

Distribution

05 June 2020

COVID-19 RESPONSE: DEFENCE FORCES GUIDANCE ON WORKSPACES, SHARED FACILITIES AND ACCOMMODATION

NOTE: This document consolidates and replaces the following document; *Covid-19 Guidance on the Maintenance of Safe DF Workstations and Meeting Rooms*, issued by DF H&S Offr on 31 Mar 20.

References

- A. GRO 05/2015, *DEFENCE FORCES HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT*.
- B. GRO 05/2020, *DEFENCE FORCES GENERAL GUIDANCE ON COVID-19*, Amendment 3 issued by DCOS (Sp) on 02 Jun 20.
- C. *COVID-19 RESPONSE: DEFENCE FORCES RISK ADVISORY NOTICE ON THE COMPILATION OF OPERATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENTS*, issued by ACOS on 29 Mar 20.
- D. *COVID-19 RESPONSE: CONSOLIDATED DF GUIDANCE ON PPE, DECONTAMINATION AND CLEANING PROCEDURES*, VERSION #2, issued by ACOS on 09 Apr 20.
- E. *COVID-19 RESPONSE: DF GUIDANCE ON REUSABLE BARRIER FACEMASKS*, issued by ACOS on 17 May 20.
- F. *ROADMAP FOR REOPENING SOCIETY AND BUSINESS*, published by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Health on 01 May 20.
- G. *RETURN TO WORK SAFELY PROTOCOL*, published by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation on 09 May 20.
- H. DF 'PHASES SYNCHRONISATION MATRIX - ROADMAP OUT OF RESTRICTIONS', issued by the Director of Strategic Planning Branch on 05 Jun 20.
- I. DF TRAINING INSTRUCTION 03/2020 "TRAINING IN A COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT", issued by the Director of Training and Education Branch on 05 Jun 20.
- J. www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-COVID-19.pdf.
- K. osha.europa.eu/en/highlights/COVID-19-back-workplace-safe-and-healthy-conditions.
- L. www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/novel-coronavirus-china.
- M. www.nsai.ie/covid-19workplaceprotection.

1. **Introduction**

- a. **Background.** Following the progress made in recent months, the Government has decided that Ireland will move to Phase Two of our national 'Roadmap' for reopening society and business on Monday 08 Jun 20 (Ref F). As we move towards the gradual re-opening of our society, the health, safety and welfare of our members remains the DF's centre of gravity, so that we can continue to contribute to containing and managing the spread of COVID-19. In order to effectively adapt to this new phase, we are updating our direction and guidance documents. In this way we will maintain the gains we have made, and continue to play our part in 'Strengthening the Nation' at this challenging time. To this end, a DF 'Roadmap' document has been issued today (05 Jun 20) by the Director of Strategic Planning (Ref H), which will show the steps that the DF will take during each phase of the national recovery plan. At the same time, a Training Instruction on "Training in a COVID-19 Environment" (TI 03/2020, Ref I) has been issued by the Director of Training and Education (DJ7).



- b. **Aim.** The aim of this document is to complement these two documents by updating the Health and Safety (H&S) measures required in our workspaces, shared facilities and accommodation. By adhering to the measures outlined in these three documents, the DF will make a safe, planned and integrated transition to the next and subsequent phases of the national Roadmap, while continuing to carry out our framework activities (such as essential training for overseas deployments and induction training). The desired end-state will be achieved when the DF has safely navigated our DF roadmap through the phased lifting of restrictions, having maintained our framework activities throughout.

2. **General Guidance**

- a. Each member of the DF has a responsibility for their own H&S, and that of their comrades. Leaders at all levels will continue to reinforce individual and collective responsibility in this regard.
- b. This guidance is based on the scientific advice that social distancing, along with the maintenance of personal and environmental hygiene standards, remains the best way to stop the spread of COVID-19, including in our workplaces, shared facilities and accommodation. As we enter a new phase, the DF will continue to follow, as far as practicable, Government guidance on social distancing. While social distancing of two metres should be maintained where possible, experience has shown that this is not always possible due to the exigencies of military training and operations. In cases where social distancing of two metres is not possible, all ranks will ensure strict compliance with the force protection measures outlined in this document, the local risk assessment and the provisions of the other guidance documents previously issued (Refs A to E above).
- c. Unit and Installation Commanders and their risk management staff will implement this updated guidance in their respective locations. In this regard, commanders will continue to rely on the advice of their COVID-19 Advisors¹, unit safety officers, Engr and Medical SMEs. If not already identified, Unit and Installation Commanders will task workspace and accommodation managers for ALL locations under their control. Formation and unit safety officers remain the main points of contact for all H&S issues related to COVID-19.
- d. As the situation continues to evolve and in line with Government advice, the DF will update its direction and guidance on H&S and risk management. To ensure standardisation across the DF and compliance with national policies, these updates will be approved and issued by the DF Risk Manager (ACOS) on a case by case basis. Any suggestions for improvements in this regard are welcome and should be submitted through the chain of command to the DFHQ H&S Officer (conorp.ryan@defenceforces.ie) for ACOS consideration.

3. **Standard Hygiene Precaution Protocols for All Activities.** The use and selection of workspaces, shared facilities and accommodation will be conducted in line with the hierarchy of risk management controls (elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administration controls and PPE). These controls will be employed in order to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. On an individual

¹ Training Instruction (TI) 03/2020 (“*Training in a COVID-19 Environment*”) requires the appointment of a COVID-19 Advisor to assist in the implementation of all Governmental and DF COVID-19 protocols. This role should be filled by the EO/2IC, Chief Instructor or equivalent. The duties of the COVID-19 Advisor are laid down in para 7 of the TI.

level, the message of meticulous standard precautions for infection prevention and control will be continually reinforced.

- a. **Wash** your hands well and often to avoid contamination, using cold water and soap or an alcohol-based sanitiser for at least 20 seconds.
- b. **Cover** your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing and discard the used tissue, then clean your hands as above. Should you not have a tissue available, cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow and if necessary then clean your hands as above.
- c. **Avoid** touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- d. **Clean** and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.
- e. **Stop** shaking hands or hugging when saying hello or greeting other people.
- f. Where possible, **Distance** yourself at least 2 metres away from other people and especially from those who might be unwell.

4. **Risk Assessment.** Risk assessments will be carried out in accordance with GRO 05/2015 (*DF Health And Safety Risk Management*) and *COVID-19 Response: DF Risk Advisory Notice on the Compilation of Operational Risk Assessments*, issued on 29 Mar 20. Local risk assessments for shared workspaces, facilities and accommodation will follow the Garrison Risk Assessment protocol outlined in Part 2, Para 4 of GRO 05/2015. While the COVID-19 Advisor plays a key role in this regard, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) should be consulted in this regard (e.g. MOs, Engr Offrs, H&S Offrs etc.). COVID-19 Advisors and specific workspace/accommodation managers will be identified in the risk assessment.

5. **Shared Workspaces.** Formations and Units will ensure that the following control measures are in place in all shared workspaces.

- a. **Unit/Installation Commanders and their representatives** (e.g. COVID-19 Advisors, Workspace Managers) will ensure that:
 - (1) Access to workspaces is strictly controlled, with appropriate social distancing in place.
 - (2) Appropriate hand sanitiser is available at the entrances to all shared workspaces. Workspace managers will ensure provision of sufficient stocks (and a reserve) of these utilities in all locations.
 - (3) Individual workstations are appropriately spaced in line with social distancing guidelines, in all directions. Where this is not possible, appropriate DF force protection measures may be employed, for example the use of an appropriate level of PPE (Ref D).
 - (4) Workspaces are appropriately ventilated, using windows and doors.
 - (5) All miscellaneous surfaces that may have primary contact (door handles, exit door bars, sign-in tables) are sanitised twice daily. To that end, sufficient supplies and reserves of cleaning materials, hand sanitiser and other materials will be available in each location.
 - (6) Adequate signage for information and control of the above mitigation measures is displayed.
- b. **ALL personnel** using shared workspaces will:

- (1) Perform hand hygiene prior to and after using workstations (Ref D).
- (2) Assume that all workstations are contaminated on occupation.
- (3) Sanitise all surfaces of individual workstations before and after use with an appropriate sanitising agent appropriately (Ref D), with particular attention to keyboards and phones.
- (4) Adherence to these protocols will be maintained for shared workspace utilities such as printers, TV remotes, white boards etc.

6. **Accommodation.** Until further notice, the use of DF shared or single occupancy accommodation can be utilised on the basis of a specific operational and training needs analysis. This will be done following an appropriate risk assessment, in line with the following guidance;

a. **Unit/Installation Commanders and their representatives** (e.g. COVID-19 Advisors, Accommodation Managers) will ensure that:

- (1) Prior to the selection and occupation of any accommodation, a visual inspection is carried out. This may involve (as required) local G4/S4 staff, the Fmn/Unit H&S Offr, the Formation/local Engr Offr, the accommodation manager and the BMO or local MO. This will allow for the development of a customised plan of priority works and/or control measures, to be implemented prior to any occupation. Specific considerations in this regard should include, inter alia;
 - (a) Access and Egress.
 - (b) Room size.
 - (c) Where possible, the ability to compartmentalise personal sleeping and admin spaces (e.g. with partitions or lockers).
 - (d) Ventilation capability.
 - (e) Shared sanitation facilities.
- (2) All occupants are briefed on the control measures in place PRIOR to occupying shared accommodation.
- (3) Where possible, habitual association will be established, whereby personnel who work or train together will be accommodated together.
- (4) Appropriate hand sanitiser is available at the entrances to all shared accommodation and is made available on personal issue to occupants.
- (5) Access to accommodation is strictly limited to those occupying the accommodation and essential staff only (e.g. Directing Staff in a training environment, cleaning staff). In this regard, social distancing will be adhered to, in as far as is practicable.
- (6) Where possible, each individual is allocated a demarcated personal space allowing for at least 2 metres of separation from their comrades. Where possible, personal bed spaces should be positioned close to a window, for ventilation purposes.
- (7) Each bed space is provided with its own cleaning materials, so that the personal space can be cleaned both in the morning and before retiring for the night.
- (8) All miscellaneous surfaces including all shared WC facilities are appropriately cleaned at a minimum twice daily, with a log of the same being maintained. To that end, sufficient supplies and reserves of cleaning materials, hand sanitiser and other materials will be made available in each location.
- (9) Adequate signage for information and control of the above mitigation measures is displayed.

- b. **ALL personnel** using shared accommodation will ensure that:
- (1) Hand hygiene is carried out prior to entering accommodation (Ref D).
 - (2) Social distancing is observed inside and when entering and exiting the accommodation.
 - (3) All accommodation is assumed to be contaminated on occupation, and treated accordingly.
 - (4) All surfaces in personal bed spaces are sanitised before and after use with an appropriate cleaning product (Ref D).
 - (5) Adherence to these protocols is maintained for shared accommodation utilities such as WCs etc.
- c. **Inspections.** In addition to regular inspection visits by COVID-19 Advisors, accommodation managers and unit H&S staff, local Commanders should task ofrs and NCOs on regimental duty (e.g. the BOO or BOS) to visit and inspect accommodation areas outside of duty hours IOT to reinforce high standards of sanitation, social distancing etc. This should be detailed in Installation/Barrack orders.

7. **Meeting, Duty and Conference Rooms (including ad-hoc locations e.g. Messes).** These will be treated in the same manner as shared workspaces. The requirement for social and individual distancing does NOT change. Where external cleaning services are in operation (e.g. in Messes, dining facilities and shared toilets), the Unit/Installation Commander and his/her representatives will ensure that locations are cleaned with appropriate cleaning products (Ref D). It is recommended that a roster for this cleaning is established, if not already in place.

8. **Naval Vessels.** Due to the specificities of service on a NS ship, FOCNS will decide on the appropriate additional measures required for workspace and accommodation facilities on NS vessels.

9. **Personnel Falling Ill.** Should an individual experience any symptoms of COVID-19 in their workspace, accommodation or at home, they should (if required) immediately isolate themselves from any comrades and inform their direct or nearest reporting authority, who will advise accordingly and initiate further action as required. Ref B² and Para 6 of Ref I³ contain specific guidance in this regard. Immediate priority will be given to the health, safety and welfare of the individual concerned, and to any comrades who may have been in contact with that individual.

10. **Communications.** It is imperative that Formation and Unit/Installation Commanders communicate these guidelines to ALL personnel within their command. DF PR Section will post details of this guidance on the members' area of www.military.ie and on IKON.

11. **For guidance, dissemination and strict compliance.**



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² GRO 05/2020.

³ TI 03/2020.



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