



GUIDANCE Note

COVID-19 and Engineering Services: guidance (GN 1) revised

Title	COVID-19: use of PPE/RPE in higher risk environments
Purpose	Template on use of PPE and RPE when working in environments with elevated risk of coronavirus (Covid-19) spread

1. Introduction: work in specific environments

This guidance note relates to the use of PPE for work in environments where there is an *elevated risk* of spread of COVID-19.

For typical construction and maintenance activity, government guidance and the CLC SOPv4 do not support using RPE as a protective measure against viral spread. However, some types of activity may present *elevated risk* of spread of COVID-19, such as work in the vicinity or proximity of those:

- **who are shielding;**
- **with symptoms; or**
- **where confirmed COVID-19 cases may be present.**

In these situations*, use of PPE (which may include RPE) – based on risk assessment and in addition to general, effective mitigating actions such as social distancing and thorough hygiene and cleaning measures - should be considered in relation to mitigating the risk of viral spread.

*Examples may include NHS premises, care home or some emergency work in domestic settings.



2. Planning and Risk Assessment

- Work in the situations outlined above must be approved by the Operations Director / Project / Contract Manager and Principal Contractor / Client
- Decide on the mitigating and protective measures, based on **risk assessment**
- Consult with employees on planned mitigating and protective measures
- Operatives to be fully briefed on viral symptoms and on monitoring their own health, with daily discussion / support from Supervisors / Line managers
- Specify and maximise social distancing (or see s.9 below), hand washing /hygiene and surface cleaning protocols.

3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Based on a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, general PPE may include:

- Construction environments - Hard hat (e.g. BS EN 397)
- Facilities and Infrastructure Services and Off-Site Manufacture - Bump Cap (BS EN 812) - some environments, if supported by risk assessment, may upgrade to a hard hat (e.g. BS EN 397)
- Hand Protection – Abrasion/Blade, Cut/Tear/Puncture and TDM cut 4X44E to BS EN388
- Prescription safety spectacles or light (low impact hazard) eye protection – BS EN 166, Optical Class 1, mechanical strength - F, resistance to fogging – N, resistance to surface damage – K, or equivalent
- Full face shields (if selected, low impact hazard eye protection may be risk-assessed out).
- Hi-Visibility Clothing, BS EN 471 Class 2
- Foot Protection – Steel toe footwear, BS EN-345 Type-S3
- Microgard Paper overalls, BS EN ISO 13982-1 Type 5 Airborne particulates

RPE

- FFP3 face masks or equivalent, or higher protection factor RPE (e.g. air-fed respirators)

If FFP3 masks are not available, FFP2 face masks may be used instead, provided:

- the FFP2 protects against any other respiratory hazards identified by risk assessment; and
- a face fit test for any *make or model* of face mask new to the wearer has been carried out.

Note: valved face masks may allow a viral *exhalation* risk. This may be mitigated by e.g. use of a full-face shield (visor). A visor does not protect against inhalation hazard, but it may protect co-workers from wearer exhalation (noting individuals may contract COVID-19 but show no initial symptoms).

4. Site requirements to wear RPE

Any other applicable policy or site requirement to wear RPE with a view to controlling the risk from coronavirus should be dealt with in discussion with the site owner and/or main contractor.

5. PPE: Operational Control

Re-usable PPE / RPE should be avoided where possible. If this is not possible it must be thoroughly cleaned as per manufacturer's guidance after use, and never shared between personnel.

Single use PPE / RPE to be disposed of safely, and never re-used.

Employees must NOT commence work without the correct PPE. Personnel must raise any lack of, or defective, PPE to their supervisor before any work is undertaken.

Employees are required to take good care of all PPE issued to them, and not modify the equipment or deface it in any way. If equipment is damaged, lost or stolen then personnel must report this immediately to supervision or management to ensure that replacement PPE can be provided.

The employer is required to ensure that if any sub-standard equipment is identified, that it is removed from use and properly disposed of. The employee may not enter or return to the work site until issued with the correct PPE.

Employees to be briefed regularly that wearing RPE must not lead to behaviour that undermines social distancing measures and thorough hygiene practice – the two most effective control measures against viral spread. Note in particular:

- Protection afforded by RPE can deteriorate
- RPE can become contaminated
- Face masks alone do not protect the eyes
- 'Doffing' RPE, and (single use) waste disposal must be done according to established good practice, to reduce the risk of viral contamination and spread.

6. Dealing with waste PPE

A person should be designated to ensure compliance with the PHE guidelines on the disposal of any waste PPE/RPE (along with any disposable cloths and wipes).

1. PPE waste to be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied off when full.
2. The plastic rubbish bag to be:
 - placed in a second bin bag and tied; and
 - put in a suitable and secure place and marked for safe storage.

Waste should be stored safely for *at least* 72 hours, after which it can be disposed of as general waste (or if the local presence of COVID-19 is confirmed, it must be suitably disposed of as *clinical waste*).

7. Awareness, training and Competence

All personnel to be:

- briefed on the requirements in this guidance note, and a record of the briefing kept on site.
- trained in the correct use and disposal of selected RPE.

8. Performance Monitoring

Managers and supervisors to ensure that PPE is worn in the appropriate manner and for the correct application.

Provision and use of PPE to be monitored, e.g. by a nominated supervisor or manager, and during site visits/inspections.

9. Close proximity working

Government guidance states “where it is not possible to follow the (2 metre) social distancing guidelines in full in relation for a particular activity, you should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to continue to operate and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission”. Mitigating measures may *include* RPE, noting RPE is the last resort. Please see ECA/BESA **GN2** for further guidance on ‘Working in close proximity’.

10. Further guidance

- www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#construction
- **SOP v4:** www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Site-Operating-Procedures-Version-4.pdf
- BSIF Fit2Fit Accredited face fit testers: www.fit2fit.org/

Important note:

This guidance (GN 1) has been drawn up by the BESA and ECA to help contractors working in the engineering services sector to meet the requirements of work where there is elevated risk of viral spread .

GN1 provides guidance only – it must be adapted as necessary to fit the prevailing site and other circumstances and based on a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. The BESA and ECA provide further supporting information for respective Members on conducting suitable and sufficient risk assessments.

We would like to acknowledge input from NG Bailey, along with health and safety and other practitioner input from other ECA and BESA Members.

Comments on this guidance are welcome, and should be directed to either:

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