



Rijksoverheid

# ‘Let’s keep working, safely’

Version 3 - 17 April 2020

This protocol offers clarity to businesses, home occupiers, contractors, clients and workers on safe working procedures in the construction, engineering and installation sectors during the coronavirus crisis. It also looks at how work in private homes can be carried out safely. The protocol was drawn up by the associations Bouwend Nederland and Techniek Nederland and submitted to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. It was then further fleshed out and finalised during consultations between the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management and various industry bodies and trade unions.

The protocol is based on the the advice and measures put forward by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). It reflects the situation at the time of publication and will be updated accordingly when new advice or measures enter into force. It is intended as a guide to carrying out work safely. However, there may be justifiable reasons to depart from the protocol in certain circumstances.

The protocol is intended for the construction and engineering sectors and associated activities. Consult the RIVM website for general measures and guidelines regarding what to do in the case of a confirmed or suspected coronavirus infection.

A coronavirus helpdesk has been set up for the construction and engineering sectors ([www.helpdeskcorona-bt.nl](http://www.helpdeskcorona-bt.nl)). This is a central desk where people can ask questions, obtain information and report breaches of the rules set out in this protocol.

The responsibility to combat the spread of the virus while also ensuring people can keep working safely is a shared one. Only together can we stop the virus spreading and keep society running. We hope that everyone will adhere to the protocol and actively discuss situations where this is difficult to do.

## The basis of the protocol

This protocol is based on an occupational hygiene approach. The aim is to minimise the need to use personal protective equipment (PPE) except in specific environments such as care institutions, as it is in very limited supply at present. The first step is to restrict activity in environments where there is a risk of infection. If that is not possible, i.e. if it is necessary to carry out work in places where there is a risk of infection, technical and organisational measures must be put in place to prevent infection. Lastly, there are specific situations and environments where it is necessary to use PPE.

When carrying out work in buildings where residents or building users are present, additional care must be taken. This includes obtaining prior consent from these parties. If they do not give consent, it follows that work cannot be carried out safely.

The following pages set out the protocol and its implementation. This document then looks at several aspects in more detail. Various checklists whereby the protocol has been incorporated into a daily routine can be found on [www.helpdeskcorona-bt.nl](http://www.helpdeskcorona-bt.nl).

## Overview of coronavirus measures in the construction and engineering sectors

Sector	Situation	Measures to control the risk at source	Technical and organisational measures	PPE (face masks, gloves etc.)
<b>All sectors</b>				
General (these preventive measures must always be adhered to).	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work from home if possible.</li> <li>- Do not go to work if you or someone you live with are infected with coronavirus.</li> <li>- Do not go to work if you have cold-like symptoms.</li> <li>- Do not go to work if someone you live with has a fever. Only go back to work at least 24 hours after symptoms have disappeared.</li> </ul> <p>An exception applies to people working in crucial sectors and critical processes.<sup>1</sup> If this applies to you, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- not go to work if you or someone you live with are infected with coronavirus.</li> <li>- not go to work if you have symptoms (with or without a fever).</li> <li>- still go to work if someone you live has symptoms (even if they have a fever).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do not shake hands.</li> <li>- Wash your hands or use a disinfectant hand gel (at least 70% alcohol) regularly.<sup>2</sup> Wash your hands at least 6 times a day as instructed. And always before meals, after going to toilet, after using public transport and after cleaning.</li> <li>- Touch your face as little as possible. Cough and sneeze into your elbow. Bring your own paper tissues and dispose of them immediately after use. Then, wash your hands.</li> <li>- Wherever possible, stay 1.5 metres from other people while at work.<sup>3</sup></li> <li>- Adapt your work and workplace to the 1.5-metre rule.</li> <li>- If it is not possible to maintain a 1.5 metre distance, insist on strict observance of the RIVM hygiene requirements.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>- Clean regularly. If possible, disinfect items using 70% isopropyl alcohol wipes.</li> <li>- Do not share your tools or telephone with other people.</li> <li>- Keep materials, tools and PPE clean.</li> <li>- Ventilate workspaces and offices.</li> <li>- Work in fixed teams as much as possible.</li> </ul>	All preventive hygiene measures. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For information from the Dutch government and the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers on crucial sectors and critical processes see <https://www.government.nl/topics/coronavirus-covid-19/documents/publications/2020/03/20/childcare-for-children-of-people-working-in-crucial-sectors> and <https://www.vno-ncw.nl/weekbulletin/extra-info-lijst-cruciale-beroepen-voor-noodopvang-kinderen>.

<sup>2</sup> Please note: frequently washing and disinfecting your hands dries out your skin, reducing its ability to keep infection at bay. So make sure to hydrate and protect your skin by using hand cream.

<sup>3</sup> This also applies during lunchbreaks, and when taking deliveries from suppliers, for instance.

<sup>4</sup> 1.5 metres is a guideline. The main aim is to increase people's awareness. If it is impossible for workers to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres, the RIVM hygiene requirements should be strictly adhered to. If you are uncertain about a specific situation, you can contact the coronavirus helpdesk for advice.

<sup>5</sup> In line with the RIVM guidelines.

Sector	Situation	Measures to control the risk at source	Technical and organisational measures	PPE (face masks, gloves etc.)
<b>Specific sectors or situations (additional measures on top of general preventive measures for all sectors)</b>				
Carrying out work for private individuals and tenants of housing associations or landlords.	General (these preventive measures must always be taken).	<p>In advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gain clear consent from residents/building users.</li> <li>- Ask residents/users if they or other people they live/work with have coronavirus symptoms (cough, sore throat, fever) or belong to a vulnerable group.<sup>6</sup> The resident decides whether you may enter their home.</li> <li>- Ask that spaces be well ventilated.</li> <li>- Ask that the area/item in question be easily accessible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clients must stay at least 1.5 metres away from workers.</li> <li>- Limit the visit to the necessary work.</li> <li>- When having clients sign off on work, avoid them touching devices or documents as much as possible.</li> </ul>	No additional measures.
	Residents/users and other people they live/work with do not have symptoms of coronavirus (cough, sore throat, fever) and do not belong to a vulnerable group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular work can be carried out with consent of residents/users. The national measures concerning hygiene and keeping a safe distance must be observed.</li> </ul>	No additional measures.	No additional measures.
	Residents/users and other people they live/work with have coronavirus or symptoms of coronavirus (cough, sore throat, fever) or belong to a vulnerable group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only carry out work in the event of serious disruption or calamity; i.e. where essential daily tasks (cooking, using the toilet, washing, cleaning, etc.) can no longer take place as a result.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The external door is open, or is opened from outside by someone else.</li> <li>- Residents/users must stay in another room.</li> <li>- Communicate with residents/users by telephone only.</li> </ul>	<p>For additional protection, consider using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- disposable gloves<sup>7</sup> (any grade is sufficient)</li> <li>- disposable overalls</li> <li>- disposable shoe coverings</li> <li>- safety goggles (dispose of or disinfect after use).</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> In line with the RIVM definition, specifically older people and people with underlying health conditions.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. nitrile, PVC, latex, butyl rubber.

Sector	Situation	Measures to control the risk at source	Technical and organisational measures	PPE (face masks, gloves etc.)
External locations (infrastructure, construction, utilities).	Working alone.	No additional measures.	No additional measures.	No additional measures.
	Working with several people.	No additional measures.	In the site hut or meeting room: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Display rules and instructions clearly.</li> <li>- Determine the maximum number of people who can be in the space while still staying 1.5 metres apart.</li> <li>- Remember to also maintain a 1.5 metre distance when entering a space.</li> <li>- Stagger break times or provide multiple break areas.</li> <li>- When instructing staff and giving toolbox talks, make sure everyone can stay 1.5 metres apart. If necessary, issue instructions several times to smaller groups.</li> <li>- Inform staff and visitors of the measures beforehand.</li> <li>- Ensure that spaces are cleaned more often and that soap/disinfectant and disposable hand towels are available.</li> <li>- Communicate with suppliers, subcontractors and clients by telephone wherever possible.</li> </ul>	No additional measures.

Sector	Situation	Measures to control the risk at source	Technical and organisational measures	PPE (face masks, gloves etc.)
Healthcare	Low-risk spaces <sup>8</sup>	No additional measures.	No additional measures.	No additional measures.
	High-risk spaces <sup>9</sup>	Follow the client's instructions.	Follow the client's instructions.	Follow the client's instructions.
	Air handling systems in intensive care units or pulmonary units.	No additional measures.	No additional measures.	If discharged air can be inhaled, use an FFP2 mask.
Travelling with others (e.g. in van).	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Travel alone if at all possible (e.g. using own transport).</li> <li>- Establish whether it is really necessary to travel together.</li> <li>- Only travel with others if separate transport can't be arranged.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sitting close together increases the risk of contracting and spreading coronavirus. So, keep as much distance as possible.</li> <li>- If more than two people are travelling together, keep at least 1.5 metres apart.</li> <li>- Ensure the vehicle is well ventilated: open the windows if the weather allows or use the vehicle's ventilation system.</li> <li>- Always sit in the same seat.</li> <li>- Ensure optimal hygiene by cleaning the steering wheel, gearstick, door handles, touchscreens etc. more frequently and disinfecting them regularly using 70% isopropyl alcohol wipes.</li> </ul>	No additional measures.

<sup>8</sup> Spaces that are not occupied or visited by (potentially) infected patients or care workers who might be contaminated.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. triage tents, rooms of sick residents in nursing homes, intensive care units, isolation wards.

## Communication

The government has produced a wide range of public information posters, flyers etc. explaining the RIVM guidelines and giving practical instructions on how to prevent the spread of coronavirus. You can download them [here](#) for use at your company or construction site. There is also information material available for people who have trouble reading. Industry partners have their own channels of communication (e.g. [Helpdesk Corona Bouw en Techniek](#), [Volandis](#) and [ArboTechniek](#)). Posters about the protocol for restricting the spread of coronavirus, both on construction sites and when working in private homes, are available in several languages and can be downloaded from the helpdesk website.

## General measures and rules

On Monday 23 March, the government tightened up measures to combat the spread of coronavirus. This included banning all meetings, gatherings and events which require a permit until 1 June 2020. The ban does not apply to construction and engineering work. However, you must of course comply with the RIVM guidelines, not just on site, but also when travelling to and from work. This means:

- stay at least 1.5 metres from others
- do not shake hands
- wash your hands regularly
- stay at home if you have mild cold-like symptoms (runny nose, cough, sore throat or fever)
- stay at home if someone you live with has a fever
- sneeze or cough into your elbow
- use paper tissues to blow your nose and throw them away immediately.

This protocol provides general frameworks and guidelines. If you're unsure about how to comply with it, contact your employer, client or company. You can also contact the helpdesk for advice.

## Translating the protocol into daily work routines

It is important to translate the protocol into a daily work routine. Below is an outline of the practical measures to be taken in the workplace and while at work. Complete checklists can be found on the helpdesk website.

## Designate a coronavirus overseer in the workplace

Following the rules is first and foremost an individual responsibility. To ensure that everyone takes this responsibility, designate an employee to oversee compliance with the protocol on site. The person in question must be familiar with all the rules and must – when necessary – call employees to account if they fail to comply with them.

## When must employees stay at home?

1. Employees must stay at home if they have a cold, cough, sore throat or fever.
2. Employees must stay at home if someone they live with has a fever (until 24 hours after their symptoms have disappeared).
3. If an employee is sick and their symptoms worsen (fever above 38°C, difficulty breathing) they must ring their doctor.

Different rules apply for employees who work in a crucial sector or critical process<sup>10</sup>:

- Employees must stay at home if they or a family member have tested positive for coronavirus.
- Employees must stay at home if they are ill (including cold-like symptoms).
- Employees may go to work if a family member is ill (even if they have a fever).

## Assessing whether someone belongs to an at-risk group

If it is not clear whether someone falls into an at-risk group, consult the occupational health specialist or health and safety service.

## When should employees go home?

Anyone on site and employees working in private homes should take responsibility for their own safety and health, and that of others. They should therefore go home if they have mild cold-like symptoms like a runny nose, cough, sore throat or fever. Exceptions can be made for employees who work in a crucial sector or critical process if their symptoms are mild.

## When should employees be sent home?

Workers who have cold-like symptoms or a fever should be sent home. Again, exceptions can be made for employees working in crucial sectors and critical processes if their symptoms are mild. Workers who do not comply with safety measures and precautions should be also sent home.

<sup>10</sup> For information from the Dutch government and the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers on critical processes and crucial sectors: see <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/coronavirus-covid-19/veelgestelde-vragen-over-coronavirus-en-kinderopvang/cruciale-beroepen> and <https://www.vno-ncw.nl/weekbulletin/extra-info-lijst-cruciale-beroepen-voor-noodopvang-kinderen>.

### Are people allowed to work from home?

People are expected to work from home if they can. It is important that employees working from home can do so under healthy conditions (e.g. good desk posture). Employers should make sure employees are aware of this. For more information see the websites of [Bouwend Nederland](#) and [Techniek Nederland](#). Working from home is not possible in all jobs. This protocol provides guidelines for working safely in the workplace.

## Measures in the workplace and at work

### What measures apply when working on site?

In principle there is nothing to prevent construction work from continuing. At building sites in the open air the risk of infection is reduced. At other locations, the protocol can be used to manage that risk.

Wel moeten de volgende richtlijnen worden nageleefd, bespreek deze voorafgaand aan het werk met elkaar.

1. Designate an employee as the coronavirus overseer on site.
2.
  - a. Where possible, employees should stay 1.5 metres apart on site.
  - b. Plan work so that this is feasible and adapt the working area. For instance, split groups up during the lunch break. Where possible, eat lunch outside. If someone wants to have lunch in their van they must do so alone.
  - c. If it is impossible to stay 1.5 metres apart while carrying out certain tasks, try to minimise contact as much as possible and insist on strict observance of the RIVM hygiene requirements.
3. The hygiene requirements for places of work must be strictly complied with. This entails:
  - extra cleaning of toilets;
  - cleaning door handles thoroughly;
  - cleaning materials and equipment used by more than one person. Isopropyl rubbing alcohol 70 % (IPA) is suitable for this purpose.
4. Restrict external contacts as much as possible. Make arrangements to this effect with suppliers and subcontractors. For instance, you could have supplies delivered to a point outside the site.

5. Where possible, employees should work in fixed teams and at the same locations, so that they don't keep coming into contact with different people.
6. Speak up and hold each other to account if anyone ignores the rules or puts themselves or others at risk. Everyone must take responsibility for themselves and their colleagues. Employees can ask questions and report problems to their managers.
7. In case of doubt or commotion, contact the health and safety service, the [Helpdesk Corona Bouw en Techniek](#) or the industry partners' knowledge centres ([Vollandis](#), [ArboTechniek](#)).

### What measures apply when working in private homes?

The duty of employers to make sure that employees can work safely also extends to work done in private homes.

#### Beforehand

- Ask residents/users:
  - o whether they consent to the work being carried out;
  - o whether they or anyone they live with has coronavirus symptoms;
  - o whether they or anyone they live with belongs to an at-risk group (to avoid possible unintended infection by workers);
  - o to make sure their home is well ventilated;
  - o to make sure that the workers can easily access the area/item in question;
  - o to keep toilets clean;
  - o to clean door handles etc. several times a day.
- Tell employees that they are free to leave the work location if they encounter situations in which they feel unsafe. For instance, if the person who opens the door is sneezing and coughing. The employee should inform the client that he/she does not think it advisable to enter given the risk of infection, and then tell his/her manager or planner.
- Tell clients that they are free to ask the employee to leave the work location if they encounter situations in which they feel unsafe. For instance if the employee is sneezing or coughing while carrying out the work. The client should inform the employee that he/she does not think it advisable for the work to be carried out given the risk of infection. The employee then passes this message on to his/her manager or planner.

#### *Carrying out the work*

If a client or someone they live with has symptoms that could indicate a coronavirus infection (cough, cold, fever) or belongs to an at-risk group, work should only be carried out in the event of serious disruption or calamity. In such cases, extra precautions must be taken. See the table above.

#### *Signing off on work*

Where possible, an alternative should be found to clients signing off on work, because of possible infection via hand/mouth/nose/eye contact. Alternatives do exist. See FAQ Helpdesk Corona Bouw en Techniek.

#### **If keeping a distance of 1.5 metres is not possible, how should work be carried out?**

The principle is to always keep a distance of 1.5 metres. If this really is impossible, be extra vigilant and make arrangements so that the work can be done while complying with RIVM hygiene requirements.

#### **Communication in the workplace**

Give a toolbox talk in which you tell employees what precautionary measures have been taken to work as safely as possible, and discuss your policy with them. Consider giving this talk online.

#### **Can employees still travel together in a company van?**

Establish whether it is necessary to travel together. Where possible, employees should travel to and from work alone. They should only travel together if travelling separately is not an option. If employees do have to travel together, the following rules apply:

- sitting close together increases the risk of contracting and spreading coronavirus. So employees should sit as far away from each other as possible;
- if more than two people are travelling together, they should sit at least 1.5 metres apart;
- make sure the vehicle is well ventilated, either open the windows if the weather allows or use the vehicle's ventilation system;
- people should always sit in the same seat;
- ensure optimal hygiene by cleaning the steering wheel, gearstick, door handles, touchscreen, etc. more frequently and disinfecting them regularly using 70% isopropyl alcohol wipes.

**The 'Let's keep working, safely' protocol is backed by: Aedes, AFNL-NOA, Bouwend Nederland, CNV Vakmensen, FNV Bouwen en Wonen, FNV Metaal, NEPROM, OnderhoudNL, Techniek Nederland, VHG and Woonbond.**