

WASH in Workplace Settings

Guidance on COVID-19 Back-To-Work Preparedness

INTRODUCTION

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is a critical component of efforts to combat the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). This includes WASH conditions in workplace settings. While some places of work have remained open since the coronavirus outbreak (e.g. essential services), others have closed. These workplaces are now planning what needs to be put in place to protect worker and public health as people return to work. This document offers employers:

- ACTION 1** WASH COVID-19 Rapid Assessment Checklist
- ACTION 2** Recommendations to develop WASH infection and control (IPC) measures¹
- ACTION 3** Guidance to establish a plan for suspected or confirmed cases in order to protect worker health and prevent the further spread of COVID-19

This document was prepared by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) and the Child Rights and Business Team (CRB) in the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division (PFP). It presents interim recommendations in a fast-evolving context. Readers are advised to regularly check the sources cited in the document for updated guidance.

1 WASH is only one of the IPC measures employers should be addressing in their workplace. Please refer to other resources in this guidance document for other measures.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

COVID-19 exposure risk at work varies greatly and is dependent upon a number of factors such as the type of workplace, nature of work and interaction among workers. The following actions are recommended to protect workers from exposure to and infection from COVID-19:



ACTION 1

Conduct a WASH COVID-19 Rapid Assessment (see checklist): this is a tool to assist workplaces to complete a rapid assessment of their WASH conditions. Assessment² should occur with workplaces that have remained open since the outbreak began, and those that are considering opening after closure, following guidance from national and local authorities



ACTION 2

Design infection prevention and control (IPC) measures based on assessment findings and further guidance recommended in this note



ACTION 3

Establish a plan for confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 at the workplace, including reporting, notification, monitoring, reorganization of work and disinfection




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2 Pages 5-7 Family-Friendly Policies and Other Good Workplace Practices in the Context of Covid-19 <https://www.unicef.org/media/66351/file/Family-friendly-policies-covid-19-guidance-2020.pdf> and Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work Action Checklist (ILO) http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_protect/-protrav/-safework/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_741813.pdf

ACTION 1: WASH COVID-19 RAPID ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

THIS CHECKLIST PROVIDES WORKPLACES WITH A RAPID ASSESSMENT TOOL TO ASSESS THEIR WASH FACILITIES AND PRACTICES FOR INFECTION CONTROL OF COVID-19. The assessment should be completed at workplaces 1) when workers are returning to work after operations have been shut down due to COVID-19; and 2) for workplaces that have continued to operate. Questions relate to all workplaces (indoor and outdoor), unless noted otherwise.

 WATER			
YES	NO	BASIC STANDARD	COMMENTS OR MARK IF BASIC STANDARD IS N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sufficient quantities of water are available for handwashing facilities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sufficient quantities of water are available for cleaning and disinfecting of workplace facilities and equipment (indoor and outdoor, as relevant)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sufficient quantities of safe drinking water is available at work facility/location for all workers	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If water is not safe to drink, it has been treated by qualified personnel with chlorine, or other proven methods, to ensure safety	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Routine cleaning procedures are followed for water containers and tanks	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The number of drinking points/taps has been increased to avoid queuing, using no-touch systems where possible	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social distance marking (every 2 metres) is used in case of queues around drinking water facilities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Safe method(s) for drinking water distribution (clean cup/vessel/water bottle) are in place (using no-touch systems where possible) and workers do not share cups or containers	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If other on-site facilities are provided for workers, e.g. kitchen/dining room, health care or childcare facilities they have sufficient and safe drinking water available	



HYGIENE

YES	NO	BASIC STANDARD	COMMENTS OR MARK IF BASIC STANDARD IS N/A
FUNCTIONAL HANDWASHING FACILITIES WITH SOAP AND SAFE WATER (AND SINGLE USE TOWELS FOR DRYING, OR AN AIR DRIER IF POSSIBLE) ARE AVAILABLE FOR ALL WORKERS AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All toilet facilities (indoor and outdoor)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All eating areas e.g. kitchens/canteens/dining rooms, outdoor eating areas, such as in agriculture settings.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For enclosed/indoor workplaces at main entrance(s) and meeting areas, as well as on-site facilities such as cafeterias/canteens, health clinic, child care facilities, breastfeeding rooms etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For outdoor workplaces (e.g. agricultural fields): facilities should be near workers and ideally should be mobile to enable movement with workers	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If facilities are large, e.g. factories, handwashing facilities are recommended to be available on each floor or section	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Where handwashing facilities are not available or difficult to install, workers and customer/clients have access to alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol	
HYGIENE			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All handwashing facilities have signage and posters to build awareness of good handwashing techniques as well as relevant nudges and visual cues to reinforce where and how to wash hands and critical times for handwashing	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The number of handwashing points has been increased to avoid queuing	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social distance marking (every 2 metres) is used in case of queues around handwashing facilities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide workers with culturally relevant messages (e.g. including recorded messaging and announcements) on measures to prevent COVID-19 such as face coverings/masks	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide covered bins to enable safe disposal of tissues used to catch coughs or sneezes	



HYGIENE

YES	NO	BASIC STANDARD	COMMENTS OR MARK IF BASIC STANDARD IS N/A
WORKPLACE HAS ESTABLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED WORKPLACE CLEANING PROTOCOLS TO CLEAN AND DISINFECT AND MAINTAIN HYGIENIC WORK FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT²			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For enclosed/indoor workplaces: routine cleaning for areas unoccupied for 7 or more days. Maintain existing cleaning practices for outdoor areas	
FOR ALL WORKPLACES, REGULAR CLEANING AND DISINFECTION PROTOCOLS SHOULD OCCUR (AS PER BELOW):			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For enclosed/indoor workplaces: all surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and high-use objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards, sewing machines) are cleaned and disinfected with an effective disinfecting agent at least once a day (commercial liquid bleach)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For enclosed/indoor workplaces: All common areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g. doorknobs/pushes, time punch machines, etc.) are cleaned and disinfected with an effective cleaning agent at least once a day	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For outdoor workplaces: high-touch equipment as relevant, e.g., such as sprayers, cutting shears, trimmers, etc. are cleaned and disinfected with an effective cleaning agent after each use	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	On-site facilities, e.g. childcare facilities, kitchens/canteens, health care facilities, breastfeeding areas/rooms, as relevant, are cleaned and disinfected with an effective disinfecting agent at least daily or more regularly if heavily used	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enhanced cleaning of showers or changing rooms with an effective disinfecting agent including during the day and at the end of the day	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social distance marking (every 2 metres) is used in case of queues around showers, changing rooms and other on-site facilities	

² CDC COVID-19 Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>



HYGIENE

YES	NO	BASIC STANDARD	COMMENTS OR MARK IF BASIC STANDARD IS N/A
WORKPLACE HAS ESTABLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED WORKPLACE CLEANING PROTOCOLS TO CLEAN AND DISINFECT AND MAINTAIN HYGIENIC WORK FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sufficient number of trained workers to clean and disinfect facilities, as appropriate for the facility/work locations (indoor and/or outdoor) are available	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as working gloves, apron, rubber boots and face coverings/masks, is provided to all workers involved in cleaning and maintaining toilet and other workplace facilities and workers are required to use the PPE while cleaning facilities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cleaning staff have disinfecting agents that are effective at killing the COVID-19 virus and receive training on their appropriate use, storage and elimination where needed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional waste bins are provided together with more frequent rubbish collection (including appropriate provisions for the safe disposal of medical waste if relevant)	



SANITATION

YES	NO	BASIC STANDARD	COMMENTS OR MARK IF BASIC STANDARD IS N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sufficient number of functional and gender separated toilet facilities ³ for all workers, including workers with disabilities, are available/on location	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A continuous supply of anal cleansing materials is available	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social distance marking (every 2 metres) is used in case of queues around the toilets	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All toilet facilities, including handwashing facilities, are cleaned and disinfected at least once daily or more regularly if heavily used	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water, soap and covered bins are available in female toilet facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MHM materials are available for free, or are affordable to purchase, at the worksite	

³ World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) standard: minimum 2 toilet seats and 2 urinals per 45 male workers and minimum of 4 toilet facilities per 50 females in facilities. Toilets should meet international standards

ACTION 2: DESIGN INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPC) MEASURES

EMPLOYERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO DESIGN IPC MEASURES TO ADDRESS ALL AREAS CHECKED AS NO, NOT IN PLACE IN THE RAPID ASSESSMENT TOOL (ACTION 1). While recommendations for infection control of COVID-19 may differ for “enclosed or indoor” places of work (e.g. offices and factories) and “outdoor” locations (e.g. agriculture fields or tea plantations)⁴, all measures should cover the following:

A. Measures that support more frequent handwashing by workers and cleaning of facilities and equipment. Messaging should follow WHO advice for the public for COVID-19 prevention, including frequent handwashing and demonstration of proper handwashing techniques, i.e. handwashing with soap and water for 20 seconds at critical times.⁵ Proven behaviour-change techniques and other methods such as nudges and visual cues⁶ encourage workers hygiene practices, e.g. such as painted feet on floors, or arrows on posts in agriculture fields that point, or lead to, handwashing locations.

B. Adequate quantities of safe water are required for the prevention and control of infection for handwashing by workers and cleaning of facilities. Longer term, water safety can be improved by: protecting the source water; treating water at the point of distribution, collection, or consumption; and ensuring that treated water is safely stored in clean and covered containers. Also, sufficient numbers of cups are required so that workers don't need to share.

While there is no evidence that COVID-19 virus has been transmitted via sewerage systems or faecal-oral transmission, workers still need to be provided with adequate and safely managed sanitation at all places of work.⁷ In addition, female workers require adequate facilities in order to manage their menstrual hygiene at work such as a safe and discrete disposal mechanism for MHM waste (i.e., covered bins) as well as soap and water for cleaning. As the availability of sanitary products could be affected by COVID-19, it is essential that MHM products are available for free (or affordable to purchase) at work to ensure female workers can continue to work during menstruation.

ACTION 3: ESTABLISH A PLAN FOR A CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED CASE OF COVID-19 AT THE WORKPLACE

Before workers return to work, or if workers have remained at work, workplaces should establish a plan for what to do if a worker is confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19. The plan should follow WHO advice on reporting, notification, monitoring, reorganization of work and disinfection. The plan would involve:

- Making a focal person in the workplace responsible for liaising with public health authorities and social service providers
- Checking in regularly with workers to ensure they are well
- Ensuring workers who are unwell with respiratory symptoms immediately go home and contact a doctor
- Ensuring workers who are unwell with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 don't come into contact with other workers or customers/clients. This must be done in a way that doesn't promote stigma or discrimination
- Keeping track of those entering or leaving the premises or workspace to enable contact tracing if someone becomes ill
- Disinfecting the work area of the unwell worker, in line with public health advice
- Collecting information about people at work who have been in close proximity to someone suspected or confirmed as infected with COVID-19, to assist with contact tracing
- Keeping in contact with unwell workers and tracking their progress
- Communicating the plan with employees and contractors to make sure they are aware of what they need to do – or not do

4 WASH@Work a Self-Training Handbook ILO (2016) See hierarch of control, page 5-6 http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_dialogue/—sector/documents/publication/wcms_535058.pdf and Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for Covid-19 (OSHA), pages 7-16 <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

5 WHO handwashing challenges provides posters on handwashing with soap and use of hand rub and links to other creative measure to increase handwashing during COVID-19 <https://www.who.int/news-room/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/safehands-challenge/handwashing-challenge>

6 A nudge is a cue in the environment to engage unconscious decision-making to prompt behavior change. For example, painted footsteps on the floor in a factory floor or posted directional arrows in an agriculture field that point to a handwashing station.

7 The new JMP ladder for sanitation defines safely managed sanitation service as having improved facilities which are not shared with other households and where the excreta are safely disposed in situ or transported and treated off-site <https://washdata.org/monitoring/sanitation>



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FOR FURTHER GUIDANCE SEE:

- WHO getting your workplace ready: <www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6>
- ILO Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at work Action Checklist: <www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_741813/lang-en/index.htm>
- CDC COVID-19 Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, businesses, Schools, and Homes: <www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
- UNICEF, ILO and UN Women Family-Friendly Policies and Other Good Workplace Practices in The context of COVID-19: Key steps employers can take: <www.unicef.org/media/66351/file/Family-friendly-policies-covid-19-guidance-2020.pdf>
- COVID-19 Resources for Agriculture Workers: <aghealth.ucdavis.edu/covid19>
- WASH4Work: Baseline and Monitoring Indicators <https://www.unicef.org/csr/css/WASH_indicators_Dec_2019.pdf>