

Safely Re-opening Your Retail Business

After months of lockdown many retailers will soon be able to re-open but the process requires careful planning. There is detailed guidance by the government, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches#shops-5-1>

Our checklist is here to assist you with your planning and provide some useful pointers:

General Risk Management	Check
Review all work activities to see if they are safe or how they can be made safe. A risk assessment template is a useful tool for this: if you cannot carry out an activity safely it should not be undertaken at all	
Consult with employees regarding the risk assessment, share the details and train them in the revised working procedures	
Make sure employees understand social distancing rules, hygiene and why it is relevant	
Make sure customers / the public clearly understand the rules by using signage, floor markings, announcements, etc. and reassure them with explanations of the safety steps you are taking	
Have a plan in place to deal with employees and members of the public who do not comply with your rules	
It is good practice to have your assessment, policies and procedures recorded in writing	
Keep up to date with the changing guidelines and government announcements	
Employees	Check
Consult with employees to see who is able to return to work, considering things like transport, childcare, health issues, disability, etc	
Consider staggered arrival times for staff, how they are travelling and how they will enter the premises	
Ensure suitable washing and sanitising facilities are available on arrival and at regular intervals during the day	
If required, provide suitable and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks, gloves and screens	
Review staff activities and locations to reduce close and face-to-face working. Allocate tasks to minimise touching of the same objects	
Be aware of employee anxiety over return to work: Talk through anxieties and signpost to support services	
Stagger break times and put measures in place to avoid social distancing and hygiene issues in common areas such as toilets and kitchens	
What rules will you have regarding eating and drinking?	
Ensure employees are aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and understand what to do if they or someone they are in contact with experiences them	
Cleaning	Check
Will cleaning be done by employees or external contractors?	
Ensure adequate and appropriate cleaning materials and protective equipment are available	
Put a plan in place for regular cleaning of surfaces, paying particular attention to frequently touched items: door handles, phones, card machines, shopping baskets, toilets, etc	
Ensure waste is disposed of safely	
If stock items are touched or returned, do they need to be cleaned or put into temporary quarantine?	

Premises management before you re-open	Check
If water systems have been drained, they should be gradually refilled, checking for leaks. Before you re-open you should run hot and cold water systems for about 15 minutes to clear any water that may have been standing for many weeks	
Check the premises for damage and maintenance issues	
Test the fire & security systems and emergency lighting. Ensure that keyholder details are correct and held by your alarm monitoring centre	
Fire suppression and sprinkler systems should be tested in line with installer's recommendations	
Some of your equipment may have gone past its inspection date – lifts, fire extinguishers, portable appliances, etc	
Ducting and extraction systems should be cleaned in line with recommended maintenance procedures	
Where building services, such as air conditioning and boilers, have been shut down they should be reinstated by qualified individuals following OEM procedures	
Check that your suppliers are operational and able to fulfil your requirements	
If practical, consider using a separate entrance and exit to your premises and introducing a one-way system within the building	
Think about how First Aid procedures might be impacted and review fire and emergency procedures	
Liaise with neighbouring businesses regarding topics of common interest such as queuing, parking, waste removal, etc.	
Premises management when you open	Check
Consider eliminating the use of cash	
How many staff and customers will be permitted in the premises and how will they be spaced?	
Will customers only be permitted in alone?	
How will rules and directions be communicated to customers?	
Will customers be able to handle stock, try it on, use fitting rooms? How will this be controlled & cleaned?	
How much assistance can employees provide customers?	
Consider your returns procedures: how will these be safely handled?	
How much stock do you need on the shop floor?	
Try to stagger deliveries and collections to avoid issues around social distancing	
Do you need to provide cleaning, sanitising and PPE facilities for visitors?	
How will you control access to the premises, and do you have a queuing or appointment system?	

More comprehensive and regularly updated information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> as well as information specific to health and safety at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>

You should also remember that various existing regulations, such as the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992, remain in force so employee and public safety must remain a priority.

For advice or assistance on risk management or your insurance please contact our team on 01905 21681 or [email us](#).