



Generic guide for combatting the spread of **COVID-19** at work



Colofon

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Objective of this generic guide

According to the experts, we are going to have to live with the coronavirus for a long time to come. We will therefore have to continue to take measures for a long time to avoid the further spread or new waves of the virus as much as possible. This will be all the more true as soon as we phase out the strict 'lockdown' measures and the distinction between essential and non-essential sectors disappears. Employers, workers, social partners, prevention services and other actors have an important role to play here.

This generic guide is the result of co-operation between the social partners in the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work, the Economic Risk Management Group, the FPS ELSD and the policy unit of the Minister for Employment. Based on their expertise, they have developed a tool that carries considerable support, containing a number of necessary and minimum building blocks to enable workers to return to work as safely as possible in the post-lockdown period by keeping the risk of infection as low as possible and avoiding infections as much as possible.

This generic tool can then be further customised by the different sectors to take maximum account of their sector-specific context, and by any employer who needs it, so that activities can be restarted in safe conditions.

Social dialogue at all levels plays a central and crucial role here. Existing consultation bodies within the organisation, such as the Committee for Prevention and Protection at Work, the trade union delegation, or the workers themselves (if there is no trade union delegation) should be involved in the choice and implementation of these measures. In addition, the expertise available internally and externally, e.g. from the prevention advisor and the external prevention services, must also be called upon, especially at companies where internal expertise is lacking or limited.

There is currently a very high demand for concrete and feasible prevention measures, whether general or sector-specific, to support employers and protect workers at work, during journeys to and from the workplace (e.g. communal transport), or during other work-related activities (e.g. use of canteens, changing rooms and other social services and contact with customers, suppliers and sub-contractors).

This guide provides guidelines for sectors and employers who have had to (partially) cease their activities, in preparation for a safe resumption of these activities (cfr. [Declaration](#) of the Group of 10 dd. 22/4/2020). Sectors and employers who have not interrupted their activities and have already taken the necessary measures can use this guide as a source of further inspiration.

The content of this guide may be supplemented in accordance with the guidelines from the National Security Council and on the basis of new scientific insights and best practices.

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Note: the images in this guide are intended only to illustrate and clarify the principles or measures contained in the text. They are not a perfect reflection of reality in terms of layout and dimensions. They should not be regarded as a mandatory example but can provide inspiration.



CONTEXT. How does this generic guide relate to the sectoral guides and their application in the company?

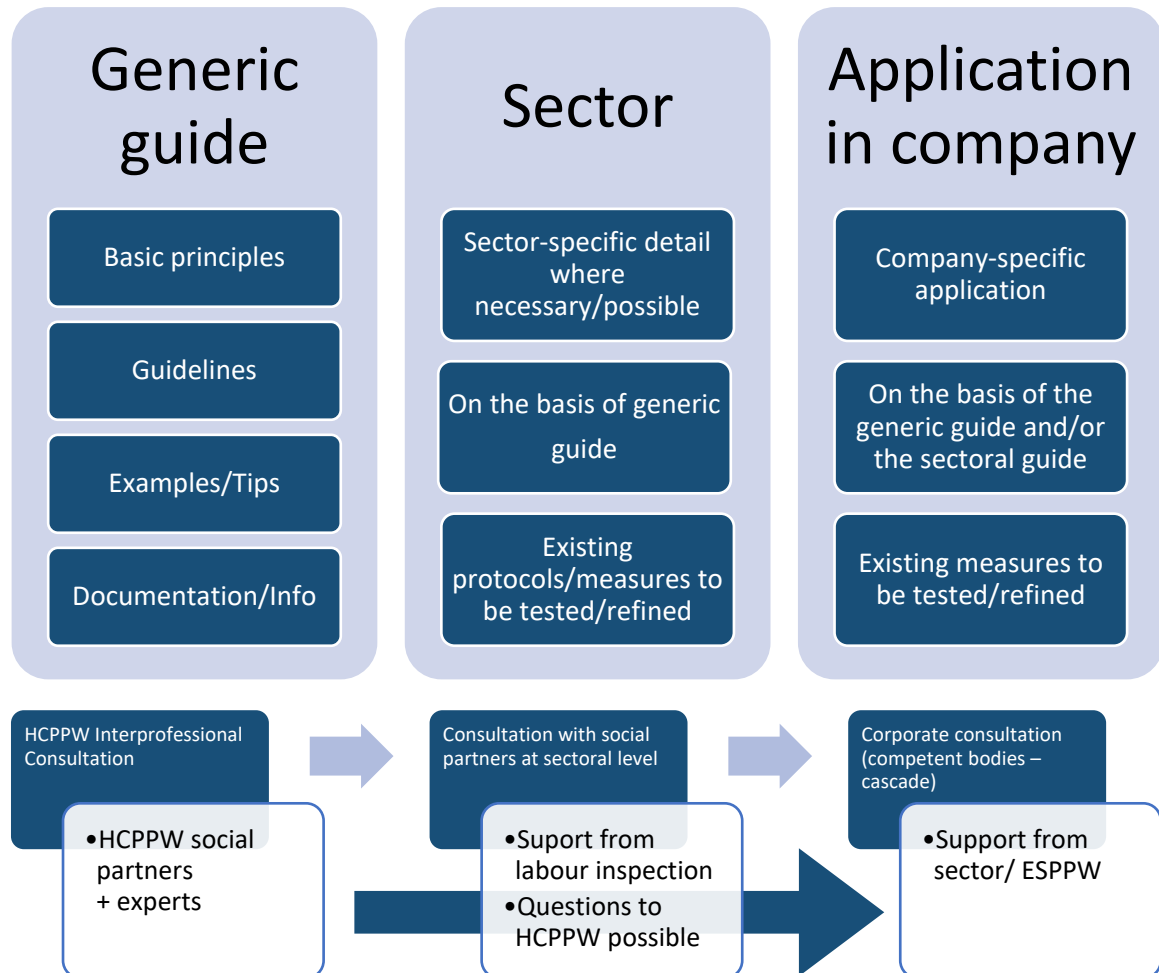
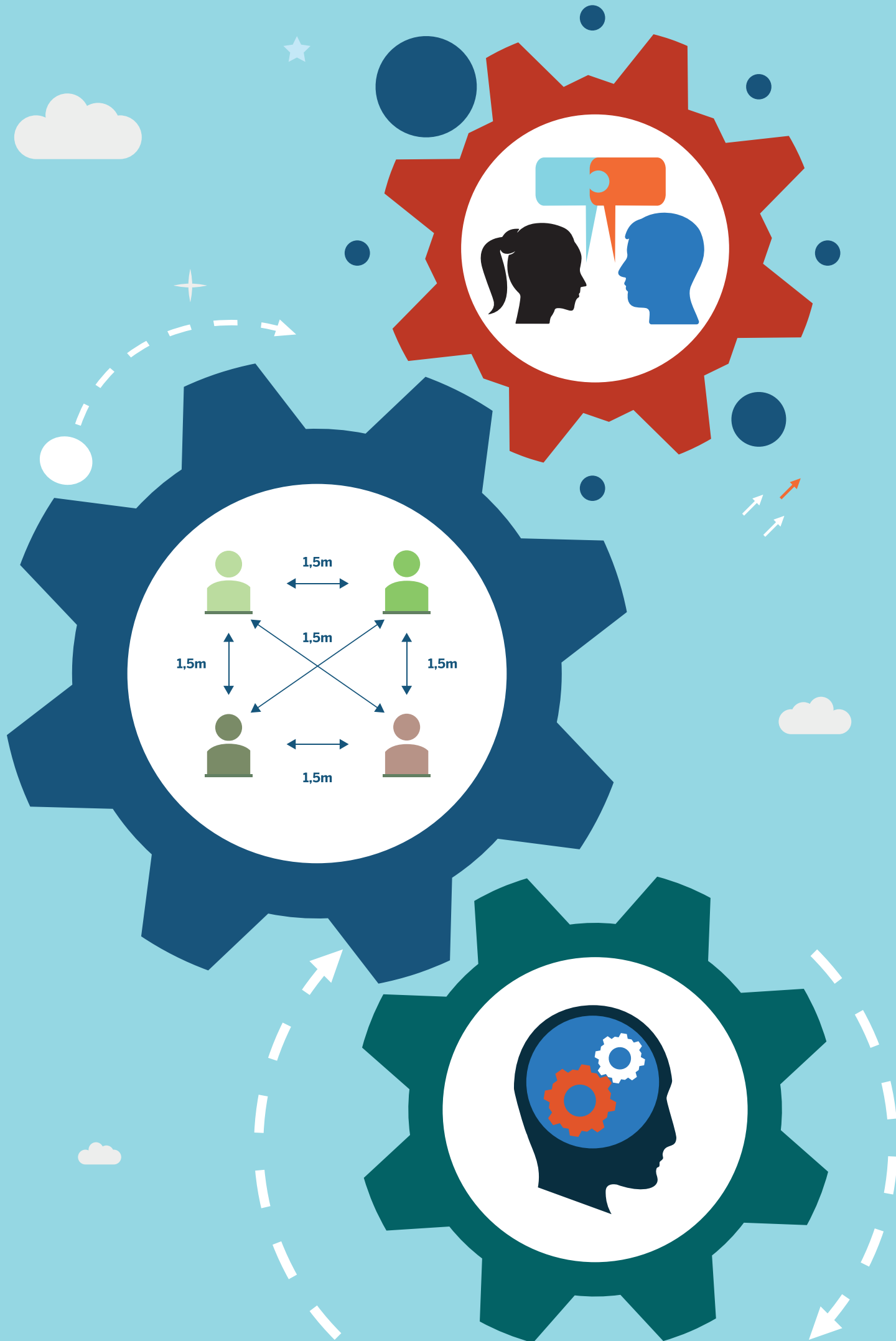


Figure 1. Guideline framework for safety at work

The generic guide and the sectoral guides on which companies can rely can be consulted on the FPS ELSD website www.employment.belgium.be.



General measures

Make maximum use of the social dialogue in your company

Consultation on a regular basis on the measures (to be) taken with the Works Council, the Committee for Prevention and Protection at Work, the trade union delegation and the workers themselves (through direct participation), in accordance with their respective powers: this will increase support for and observation of the measures. Consultation on the measures to be taken should take place as early as possible, preferably even before a possible restart.

Ask the advice of the social dialogue bodies before restarting activities.

Involve experts

Call on the expertise available internally and externally, such as the prevention advisor and the external prevention services.



Figure 2. Make maximum use of social consultation and involve experts

Give clear instructions and provide the necessary training and communication

Inform your workers as to why it is necessary to start work or stay at work in a safe way, even if working from home is not possible.

Provide your workers with accessible information, clear instructions and appropriate training on the measures and ensure that this information and these instructions are properly understood and followed. Repeat the instructions regularly, having regard to workers who may need additional training and instructions, such as inexperienced workers or temporary workers.

In addition, ensure psychosocial support for your workers and, if necessary, involve the psychosocial aspects prevention advisor or confidential counsellor, including for home working.

Pay particular attention also to workers with vulnerable health, such as workers with chronic conditions (e.g. lung and heart problems, diabetes) and workers undergoing or having undergone cancer treatment.

Have regard to workers who have continued to work in unusual or difficult circumstances.

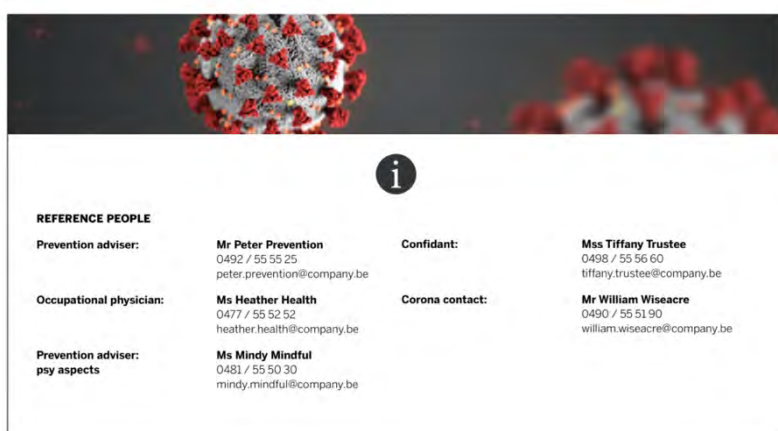
Communicate continuously with all workers.

Provide information for workers and externals

Contact your workers, including temporary workers and interns, in a timely manner, as well as external parties such as customers, clients, suppliers, sub-contractors, freelancers, visitors, parents and others who come into contact with the organisation, to inform them about the rules at your organisation.

Many people will have practical questions: make it clear to whom they can turn via info boards, your intranet, website, etc.

Include the contact details of useful reference people at the internal or external prevention service, such as the occupational physician, the confidential advisor, the prevention advisor and the psychosocial aspects prevention advisor, the confidant(s) potentially along with a contact point for corona-related questions.



Apply the social distancing rules to the maximum

Keeping a distance, i.e. avoiding contact with other people within 1.5 metres, remains the best way to limit the spread of COVID-19. So, guarantee a distance of 1.5 metres as much as possible and forbid gatherings. If the organisation of work does not permit this despite other additional measures, then try to come as close as possible to the margin of 1.5 metres. Use markings, ribbons or physical barriers to demarcate zones or places or mark on the ground how much distance to keep. These principles apply to all places in the company and to all other aspects of work.

**Keep
enough distance**



At the end of this guide, a series of examples of scenarios have been developed that illustrate the principles of social distancing. See Social distancing: illustration of scenarios.



Hygiene measures

Hand hygiene (and respiratory hygiene)

- ✓ Wash your hands regularly, with water and liquid soap in a correct manner (even if gloves were worn). See Figure 3
- ✓ Provide means for washing hands (preferably with water and liquid soap) and drying (paper wipes, no towels, no electric hand dryers) and/or disinfecting. Provide suitable hand gels or disinfectants in places where handwashing is not possible, preferably in dispensers that should not be touched.
- ✓ Check which products qualify as suitable soap, hand gel (with alcohol) or disinfectant: not all products are suitable or sufficient; if in doubt, contact your occupational physician or occupational hygienist.

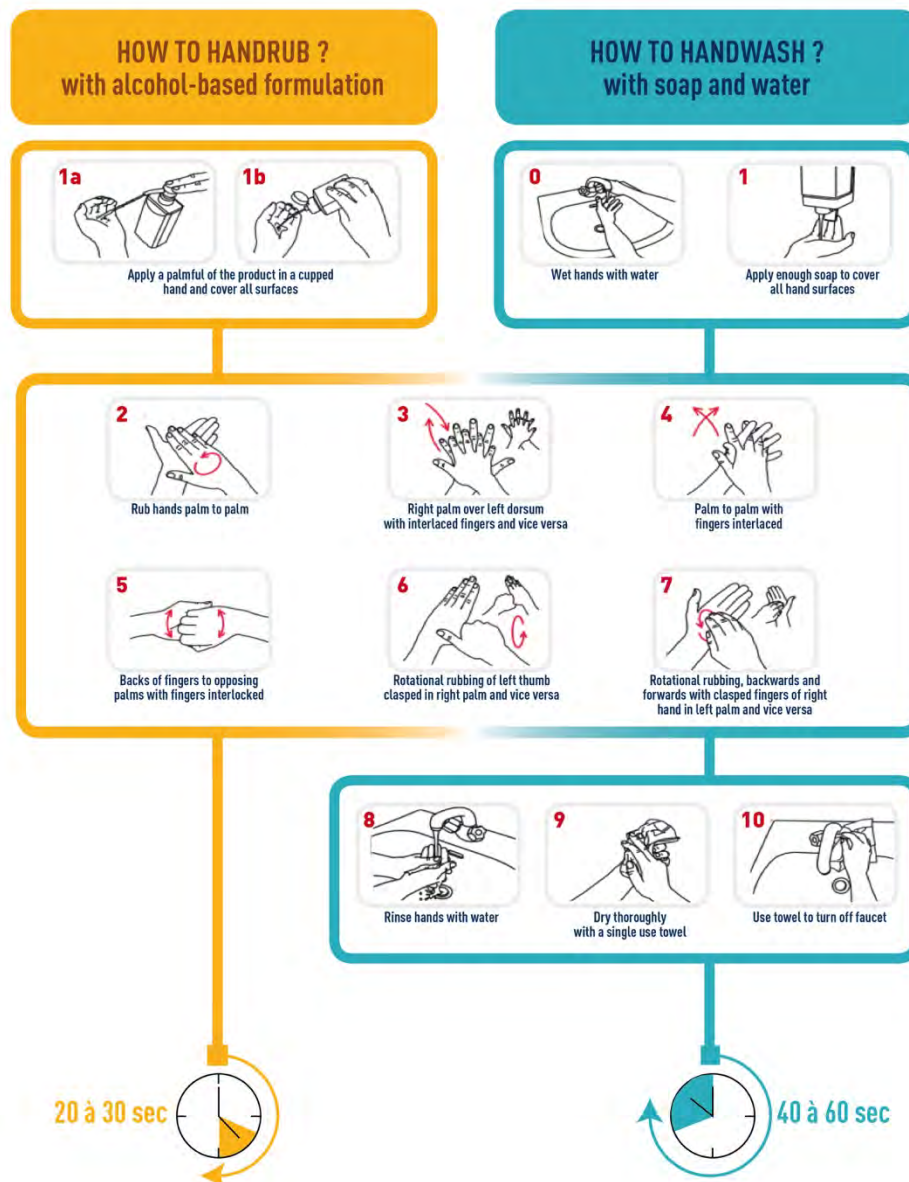


Figure 3. Wash hands regularly and correctly

- ✓ Avoid contact with objects or surfaces that have been used or touched by others and wash hands regularly and thoroughly after contact with surfaces and containers that are touched by many people.
- ✓ Provide paper towels.
- ✓ Dry your hands after washing with a paper towel and use this towel to close the tap or close the tap with your elbow.
- ✓ Raise worker awareness about hand hygiene and coughing or sneezing into handkerchiefs or elbows, e.g. through posters, and discard used handkerchiefs immediately.



- ✓ Provide appropriate containers for the collection of the (waste) material used for the application of individual and collective hygiene, such as handkerchiefs and disposable cleaning cloths (and used protective equipment).



- ✓ If necessary, use protective equipment such as (disposable) gloves and be careful when putting them on, taking them off and throwing them away.

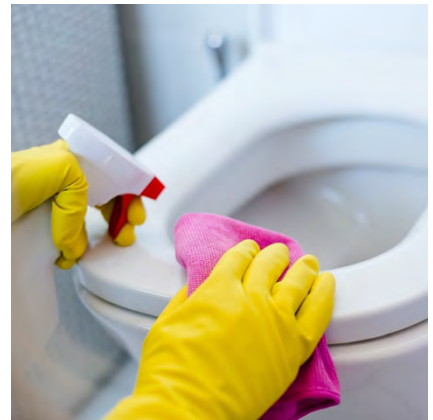


Cleaning of workplaces, work equipment and social facilities

- ✓ Ensure proper cleaning of the workplace and workstations and provide cleaning between shifts.



- ✓ Clean work equipment (handles) after use, and in any case before it is used by someone else; this also applies to mobile work equipment, such as forklift trucks.
- ✓ Pay extra attention to vending machines, including in areas for rest and lunch breaks and customer areas.
- ✓ Also pay attention to door handles, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, handles of cabinets and slides, washbasin taps, control buttons of appliances and machines, etc. You can also look at possibilities for opening doors, cabinets, etc. without contact or using the elbow.



- ✓ Pay attention to cleaning printer or machine control screens or provide alternative modes of operation (e.g. a touchscreen pen).



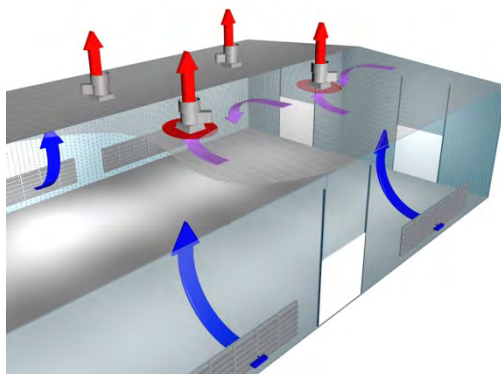
- ✓ Also pay attention to the hygiene and cleaning of smartphones, keyboards and computer mice.



- ✓ Pay particular attention to appropriate protective equipment, cleaning agents and instructions for cleaning staff.
- ✓ Be alert for possible contamination (like legionella) in unused pipes when restarting.

Ventilation and aeration

- ✓ Ensure adequate and regular ventilation of work areas and social facilities, either by natural ventilation or mechanical ventilation.



- ✓ Ensure proper maintenance of ventilation and/or aeration systems; check whether additional measures are necessary for systems in which air circulates.
- ✓ Do not use individual fans, which could spread the virus.

Collective protective equipment and personal protective equipment

- ✓ Collective protective equipment takes priority over personal protective equipment.
- ✓ The following can be regarded as collective protective equipment: installing partitions, putting up ribbons, applying markings, etc.



- ✓ The following can be regarded as personal protective equipment: protective clothing such as an apron, goggles, gloves, respiratory protection masks, etc.



Face masks

- ✓ When using face masks, take into account the general measures issued by the National Security Council and include these when determining the measures at the company level resulting from the risk analysis.
- ✓ In situations where the 1.5 metres cannot be respected and after exhausting organisational measures and collective protective equipment, wearing face masks can be necessary as an additional measure, albeit always in conjunction with other prevention measures and respecting the prevention hierarchy. In order to be effective, these masks must also be worn and taken off correctly.
- ✓ Face masks form a physical barrier to splashes or large droplets. They capture particles or bodily fluids emitted by the wearer. In this way, they have a role in preventing exposure. This type of mask is not a personal protective device. They do not protect the carrier against the inhalation of small particles or droplets containing the virus. They usually do not fit seamlessly on the face and the fabric does not filter small particles.
For more information about how to wear a face mask correctly, see: <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/facemask/>.
The right personal protective equipment will protect the wearer. However, they are reserved for workers at risk due to the nature of their work, such as caring for patients or working with biological or chemical agents. These are respiratory protection masks, such as FFP2 and FFP3, which protect the wearer against one or more risks to the health or safety of workers. Personal protective equipment has strict standards with degrees of protection and requires risk analysis, information and user training.
- ✓ The standards for face masks and personal protective equipment are (temporary) available for free on the website of the NBN.
 - [Official Belgian reference document face masks for daily use](#)
 - [Standards](#)



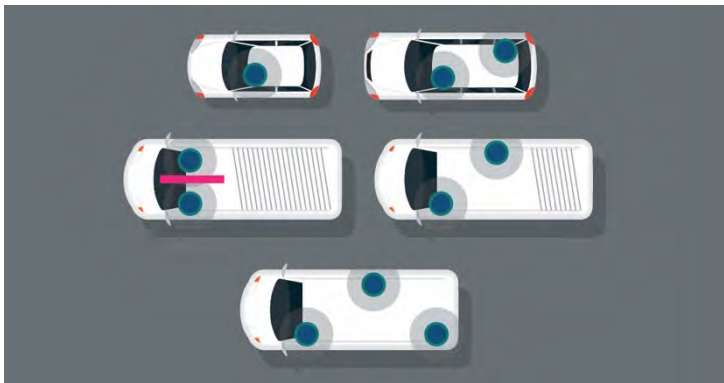
From home to work

Before you leave

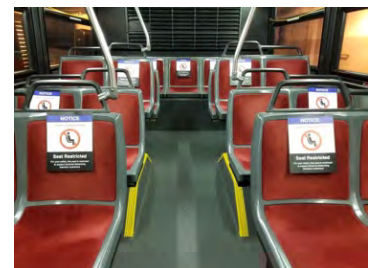
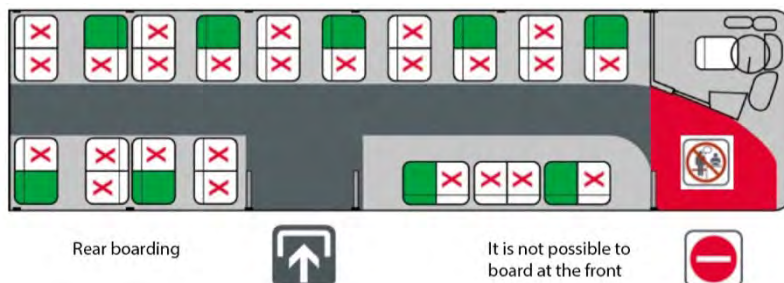
- ✓ Anyone who feels ill should stay at home and inform their employer according to the rules applicable in the company.
- ✓ Wash your hands before you leave home.

Transport

- ✓ If you come to work by bicycle or scooter, or on foot, then keep a sufficient distance. Pay attention to hygiene if you use shared bikes or scooters.
- ✓ Those who do arrive in a shared car must respect a minimum distance of 1.5 metres between each person during transport. The number of people that can be transported therefore varies depending on the type of vehicle.



- ✓ It is recommended to regularly clean and air out the car.
- ✓ Those arriving by public transport (train, tram, bus) must follow the instructions from the transport companies.

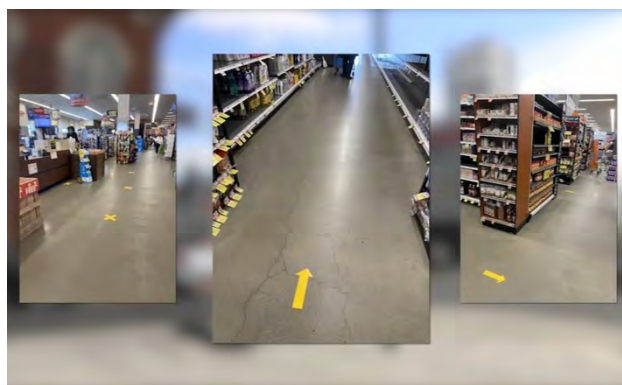


- ✓ Communal transport organised by the employer: respect social distancing and, if this is not possible, limit e.g. the number of persons in the vehicle and/or provide partitions (in a flexible material taking into account visibility and safety); and use additional face masks if necessary. Ensure that ventilation and aeration systems in means of transport are properly operated and maintained and pay particular attention to hygiene inside vehicles used by different people.

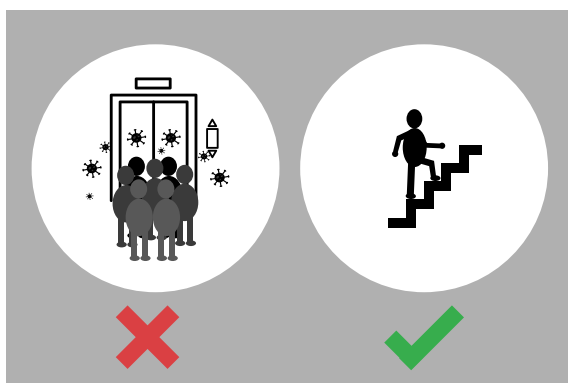


Upon arrival at work

- ✓ Anyone who feels ill, should go back home: apply the procedure in case of illness: <https://werk.belgie.be/nl/nieuws/hoe-ga-ik-als-werkgever-om-met-werknemers-die-corona-griepsymptomen-vertonen>.
- ✓ Avoid the simultaneous arrival of workers. Provide multiple entrances and exits if possible. Also pay attention to the layout of car parks (number, distribution, for bicycles too). Look at the possibilities of spreading the work out over time during a calendar day, e.g. possibilities for starting work earlier and later in the day too: this automatically has an impact on the number of people present. See Figure 15
- ✓ Use distancing measures at entrances, exits and passages with aids such as markings, ribbons or physical barriers, and consider one-way traffic in corridors where people pass by each other too often or without sufficient distance.



- ✓ Respect maximum social distancing and keep your distance. See Figure 7.
- ✓ Avoid using elevators. If this is not possible, then limit the number of people using the elevator at the same time (e.g. allow only 1 person in a smaller elevator), keep your distance and stand back to back.



- ✓ Provide one-way traffic or priority rules on narrow stairways where people cannot keep enough distance when passing by (e.g. right of way for those coming down). Keep a sufficient distance on staircases and escalators.

- ✓ No greetings that involve physical contact: there are plenty of alternatives to a handshake or a kiss.
- ✓ If you use clock in organise this in such a way that social distancing is respected, consider alternative ways of clocking in (e.g. contactless), cleaning between uses by different workers.



- ✓ Upon arrival: wash hands with (liquid) soap and according to hygiene regulations (see also hygiene measures); use posters as an awareness-raising tool. See Figure 3.



Changing rooms

- ✓ Respect social distancing, including when entering and leaving the room.



- ✓ Limit the number of people in the changing room at any one time.



- ✓ Redesign the concept of the changing room if necessary: temporarily provide additional changing rooms, create demarcated areas where up to 1 person may enter at any one time. Respect social distancing for those waiting. See also Figure 13.



Temporary changing room

- ✓ Provide regular ventilation and cleaning of the changing rooms, and in any case between shifts and at the end or beginning of each working day.
- ✓ Wash hands before and after use of the changing room



During work / at the workstation

Labour organisation and social distancing

- ✓ Organise the work in such a way that there is maximum potential for remote working from home for the functions where this is possible.
- ✓ Organise the work in such a way that social distancing is respected as far as possible for those present at work.
- ✓ Create sufficient distance between workstations; if this is not possible, then organise the layout of the workstation in such a way that a sufficient distance can be maintained, e.g. use only certain desks in open-plan offices, rearrange workstations or place them in separate rooms and work back-to-back instead of face-to-face. See Figure 13.



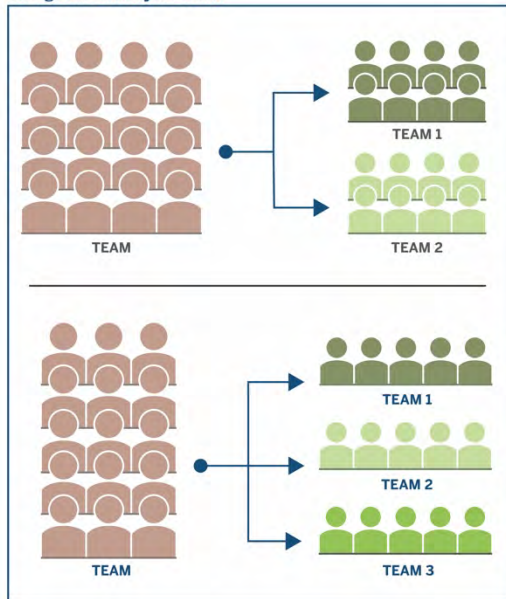
- ✓ If it is nonetheless not possible to maintain a sufficient distance from other people: use collective protective equipment in the first instance, such as screens or walls to compartmentalise workplaces, and/or organisational measures, e.g. spreading out working hours and breaks, flexible hours, working in shifts and adapting the sequencing of work tasks. See Figure 12 and Figure 15.



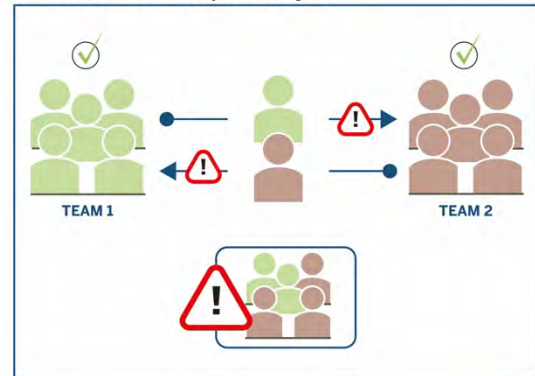
- ✓ Limit the number of workers working in one room at the same time as far as possible (by providing work from home, adjusting breaks, etc.) and limit the time that workers work or are present in one room at the same time as far as possible, including in printing rooms, archives, etc., and keep a sufficient distance while waiting

- ✓ When working in shifts or teams:
 - Limit the size of the teams.
 - Limit the rotation in the composition of the teams.

Change the size of your teams



Avoid rotations in the composition of your teams



- ✓ Do not enter rooms where you do not need to be present or do not need to carry out any work.
- ✓ Consider postponing work where it is not possible to maintain a sufficient distance and which is not urgent to a later date or reviewing work where it is estimated that a safe distance is not possible, but which is also urgent.

Work equipment

- ✓ Ensure good hygiene of work equipment (tools, smartphones, keyboards, etc.): work with your own equipment as much as possible and clean it regularly (especially when used by another worker).



Meetings and other gatherings

- ✓ Use alternatives to meetings, such as conferencing, training courses or works consultations, using digital means of communication and communication tools and tools. Start-up work meetings or toolbox meetings can be held via a loudspeaker system where everyone stays at their workstation and keeps their distance.



- ✓ If a meeting with physical presence is necessary, then apply the principles of social distancing: only the necessary people and keep a distance.



What if a worker falls ill at work?

- ✓ See the instructions on the FPS ELSD website: [How to deal with a worker who has symptoms of corona?](#)
- ✓ Provide workers with accurate information about the procedures applicable at the company in the event of illness.
- ✓ Ensure that the workers responsible for providing First Aid are familiar with the necessary corona guidelines and that they have the necessary personal protective equipment at their disposal. For an overview of the instructions, see this [diagram](#).



Sanitary facilities

- ✓ Wash hands before and after use of the toilet.
- ✓ Respect maximum social distancing, e.g. by temporarily providing extra toilets, by limiting the number of people present in the toilet area at any one time, by leaving sufficient space between urinals that can be used, and by not queueing inside the toilet area when it is crowded but outside.



- ✓ Provide paper towels for drying hands; avoid using electric hand dryers or towels.
- ✓ Provide liquid soap, preferably in dispensers that should not be touched.



- ✓ Thorough cleaning and ventilation at regular intervals.
- ✓ Consider installing (additional) sanitary columns if people have to walk too far to be able to wash their hands regularly, at the entrance or in the loading and unloading area, e.g. for externals. See also Figure 8.
- ✓ If there are showers, apply the relevant measures mentioned above.





Rest and lunch breaks

- ✓ Wash hands before and after break/lunch.
- ✓ Spread breaks and lunchtimes out so that they do not coincide and limit the number of simultaneous attendees at vending machines and in lunch or break rooms. See also Figure 15.



- ✓ Determine the maximum number of people that may be present in rest or lunchrooms.
- ✓ Limit the time you spend in rooms or places where groups of people are present.
- ✓ Organise seating in social areas and restaurants so that social distancing can be respected. See also Figure 13.



- ✓ Preferably make use of a home-made lunch or pre-packed meals.
- ✓ Avoid using cash.
- ✓ Provide suitable hand gels, e.g. at self-service or vending machines.
- ✓ Pay extra attention to hygiene in areas for rest and lunch breaks, e.g. at vending machines with frequent use over a short timeframe.
- ✓ These rules also apply to smoking areas or smoking rooms. See Figure 7.





Circulation

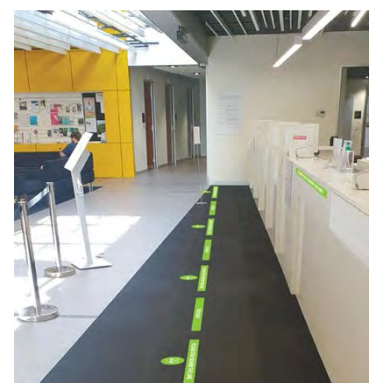
- ✓ Keep a sufficient distance and respect maximum social distancing.



- ✓ Use tools such as markings, ribbons or physical segregation to indicate the routes as clearly as possible, for workers as well as for customers and suppliers. Consider a circulation plan. See Figure 10.



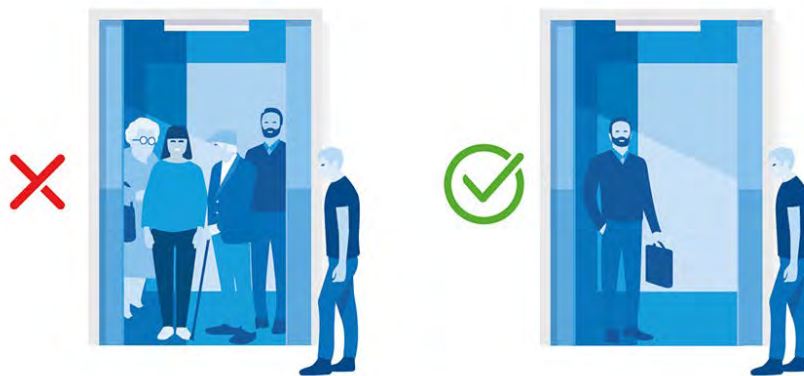
- ✓ Use distancing measures at entrances and exits and in corridors, with aids such as markings, ribbons or physical barriers.



- ✓ Ensure that persons need to pass by one another as little as possible, e.g. by placing markings on the ground or considering one-way traffic or priority rules in corridors and stairs (e.g. right of way for those coming down) or other places where people must pass by without sufficient distance. Keep a sufficient distance on staircases and escalators.



Avoid the use of the elevator; if this is not possible, then limit the number of people using the elevator at the same time (e.g. allow only 1 person in a smaller elevator), keep a distance and stand back-to-back.



- ✓ For safety reasons, leave doors that should not be kept closed open as much as possible to avoid frequent touching of doors. See Figure 11.
- ✓ Use these rules both inside and outside the building, e.g. in car parks, for going to production lines and workstations, for going to social facilities, coffee corners or smoking rooms.
- ✓ Limit evacuation exercises to theory and remote testing.

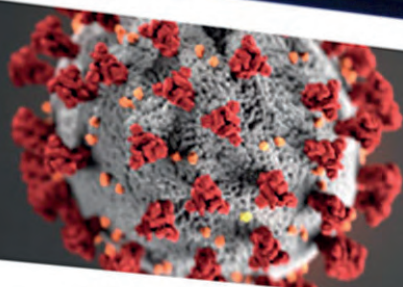


Going back home

- ✓ Wash your hands before departure.



- ✓ Spread departure times out as far as possible.
- ✓ See transport at 'From home to work'.
- ✓ When you get home: wash your hands



REFERENCE PEOPLE

Prevention adviser:

Mr Peter Prevention
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Corona contact:

Mr William Wiseacre
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william.wiseacre@company.be



Rules for external persons, such as visitors, customers, suppliers and parents

- ✓ Post the rules that apply to external persons where they enter and, if possible, notify them in advance. External must always follow the organisation's instructions. See also Figure 8.
- ✓ Spread visits out so there are not too many external persons present at the same time; make appointments for visits in advance; e.g. no visits that are too long, maximum 1 customer per 10m² in the shop, shop individually as much as possible.
- ✓ If possible, receive external persons in a separate room and limit the number of people present. See also Figure 13.



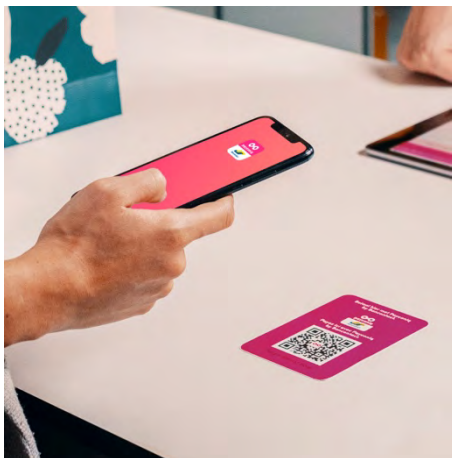
- ✓ Reorganise the layout of the reception area, e.g. by providing protective equipment at the reception desk (walls and screens), remote reception, the facility for visitors to wash their hands, or providing suitable handgels if washing hands is not possible and providing a place where mail or parcels can be deposited without contact. See Figure 13.



- ✓ Suppliers carry out their deliveries with as little physical contact with other people as possible (loading and unloading entirely by the supplier or entirely by the recipient).



- ✓ Delivery schedules are best spread out so that there are not too many external persons present at any one time.
- ✓ Work with orders and arrange pick-up hours and/or pick-up points outside the building.
- ✓ Payments should be made electronically; avoid cash. Also clean the payment terminal regularly.



Working with external workers or self-employed persons ('working with third parties') or with several employers at the same workplace

- ✓ If several employers work with their workers or with self-employed persons at the same workplace, they should co-ordinate the measures to be applied.
- ✓ Clients should make clear agreements in advance with contractors and sub-contractors and exchange information in good time about the measures that apply at the workplace of the company where these contractors and sub-contractors will come to work; the contractors should provide their own workers with the necessary information and instructions in good time.
- ✓ Self-employed persons and freelancers going to work at a company should be informed in advance of the measures that apply at the company where they are going to work (e.g. using a checklist).
- ✓ Temporary workers must maintain the same working method and be given the same instructions as the organisation's own workers; they must also be treated in the same way (e.g. with regard to protective equipment).

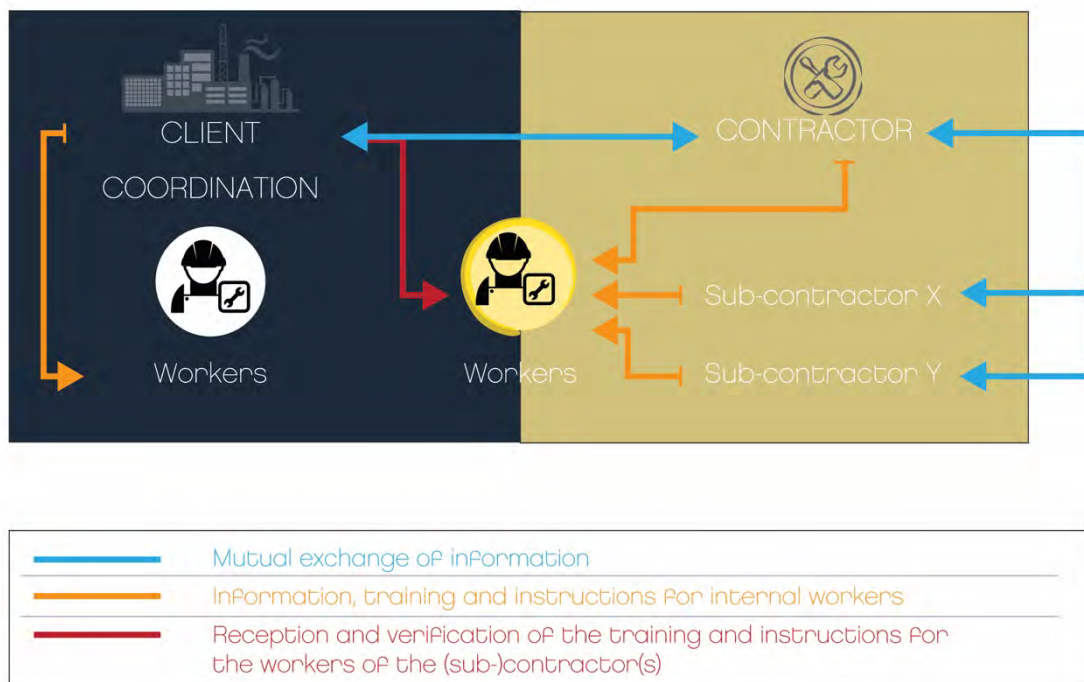


Figure 4. Diagram working with third parties



Working on the move (at other employers or at private houses)

- ✓ Clear agreements should be made before the commencement of the work; the employer should request timely information about the measures that apply at the location where the work is to be carried out; the employer should provide his own workers with the necessary information and instructions about this in good time and certainly before the commencement of the work. The employer may take additional measures if necessary. See also Figure 4.
- ✓ Provide a tool (e.g. LMRA - Last Minute Risk Analysis) or a short checklist for the workers.

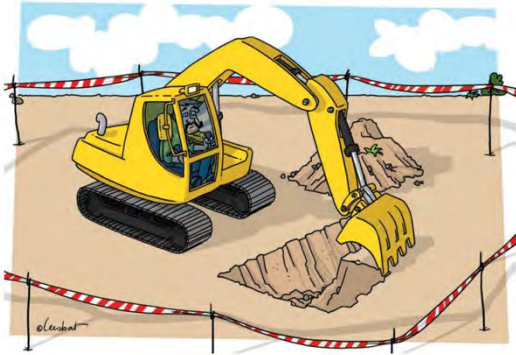


- ✓ A checklist may be made available to transporters.
- ✓ Delivery of parcels, orders, etc.: avoid contact for deliveries; agree on a time; adjust rules for confirmation of receipt (no signature).
- ✓ Anyone who is going to carry out maintenance, repairs, cleaning, etc. at private homes or at companies: if the presence of the occupant or workers is not necessary, the occupant or workers should preferably go to another room; in the case of work at private homes, the occupant may be asked in advance to indicate whether ill people are present: in that case, the work should be postponed unless it is very urgent; specific rules should apply to care for people (e.g. home care).
- ✓ Use your own work equipment and protective equipment, and not that of third parties or other workers.



Off-site work on construction sites, public property, parks and roads

- ✓ Keep a sufficient distance and respect maximum social distancing.



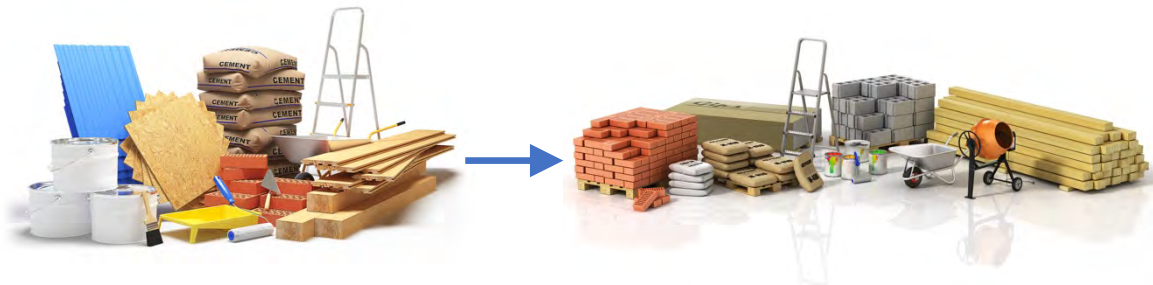
- ✓ Restrict unauthorised access, e.g. using physical dividers or ribbons.



- ✓ Install the necessary facilities for hand hygiene.



- ✓ Pay special attention to the storage of materials on a site (so that not all workers have to collect their materials from the same place and would therefore be unable to keep a sufficient distance).

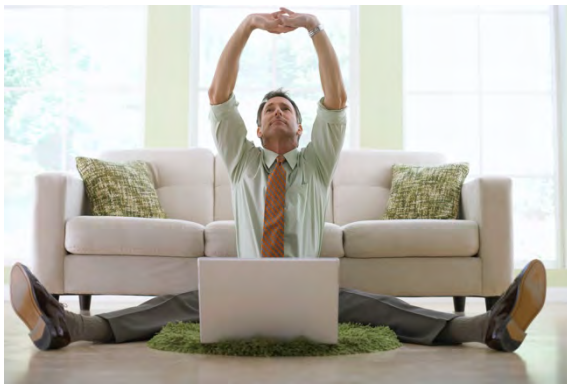


- ✓ Ensure good hygiene of work equipment: work with your own equipment as far as possible, clean this regularly (and especially when used by another worker).
- ✓ If social facilities are present: see also rest and lunch breaks and social facilities; avoid (lunch) breaks in confined spaces, such as lorries or small site sheds, as far as possible.
- ✓ See also sanitary tips.
- ✓ See also tips on loading and unloading at suppliers.



Working at home

- ✓ Make sure you have clear agreements about working hours, tasks, planning and consultation.
- ✓ Provide appropriate instructions in relation to communication and communication tools.
- ✓ Point out the importance of breaks and avoid workers putting in too many hours due to a false sense of responsibility.
- ✓ Provide an ergonomic setup, good lighting and a workstation that is conveniently furnished with a properly adjusted chair and table.
- ✓ Discuss the welfare aspects related to working from home with the workers, including the work-related psychosocial aspects.



X



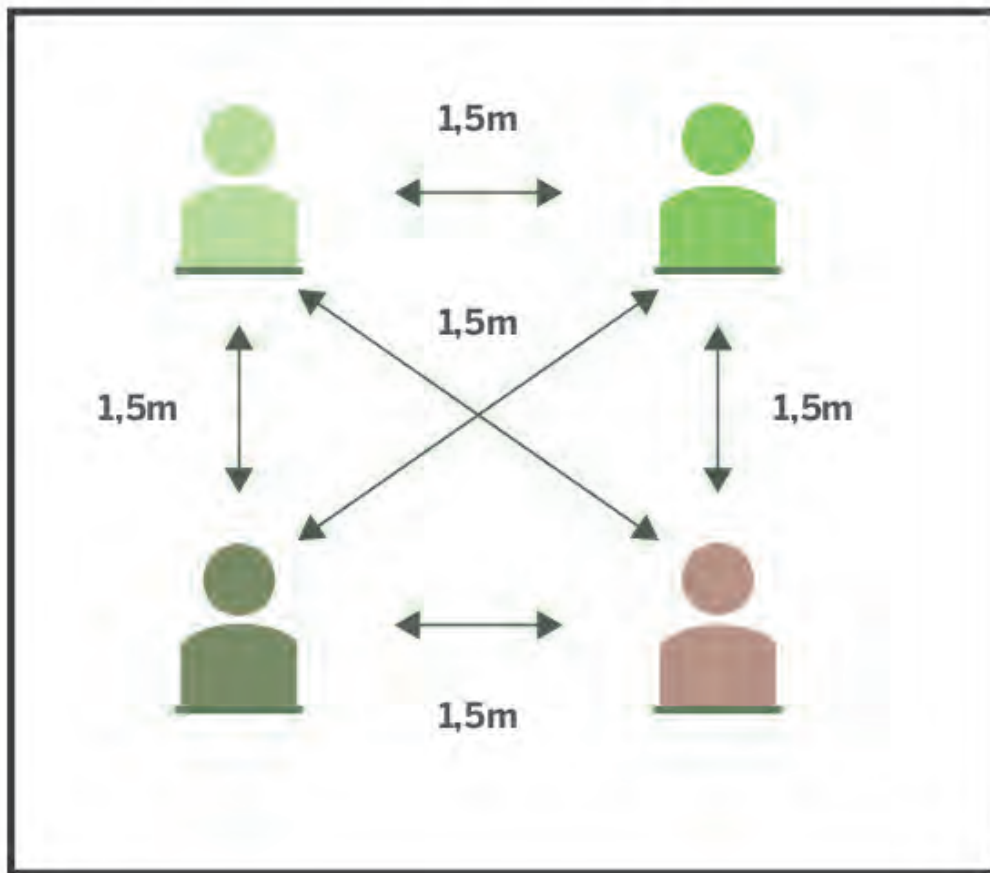
X



✓



social distancing



Social distancing: illustration of scenarios

Floor plan before corona crisis

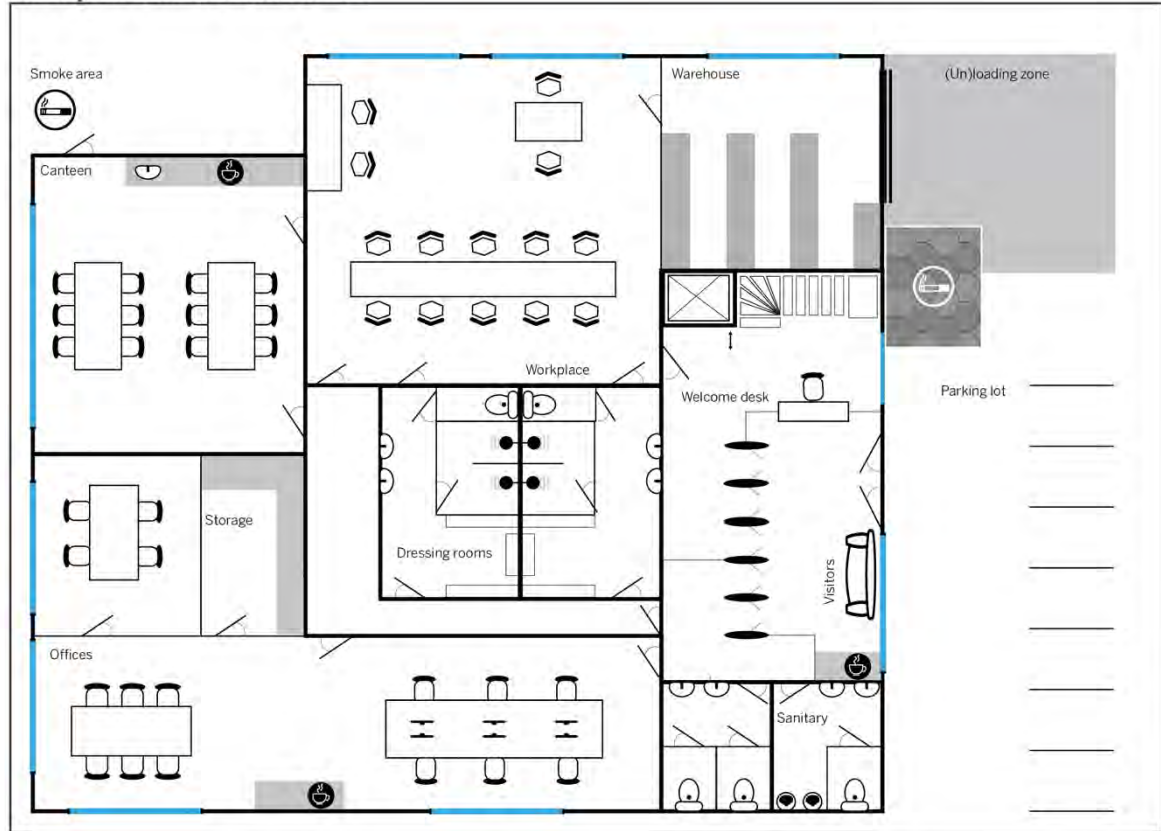


Figure 5. Floor plan before corona crisis

Situation normal occupation



Figure 6. Situation normal occupation

Scenario social distancing

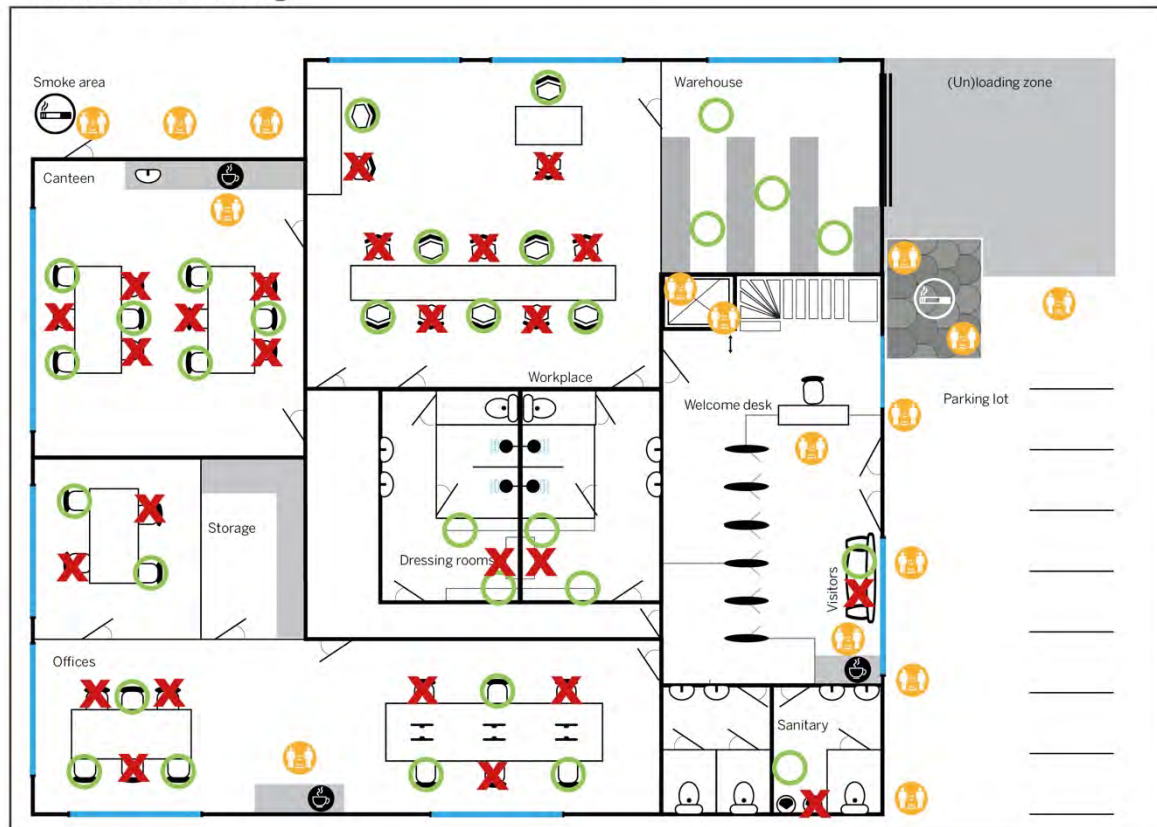


Figure 7. Scenario social distancing

Scenario sanitary stations and posters

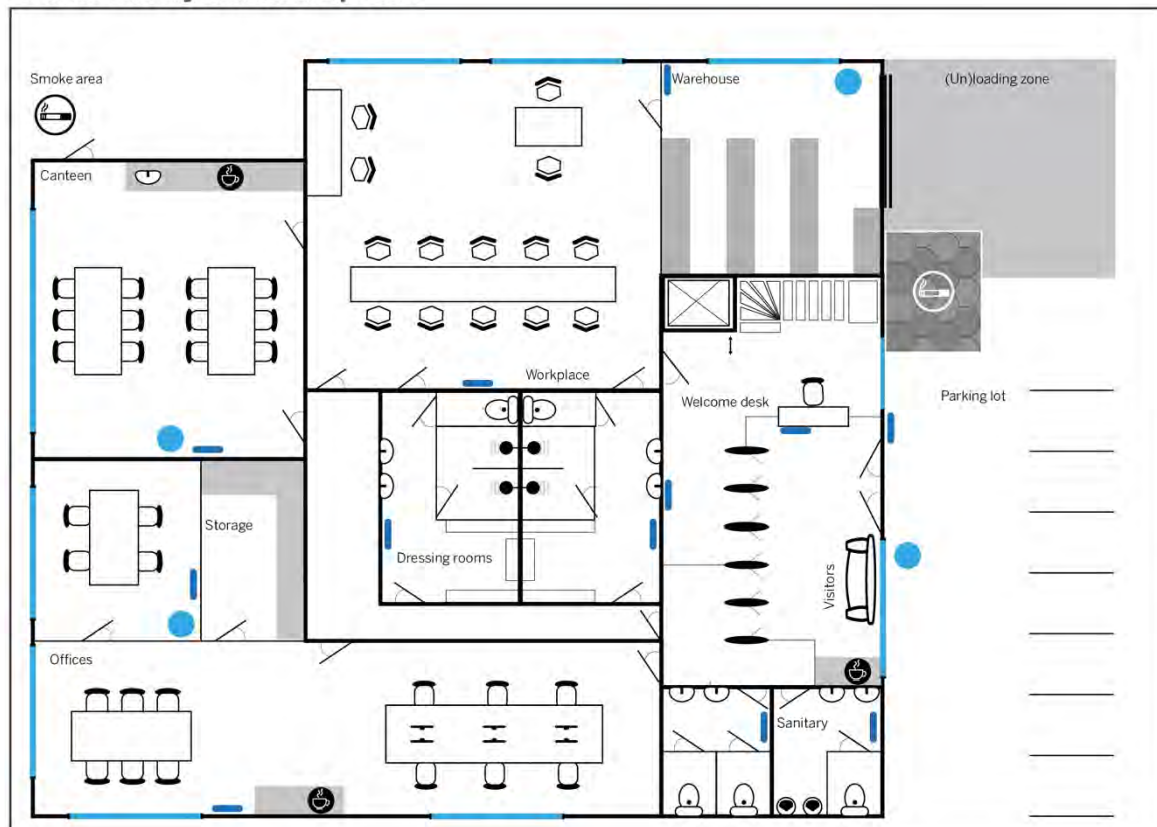


Figure 8. Scenario sanitary stations and posters



Pedestrian circulation in normal conditions

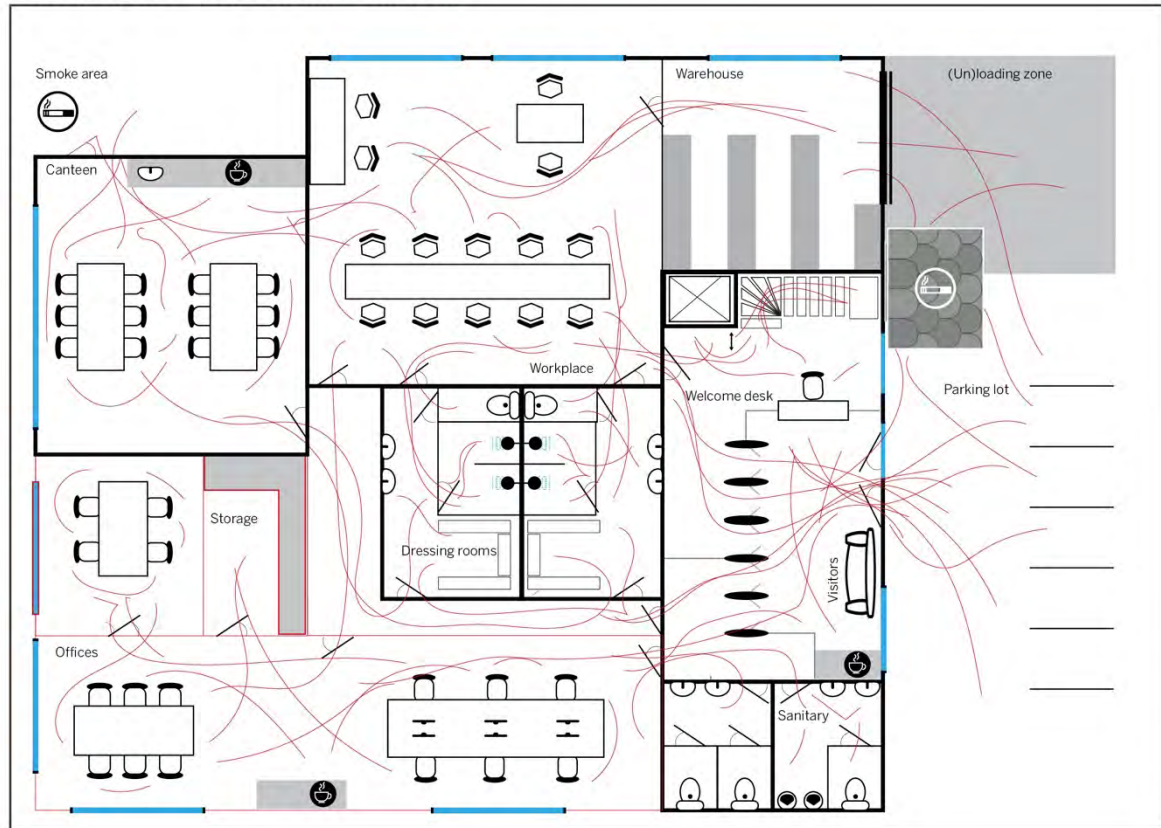


Figure 9. Pedestrian circulation in normal conditions

Pedestrian circulation plan

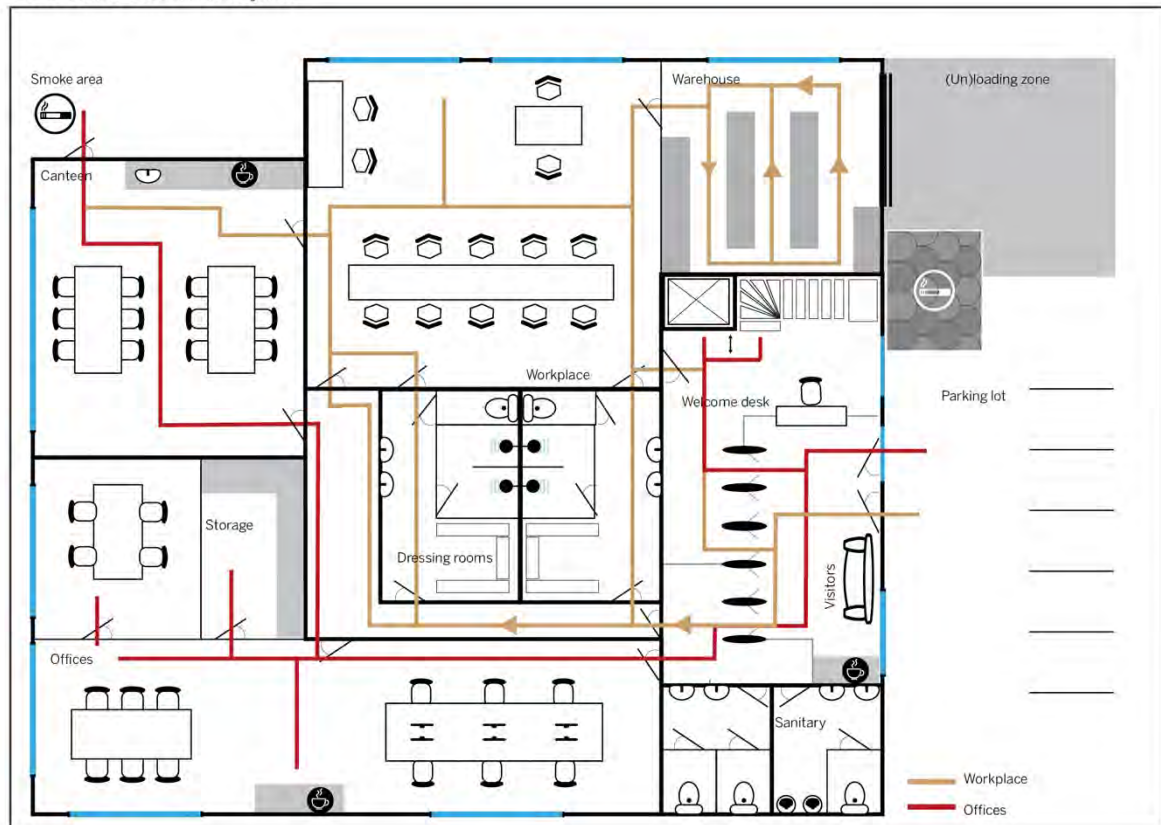


Figure 10. Pedestrian circulation plan

Scenario doors always open

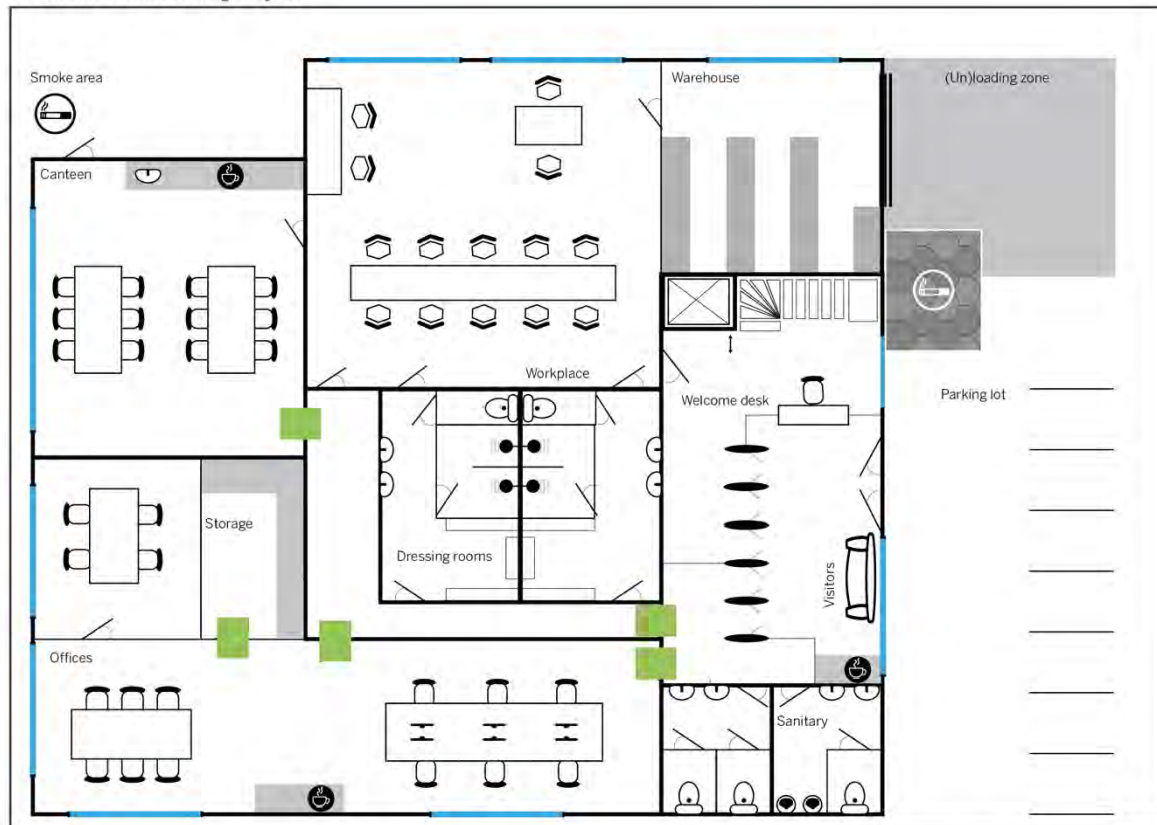


Figure 11. Scenario some doors always open

Scenario screens and barriers

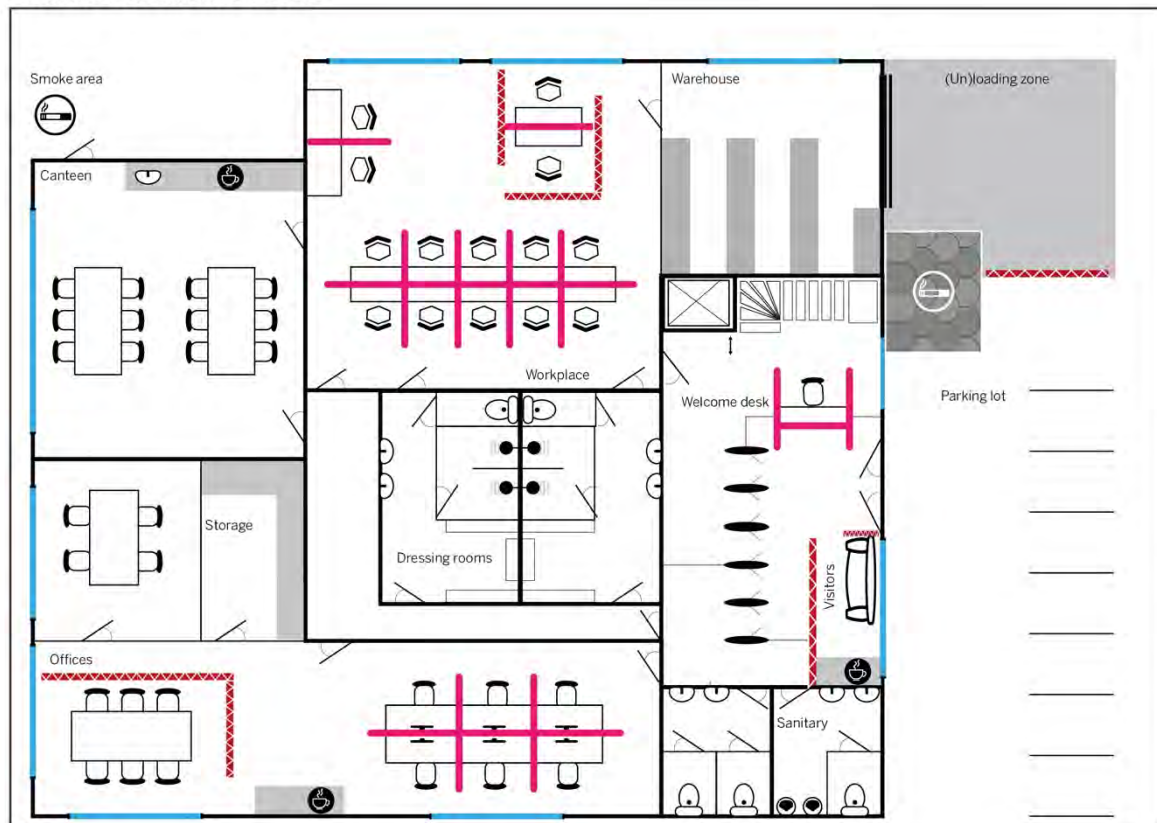


Figure 12. Scenario screens and barriers



Scenario reorganisation

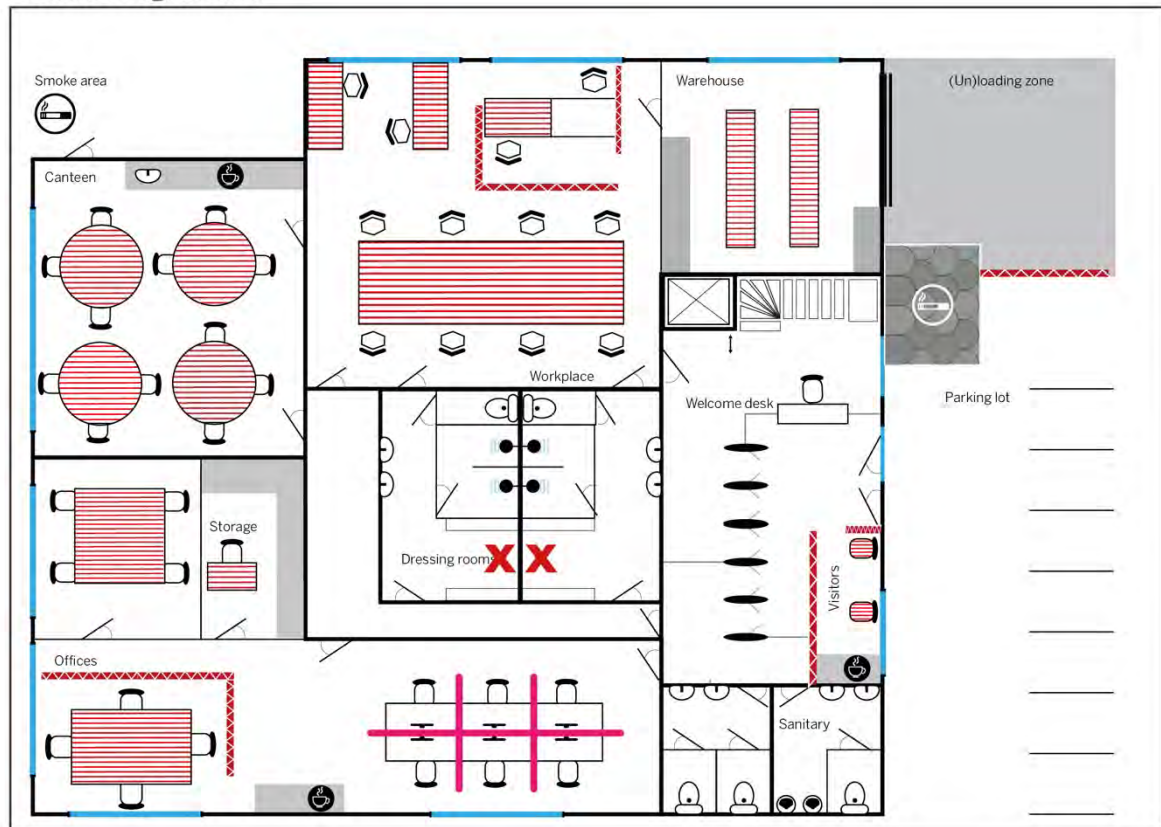


Figure 13. Scenario reorganisation

Overview combines measures

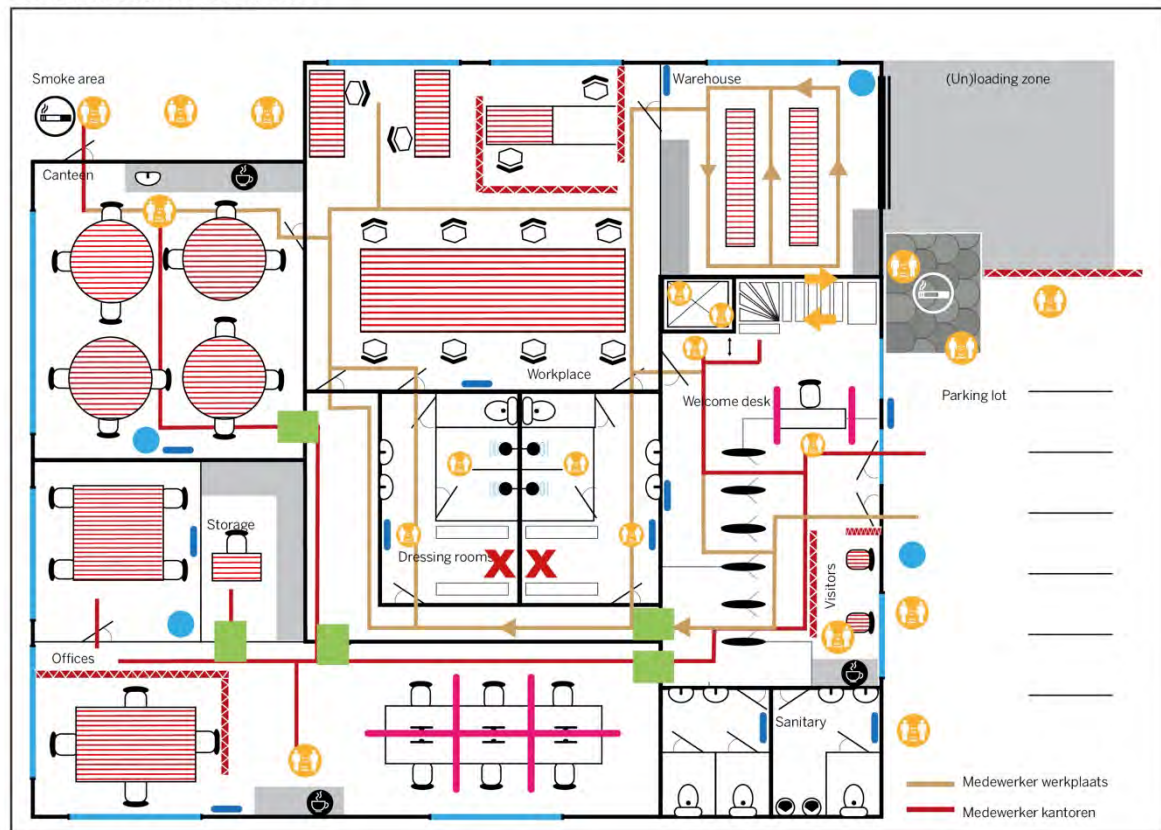


Figure 14. Overview combined measures

Organisational measures

Normal situation



16 employees: working together, on a break together.

Situation 1



16 employees: alternating breaks.
2 staff on a break, 14 staff continue to work.

Situation 2



16 employees, separate start times.
2 staff on a break, between 2 and 14 staff working at the same time.

Situation 3



16 employees in 2 shifts, only 8 staff working at the same time

Legend

Working time Lunch break Short break

Figure 15. Organisational measures



Useful links

www.info-coronavirus.be

www.crisiscentrum.be

www.coronaviruscovid19.be

www.employment.belgium.be/en

Other useful links can be found on the FPS ELSD website.

