

Choosing Hand Sanitiser for the Workplace

Face masks and hand sanitiser have become symbols of the coronavirus pandemic and now they are playing their part in the safe reopening of workplaces as the lockdown eases.

As businesses assess the risks involved in returning to the workplace and seek to identify precautions that can be taken to minimise those risks for their employees, customers and others attending the workplace, many are sourcing hand sanitiser and surface disinfectants to be used within the workplace. Further, many are considering the use of face masks in the workplace.

Sourcing hand sanitiser and surface disinfectants

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regulate these biocidal products and has issued guidance for employers to consider to ensure the products used within the workplace are safe. The HSE recommend that a good place to start to find out which hand sanitiser and surface disinfectant products are suitable for everyone's needs during the coronavirus outbreak is their database of authorised products.

The database provides information about hand sanitiser and surface disinfectants that have been authorised under the Biocidal Products Regulation.

Product manufacturers are responsible for ensuring that their products are suitably efficient, including meeting any necessary testing standards. The HSE recommended that businesses discuss their requirements with product manufacturers to determine if a particular product meets their needs.

Product manufacturers are also responsible for providing information and instructions for the user on the product label. Employers must always make sure that they read and understand the label before using a product and follow the label instructions carefully to ensure that they are using the product safely and effectively.

Face Masks

Wearing a face covering is now compulsory on public transport however it remains optional in most circumstances and is generally not required in workplaces. Face coverings are

not an effective way to manage the risks from coronavirus and should not be relied upon as a businesses' sole risk management measure.

Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect the wearer, however it may protect others if the wearer is infected and has not developed symptoms.

Face coverings are not classed as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Face coverings or masks are not manufactured to a recognised standard and are not CE marked. Further, they do not provide a proven level of protection for work risks such as dust and spray.

If people choose to wear face coverings in work employers should support them. Other measures that should be taken to manage the risk of COVID-19 infection are:

- social distancing or, where that is not possible, reducing the number of people in the work area
- assigning and keeping people to shift teams
- increasing hand and surface washing

Unlike face coverings, surgical face masks are manufactured to a recognised standard and are resistant to droplets of fluids and splashes. Surgical face masks are designed to be worn in medical settings to limit the spread of infection. Wearing them should be very limited outside of healthcare activities because they are not generally considered to be PPE in non-healthcare situations. With a high demand for supply they should also be reserved for those working on the front line.



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