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workplacecreations

Making Your Office Covid-Secure Guessing could prove Costly

Are you at risk of prosecution by failing to re-open and use your office space in full compliance with Covid-19 working environment guidelines and HSE requirements?

As we allow people back into offices we can't lose sight of the fact that the Covid-19 virus is still in circulation - and will be for many months or possibly years. We also know that people carrying the virus can be infectious before they show symptoms. Some carriers have very mild or no symptoms at all. Temperature checks on people entering the building and everyone being alert for the symptoms will help, but they won't eliminate the risks of spreading the infection.

Employers are accountable when it comes to deciding whether their office environment is Covid-secure. It's in everyone's interests to get back to business as normal but employees still have to be safe. And, of course, these are all people and colleagues, with husbands, wives, partners, children, parents and loved ones.

Exposure to a coronavirus infection is a reportable occurrence under the Health and Safety Executive regulations covered by RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013). Any illness or fatalities that result from likely Covid-19 exposure in the workplace must be reported and carry the same liability as any other fatal or potentially dangerous occurrence. So you have to be certain you're getting it right.



- Useable Desking
- Unusable Desking
- Unusable Collaboration Areas
- Direction of Circulation





Can You Make Informed Decisions?

The problem for many employers is that they are not scientists, epidemiologists or virologists. Which means you have to interpret the Government and HSE guidelines as best you can. This is far from straightforward. It's very unlikely that you can be certain of meeting your responsibilities just by installing a few screens to stop coughs and sneezes, or even just by spacing desks a bit further apart.

To become infected, people have to be exposed to a threshold number of virus particles. These can arrive in one go (via a cough, sneeze or touching your face), or gradually. There's evidence that the critical dose can be absorbed over extended periods of breathing air with low concentrations of the virus. Forced air circulation, spatial dimensions and lack of natural ventilation will affect the risk level

Wellbeing and Mental Health

Remember too, that people don't just have to be safe, they have to feel safe. Anxiety over health risks can be highly damaging to emotional and mental wellbeing. Again, as an employer, you are accountable.

There's so much more to making an office Covid-secure than applying common sense to the published guidelines. To properly discharge your responsibilities you may have to completely redesign your workspace with expert input. Ultimately, we are talking about people's lives and the potential for severe penalties. This isn't an area to take chances.

To help employers to cut through the assumptions and confusing communications, Osborne is partnering with office design specialists Workplace Creations. Together, we have the practical capabilities to plan, project manage and create your Covid-safe office environment as quickly and cost effectively as possible.



To find out more contact Richard King at Osborne by email: richard.king@osborne.co.uk or visit www.osborne.co.uk