



BEAMA Return to Workplace Guidance



About BEAMA

BEAMA is the UK trade association for manufacturers and providers of energy infrastructure technologies and systems. We represent more than 200 companies, from start-ups and SMEs to large multinationals. Our member's products ensure low carbon energy and environmental services are delivered safely, securely and efficiently to UK homes, businesses, transport and grid networks. We support our members in ensuring that the UK has a strong electrotechnical industry that is recognised as an essential part of modern society and brings invaluable economic, social and environmental benefits.

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As we approach the date on which it is expected that the Government requirement to work from home whenever possible will be removed, BEAMA has produced this Guidance in collaboration with member company specialists to assist in assessing risks and considerations.

BEAMA produced a detailed Guide in May 2020 to assist in workplace adaptations during the COVID-19 pandemic:

<https://www.beama.org.uk/resourceLibrary/covid-19-a-guide-on-returning-business-operations-to-the-new-normal-pdf.html>

Although adjustments in both workplaces and working practices will have been made during the past year or so, many members felt that a general document and sharing of experience and best practice could be helpful to provide an update and plan for greater levels of office-based working. This Guidance describes the position as it appears in June and July 2021; many companies will not make substantial changes to office use until after the Summer holiday period and it is likely that further adjustments will apply once new working models are trialed. The Guidance will be updated as needed but this would be expected towards the end of 2021 and possibly also, as situations evolve, into 2022.

The nature of workplaces, businesses and employment relations means that every company's situation will differ to some degree, so this document is provided as a general guide and not as specific advice. Specifically, it is intended to provide points to consider in the light of your own company positions. As always with health and safety and employment issues, you should seek your own legal advice wherever needed to deal with the specifics of your business needs.

Points to consider

Workplace and Office use, layout, and procedures

Have you checked latest Government and HSE guidance on COVID-Secure working?

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

Workplace Ventilation

In addition to social distancing, screening disinfecting and cleaning, aerosol transmission may be a greater risk than surface contact or droplets; have ventilation opportunities been considered and checked? For your building ventilation systems, is air drawn and expelled externally from all mechanical ventilation systems? Closed loop air-conditioning will be expected to increase virus transmission risks. Where necessary, is it possible to enhance ventilation by opening windows and is any adverse effect on workplace temperature mitigated? Further guidance can be found at:

https://www.rehva.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/REHVA_COVID-19_guidance_document_V3_03082020.pdf

Employee Testing

Are you carrying out any workplace COVID testing? If not, do you encourage use of home-testing? If you carry out workplace testing or collate home test results, have you carried

out a Data Protection Impact Assessment? Requirements for this may differ from any existing consents to hold personal data or may change the reasons for holding it.

<https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-recovery-data-protection-advice-for-organisations/testing/>

Vaccination

Do you place any requirements on employees to take up NHS vaccination when offered? If so, you should record the specific assessment undertaken to reach this conclusion and the characteristics of the business that require complete vaccination. Do you record whether or not staff have been vaccinated? Again, check GDPR position with sensitive personal data.

<https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-recovery-data-protection-advice-for-organisations/vaccinations/>

Contact Tracing

Do you encourage use of the Government Contact-Tracing app? Have you considered risks of false positive results due to proximity of phones but not individuals?

Travel

Have you reviewed company business travel policies either in UK or overseas? Are you monitoring potential quarantine and testing obligations for overseas destinations as they may change? Have you checked employee insurance cover and any exclusions arising from the COVID-related status of destinations?

Employee holidays

Do you have a policy on employees travelling overseas for holidays? How will you deal with absences and non-availability caused by requirements to quarantine on return?

Workplaces

For staff currently home-working due to COVID, is there a requirement to resume full office-based working when restrictions are lifted? Is there scope to request full or part-time home working and if so, what criteria will be used to guide a response (personal medical condition, family position, nature of role etc). Is there an overall plan for either general home-working or hybrid working? Is there a risk of unreasonable distinctions between those permitted greater home-working and those required to be based in traditional workplaces? Are you implementing practices to avoid any unreasonable detriment to staff who are now predominantly home-based?

Hybrid Working

If a hybrid working model (mix of home and office-based working) is adopted, is it open to all non-manual staff? Is there discretion to line managers to require differing levels of office attendance and if so, does this present a risk of perceptions of unfairness? Is it open to employees to choose either full-time office or home-based working? Will you require full attendance in offices on some days and if so, can you provide sufficient accommodation with appropriate distancing? Is there a process for employees to reserve their office space in advance or for advance notification to employees that office attendance will be required on certain days?

Employment contracts

Is there a change in contracted workplace planned for home-based staff? If so, are you intending to pay for travel to company premises through your expenses procedures (if so, check tax position). If adopting a hybrid model this can probably be dealt with through flexible working arrangements rather than a change of contract, but the policy should be consulted on, recorded, and provided to employees.

Employee consultation

If you have trade union representation, has this been involved in drafting of policies? If not have you consulted employees through other routes and recorded the results?

Management Training

For employees with line management responsibilities, have you provided training and checklists to assist with management of staff who predominantly work remotely. Are they aware of considerations with regard to performance, communication, team cohesion, physical and mental health etc.

Home working

All staff working from home for more than a brief and temporary period should assess their home working station to ensure it is suitable. This would not require any visit from the employer unless any unexpected risk was highlighted following the employee's own assessment. The HSE provides guidance for discharging health and safety responsibilities for home workers <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm> and a checklist template to use for employee self-assessments <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf>

Home Office Equipment

Where employees are working from home for prolonged periods the company will normally provide equipment to ensure this can be done suitably. These might be sourced by employees themselves and reclaimed where appropriate through expenses procedures. Alternatively, the company may prefer to maintain a standardised system, for example by providing an approved supplier and list of suitable equipment, with administration and payment arranged through the company directly. This will allow a greater degree of control of company assets, including return of property on employment ending although with associated administrative demands. Consideration should be given to the differing nature of employee home-working space in adopting a standardised approach to the provision of home-office equipment and especially furniture.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about BEAMA, please
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