are provided at key locations including entry and exit points and frequent touch points.
- Frequent touch points and equipment are regularly cleaned as often as necessary. This is usually three times per shift and more often if equipment is shared.
- Windows and internal doors are left open where possible although we are careful not to compromise fire safety and fire doors are kept shut or held open by door retainers.
- Disposable gloves are provided for some activities.

Social distancing.

All sites demonstrate and give confidence to the workforce that social distancing is consistently achieved without compromising other H&S requirements.

Start and finish times have been staggered at sites where this is necessary to avoid congestion at busy times.

In the event that staff numbers increase, further measures such as staff working alternate days will be considered.

We have introduced one-way systems in offices, warehouses, yards and other areas.

Workstations and work procedures have been adjusted to reduce interaction and protect people.

There are a small number of activities where the 2M requirement cannot be achieved. Such activities have been stopped unless they are essential for business or provide an essential service such as installing appliances at care homes or sheltered accommodation.

Any such activities that have been allowed to continue fully meet published guidelines and all necessary precautions have been taken.

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Warehouses and yards.

Wherever possible, there is no sharing of work equipment such as fork lift trucks, barrows and tools. Where such sharing cannot be avoided, enhanced cleaning regimes are in place and the number of users is restricted to the absolute minimum.

We also have clear procedures for goods-inwards to eliminate contact with incoming delivery drivers.

Trade counters /shop areas/ collection points.

Customers are encouraged to place orders via our website and use the delivery option rather than collect the goods in person.

Our procedures are based not only on Government standards but on industry best practice including guidance issued by the Builders Merchant Federation and The Electrical Distributors Association.

Most of our trade counters are temporarily closed and replaced with outside collection points. This coupled with our policy that customers wait in their vehicles until their order is ready has significantly reduced contact with customers.

Where the trade counters remain open, customer access is strictly controlled and Plexiglass barriers are used where we have identified the potential for social distancing measures to be breached.

Enhanced cleaning regimes are in place.

Outgoing deliveries.

Revised procedures are in place to make sure our delivery drivers do not come into contact with other people during deliveries. For example we agree procedures in advance with all our customers, do not require physical signatures, never share equipment, and have introduced enhanced cleaning regimes for all vehicles.

Wherever possible, deliveries are made by the delivery driver working alone. Delivery procedures have been adjusted to minimise the requirement for 2-person deliveries. Sometimes however this is not possible for example due to the nature of the load and to protect staff from other hazards such as manual handling.

2-person deliveries are only permitted if they are essential for business or provide an essential service. Any such activities fully meet Government requirements and all necessary precautions have been taken.

These precautions include:

- Where two installers are required at a building site, they will if possible travel to site in separate vehicles.
- If two people must travel together, the passenger faces away from the driver and they sit as far as possible away from each other. More than two people in a vehicles is not permitted.
- Physically demanding work such as manually handling products is kept to a minimum and customers are required to use mechanical handling equipment if this is feasible.
- Staff are not cross-deployed and the 2-person teams continue to work together to avoid contamination. This is known as cohorting..

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Installation work on building sites and work at customers' homes.

All such work is subject to the same standards outlined in the preceding sections with the added requirement that this work must meet published industry standards such as the Construction Leadership Council's Site Operating Procedures.

- Wherever possible, installation work on site will be done by staff working alone.
- Arrangements are in place to make sure there isn't more than one person in each plot unless absolutely necessary and even then for only a short duration.
- Where 2-people must work together on site, contact will be kept to a minimum - usually less than fifteen minutes. Fitted face masks and gloves are worn.
- Precautions for installation at customers' homes includes a requirement for the occupiers to declare if they are suffering symptoms or are at-risk, cleaning and sanitising the work areas before and after the installation, and the occupiers must stay in a separate room throughout the process.

We also make sure that our staff and subcontractors follow the requirements of the customers and site operators.

Existing hazards.

All existing risk assessments and work procedures are regularly reviewed to make sure staff are not at increased risk due to COVID 19 related changes to procedures or staffing changes.

This includes the provision of first aiders, fire marshals, and qualified operatives such as fork truck operators, and gas and electric fitters.

Staff temporarily working from home.

All staff that can work from home are working from home and are provided where necessary with the appropriate IT support. We plan to gradually increase staff numbers in the warehouses and offices in the coming months when we are sure this is safe and will introduce additional safeguards as required.

Staff working from home have been given written guidance on working safely and comfortably from home and managers regularly keep in touch through a range of media.

We are also aware of the potential impact on people's mental and physical wellbeing and follow the recently published Government guidance which has been shared with staff.

Contractors and others at our sites.

All non-essential work has been postponed and visitors are only allowed on site for essential purposes.

If it is necessary for a contractor or other person to visit our site, they are required to apply the same high standards as our own staff..

- Contractors are not allowed on site unless their own risk assessments and work practices demonstrate how they will work safely and in line with Government guidance.
- Social distancing and hygiene are maintained throughout the time any third party is on our site.
- Staff have been briefed on how to deal with contractors and other visitors, including action to take if they behave irresponsibly or contrary to their method statements.