

WEAR **FAIR**



**Ethical
Trading
Initiative**

For workers' rights. For better business.

Discussion Sheet on Factory Health and Safety

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Introduction

The consequences of COVID-19 global pandemic are clearly visible all over the world and will have long-term effects. Most countries around the world have reacted with some variation of lockdown and quarantine measures, all to help contain and avoid spreading the disease. The next phase will focus on reopening countries and resuming industrial activities. In many garment production countries, this means that workers are returning to their factories, rightfully worried about their wellbeing. Another scenario is that a factory may not have shut down or been able to sustain certain parts of production or switch to other product groups such as making face masks. In this scenario, the protection of workers against COVID-19 is also of the utmost importance.

Keeping workers safe needs to be top priority amongst both clothing brands, their suppliers and the worker representatives. To give targeted guidance on how to keep workers safe, we have developed this discussion sheet which, in combination with our COVID-19 specific health and safety checklist, gives a comprehensive overview of what measures to consider and what to look out for in the conversation between brands and their suppliers.

Aim and structure

When evaluating what efforts are appropriate to implement, the first place to start is always to seek out the guidance provided by the local authorities in production countries. This should be considered leading and be at the basis of all efforts made at any production facility. Factories should only (re) open when this is allowed by the local authorities.



The guidance Fair Wear and Ethical Trading Initiative aim to provide here should serve as a catalogue from which to draw inspiration. With insight into the complete array of possible safety measures within a garment factory, member brands can have informed discussions with their suppliers about existing measures and potential additions to complement these.

When it comes to COVID-19, there are no definite solutions and the risk of infection cannot be eliminated completely. This risk will remain as long as people keep gathering, but the goal is to put efforts in place that minimise this risk to the furthest extent possible, given the circumstances.

Implementing health and safety measures for COVID-19 has far-reaching implications, and we seek to provide insight and clarity into these. Factories and member brands should work together to ensure workers are as protected as possible. Guidance from local authorities should be considered leading, however if the standards in the production facility are higher than the regulation, then the higher standard should be attained.

Keeping workers safe while keeping factories running to secure income for workers and stable delivery of orders is in everyone's best interest.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISCUSSION SHEET:

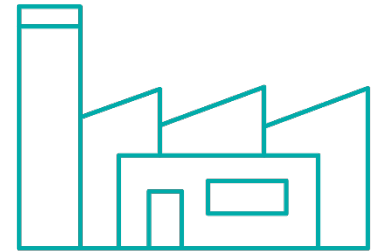
- A look at the considerations of factories and brands
- A look at the universal health and safety measures
- The aspect of social dialogue and gender lens focus
- A situational breakdown of precautionary measures
- External sources of contamination
- Link to further resources

Guidance from local authorities should be considered leading and be at the basis of all efforts made at any production facility

Considerations of factories and brands

SUPPLIER CONSIDERATIONS

The responsibility to provide a safe and healthy working environment lies first and foremost with the employer (i.e. factory management). The employer's willingness to implement all necessary safety and health measures is of the utmost importance.



Please note: whatever measures the factory management plans to implement should be coordinated with the relevant local authorities/institutions. The first step to fight a pandemic is to secure the right information at the right time. Check your main sources of information and limit gossip. Establish good relations with the local authorities responsible for combatting the pandemic and maintain open channels for communication.

Factories need to consider carefully what is possible and best suited for their specific production location, taking into account the layout of the production facility, the number of workers, the resources at hand, etc. Before taking measures, it is important to consult with unions and include worker representation in close dialogue during every step of the process. There could also be a case for workers being innovative in the precautionary measures to be taken. This could potentially come through committee engagement / worker representation.

The cost of implementing measures

While some measures are straightforward and relatively inexpensive to implement, other measures discussed in this guidance are significantly more costly and complex. Making a plan with a detailed budget of the needed measures will be useful in determining the most effective course of action. Factories should consider that efforts taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are also an investment as these will directly benefit the business when workers do not have to take sick leave, thereby allowing production to continue.

The cost of implementing safety measures will, however, show up both as a direct cost for additional purchases, extended logistical services and possible rebuilds, and indirectly in the form of decreased efficiency. The increased cost will (and should) eventually be mirrored in the price-setting of the product. A possibility to explore here is participating in the co-financing of measures together with

the supplier. In order to accurately estimate how the added cost of safety measures, as well as the likely decrease in production efficiency, will influence the price we recommend making use of the Labour Minute Costing Tool¹ developed by Fair Wear which has now been optimized to include COVID-19 specific costs.

It is important that a factory can be transparent about the real costs when implementing safety measures and openly share the information about both the efforts taken, the cost as well as their implications.

Chain of information

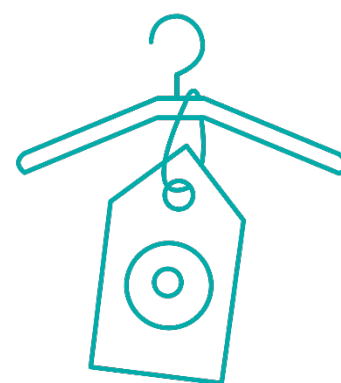
To avoid miscommunication and misinformation, it is essential for factory management to establish an effective chain of information—who is originating the information and how the information is disseminated to the factory, but also to understand what information is distributed outside of the factory. Workers need to be thoroughly informed about what measures are being taken and why. Social dialogue becomes a critical element here, as does direct worker involvement.

Outside the factory, information will flow freely and it will reflect the image of the factory as well as the conditions within factory. Every withheld piece of information is progressively damaging the image of the factory and of the brand, so factory management should be careful and address all worries and concerns expressed by worker representatives. Contagious diseases are fought with knowledge and coordinated activities, not with silence.

BRAND CONSIDERATIONS

As a brand, you do not only have a responsibility to follow up with factories on health and safety measures but you also have a real opportunity to guide and support suppliers.

While there may not be a chance to be suggesting specific safety measures to all suppliers, we still believe that open dialogue is critical, as is the ability to give informed feedback on measures taken and, if necessary, provide further suggestions.



¹ <https://www.fairwear.org/resources-and-tools/labour-minute-costing-calculators>

This guide aims to help you engage in such a dialogue with suppliers. The fact that production is often spread over several countries means that, as a brand, you are in a unique position to collect good supplier practices and recommend these to other suppliers. The same goes for passing along knowledge and materials provided by industry stakeholders, including this guide and/or the accompanying checklist.

As a brand, it is important to be aware of your role and responsibility here and be sufficiently informed about the practical and financial implications on suppliers and, as much as possible, help share the burden. This entails:

- Be open to accommodate price changes as a result of extended COVID-19 measures. We recommend the using the Labour Minute Costing Tool² developed by Fair Wear to accurately estimate how COVID-19 precautions and decreased efficiency will influence the price.
- Consulting suppliers on production deadlines and production targets
- Being lenient on deadlines
- Upholding suppliers' cash-flow by observing agreed payment terms and possibly advancing payments
- Possibly co-finance factory COVID-19 prevention efforts

² <https://www.fairwear.org/resources-and-tools/labour-minute-costing-calculators>

Universal health and safety measures

The most significant measure for disease prevention is universally considered to be increasing hygiene. The main goal is to prevent the virus from spreading. The measures suggested here are the basic recommendations, but it is important to mention again that the recommendation and guidance of local authorities always must be considered leading.

When preventive measures are planned, they need to follow the **SAFETY PYRAMID STRUCTURE**:

- 1** Elimination
- 2** Substitution
- 3** Engineering controls
- 4** Administrative and organisational controls
- 5** Personal protective equipment (PPE)

As the first step the factory management must first try to eliminate the possibility of contracting the virus. It is at this moment not possible to eliminate the risk of contracting the virus.

The second step looks at substitution. While office staff may be able to substitute by to some extent perform tasks remotely and have meeting via remote platforms, it is not possible for factory operators to substitute or replace the risk.

The third step of engineering is where the prevention measures will start in garment factories and include such measures as rearranging the work floor, building physical barriers and making one-way passages. All these measures should ideally take place prior to workers returning to the factory.

The fourth step is where the organizational measures steps in and includes adjusting the work schedule, monitoring health and safety upon entering the facility, upgraded hygiene procedures and disinfecting measures. Setting up solid procedures is paramount in ensuring a successful implementation.

As the fifth step the factory must provide employees with personal protective equipment, adequate for the level of risk and at no extra cost to workers.

GENERAL FACTORY MEASURES

Our recommendations for general measures

- Professional disinfecting is an option to bring factory hygiene to a baseline
- Optimise factory layout for practicing social distancing
- Supplying sufficient facilities for hand washing
- Upgrading and increasing cleaning efforts throughout the factory
- Supplying sufficient materials for cleaning and disinfecting
- Supply personal protection equipment (PPE)



PERSONAL MEASURES FOR EACH WORKER

Our recommendations for personal hygiene are:

- Promoting personal and collective hygiene is a priority for everybody
- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently and avoid touching your mouth and face
- Avoid touching surfaces in common areas
- Sneeze and cough into your elbow or a paper tissue
- Possibly wear a face mask if in close proximity to other workers
- Wipe down workstations daily, especially if these are shared with another workers
- Monitor your own health and contact a medical professional if you feel unwell and/or show symptoms of COVID-19 BEFORE entering the work facility or taking transport with other workers.
- When implementing higher levels of hygiene measures, adopt the attitude that you have the virus and are trying to protect other people from contracting it.
- Keep all of these measures in mind, also during leisure time

Social distancing/keeping physical distance

Another key principle that has been commonly accepted as an effective measure is the concept of *social distancing*, which means keeping a sufficient distance between people when two or more people gather. There are many discussions about what exactly the distance should be.

Most sources that are internationally available, recommended a minimum of 1.5 meters. Everywhere people gather, efforts therefore should be made for workers to be able to maintain a minimum distance of 1.5 meters from one another.³ If this is not possible, the use of masks⁴ is recommended.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE, GRIEVANCE AND REMEDIATION

The Covid-19 situation is obviously the cause for much uncertainty and insecurity among garment workers who not only fear for their lively hood if losing their job and income, but also are concerned about their health and wellbeing when continuing to perform their working task in the factory.

The measures a factory would need to take could have substantial implications for the everyday life of the workers. These range from complying with national lock-downs, change of working hours, reduction of working hours to perhaps even periods of unemployment. At the very least there will be a different way of working and interacting with colleagues which requires understanding, adaptation and trust on both sides.

Combatting Covid-19 in the workplace effectively is first and foremost a collective effort and the recommendable steps in ensuring a good collaboration would be:

- Factory management should keep workers well informed about what measures are being taken and the reason behind them and ensure that workers have access to a grievance mechanism and can get their concerns addressed. In this case we are referring to reinforcing the internal grievance mechanism in the factory, but also emphasizing external grievance mechanisms, such as the Fair Wear complaint helpline, is an example of such activity.
- Factory management engaging in social dialogue with workers / worker representation is an important step to agree on measures to take and share information.

³ Please consult your local authorities on this measure. In case if there are no recommendations, we encourage you to use the recommendations provided by Fair Wear.

⁴ Please refer to guidance on the correct use of masks provided by the WHO: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

- Factories are advised to consult with local unions and discuss the implemented measures and their implications

It is important that workers can find ways to openly address their concerns and find answers to their questions. Even more importantly it is to make sure that workers experiencing symptoms that could be Covid-19 related feel safe to come forward.

The gender lens

When evaluating the implications of COVID-19 it is important to keep a sharp eye out for any issues that may emerge related to gender. In this document we discuss such measures as rearranging the workspace, changing working hours and adjusting transportation patterns. All of these measures could have different gender related implications both in and outside the workplace. It is important to be aware of this and see if additional steps have to be taken to avoid negative impact.

Within the factory possibly tension could mount as a result of frustration to the changes happening and restrictions imposed. As the stress on line managers increases to keep producing under challenging circumstances, so does the risk of harassment and verbal abuse towards workers. A good social dialogue and effective channels of grievance and remediation will go a long way in mitigating this, but the implications extend also beyond the workplace.

Changes in transportation patterns may result in workers having to spend longer commuting and possibly do so at irregular hours. Particularly for female workers this increases the change of (sexual) harassment if for example they need to walk longer distances or wait in unpopulated areas. This risk is further elevated in the hours between sundown and sunrise.

In many production countries it is common for female workers to have extra responsibilities around the household a with child care and in the event that a female worker falls ill, needs hospitalization or the family needs to be quarantined, extra support would be needed to help out the family.

Situational breakdown

The exact situation facing each factory will vary and our recommendation therefore needs to be adjusted to match the specific circumstances surrounding each production facility. Below input for issues to discuss. Whenever discussing this make sure that measures are in accordance with the regulations provided by local health authorities and governments.

PREPARING THE FACTORY FOR WORKERS TO RETURN

Purchase a sufficient amount of personal hygiene and protection equipment

- Face masks
- Gloves
- Disinfecting hand gel
- Soap
- Cleaning alcohol
- Paper towels
- Body temperature measuring devices (Infrared thermometers)

Extended hygiene measures

- Make sure sufficient hand-washing facilities are available
- Are additional cleaning staff needed to upgrade the hygiene measures? This could be in terms of additional cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces that are continuously touched by workers, such as check-in/out machines, door knobs, railings, chairs and tabletops.
- Allow frequent aeration of the work premises to let in fresh air.
- During breaks, allow workers to go outside for some exposure to daylight/sunlight. A limited exposure to sunlight increases levels of vitamin D, and UV rays are helpful in fighting germs and infections, although there is no absolute evidence that UV rays will kill the corona virus.

Factory clinic

- Is there a factory clinic in place?
- Does the clinic have sufficient capacity and supplies?
- Is medical staff available during all working hours of the factory?
- Ensure adequate training for medical staff to deal with COVID-19 related health issues

Disinfecting the premises

- Having the entire factory professionally disinfected. When working with any type of disinfecting solvents, always observe the manufacturer's instructions on the concentrate doses and how to correctly apply it. Take all necessary precautions and use all recommended personal safety equipment. Strictly follow safety data sheets.

Signs, screens and markings

- Produce clear signs/instructions in the local language that can be placed in prominent places all over the factory, reminding people of the key measures to observe.
- Use floor markings to help people maintain their distance when walking in hallways or when queuing.
- Directional markings can also be used to create one-way passages. Where people need to pass one another, screens can be used to form the passageways, always allowing people to move in the same direction.

Rearranging the work floor

- Increase the space between workstations if possible.
- Covering every second workstation so it cannot be used is one suggestion on how to increase space between workers.
- If possible, install solid transparent barricades on the workstation⁵
- Incorporate more scheduled shifts so workers can rotate.
- Masks are recommended in areas where social distancing is not possible⁶
- Suggestion to use plexiglass screens or plastic to isolate workers from each other.
- Check that proper air circulation is not compromised as a result of the barricades
- Re-evaluate FIRE HAZARDS

AFTER HAVING REARRANGED THE WORK FLOOR AND BUILT BARRICADES AND SEPARATION WALLS THAT WERE NOT PART OF THE ORIGINAL STRUCTURE IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE A RENEWED LOOK AT POSSIBLE FIRE HAZARDS AND CHECK THAT ESCAPE ROUTES ARE NOT BLOCKED, AND THAT ACCESS TO FIRE FIGHTING AND OTHER SAFETY EQUIPMENT REMAINS.

⁵ Please keep in mind that constructed cubicles must not block the influx of air into the working area

⁶ Please refer to guidance on the correct use of masks provided by the WHO: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

Prepare training on health and safety measures

- Set up a COVID-19 Task Force within the factory
- Educate security personal on observing and upholding safety measures
- Plan training on health and safety for worker representatives
- Appoint safety ambassadors and make sure they are well trained. Safety ambassadors are regular workers who has the task of reminding everyone in his/her section of the extended hygiene measures.
- Produce leaflets/handouts and posters to inform all workers about relevant safety measures

Hostel accommodation

In the case that workers are living in company owned hostel accommodation, it is important that procedures and hygiene routines, similar to as those in the factory, are implemented and observed also in the living quarters.

TRANSPORTATION

All measures taken within the factory become ineffective if measures are not taken while bringing workers to and from the factory. Transportation of workers is done differently in different places,

When coaches/vans are used the factory is advised to consult the transport company to make sure that they also are taking measures to avoid their personnel becoming a source of contamination for factory workers.

To and from the factory

- If possible, increase the number of transport vehicles/shuttles to enable social distancing
- Seated workers in a zig-zag pattern would be one suggestion to secure a proper distance
- Consider the use of facial masks and other PPE during transportation and make these available to workers at no extra cost
- Discuss expanded hygiene measures with the transportation company
- Incorporate more shifts, possibly in combination with reducing the number of working hours
This should always be done in consultation with worker representation and/or workforce.

- Be alert to possible gender related issues that could occur due to the changed pattern of transportation that may involve workers having to commute at irregular hours, wait longer or walk increased distances in unpopulated areas.

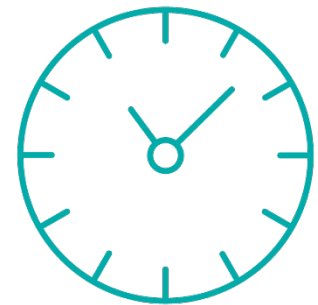
In the event of workers using public transportation similar precautions should be taken as indicated above to enable workers to protect themselves.

In South-East Asia it is common for workers to commute to the factory individually using a scooter or small motorcycle. In these cases masks could be considered as an added protective measure as it can be difficult to ensure proper Social Distancing in the crowded parking lots as well as on the public streets.

DURING WORKING HOURS

Upon entering the facility

- Do not allow any workers with a raised temperature or those not feeling well into the factory. Measuring workers' temperature with an infrared thermometer to check them for fever when entering the factory is a possibility
- Make sure workers feel safe in expressing if they are feeling unwell and enable them to take paid sick leave if needed



Workstations

- If machines are shared, it is important to disinfect the contact points, especially if machines are shared between several workers.

Social distancing should be practiced everywhere in and around the factory

- In the locker rooms and toilets
- In the corridors and hallways. Sticker markings on the floor will help people to observe the proper distance.
- In the lunch hall, where number of seats should be reduced and marked to help workers observe the distance. This should also apply to outside areas

Monitoring one's own well-being and that of others

Each person is responsible for monitoring his/her own wellbeing and for following the guidance of local authorities and that of the workplace. It is, however, also important to keep an eye out for the

wellbeing of other colleagues and to remind and help each other to follow the health and safety guidelines.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Most likely, the quantity of the waste will increase due to the increased hygiene measures. The factory management must treat all waste as potentially hazardous biological waste and dispose of it securely. If there is no established procedure for such waste disposal, disposal should be done by assigned personnel in separate plastic bags at a designated location. Coordinate regular waste pick-up with an authorised company, or, in coordination with the local authorities, incinerate it.

AFTER WORKING HOURS

At the home

Most people contract COVID-19 from people they know and close family. During the pandemic, it is crucial that all hygienic measures are followed and implemented. Social distancing in the neighbourhood and living environment will limit the spread of the virus.

Each employee has an individual responsibility to follow instructions from the authorities and those given by the workplace.

Support to employees

Employers should provide direct help to any employee in need. Sometimes, what is needed is a sincere conversation and reassurance that no one is left alone. For more complicated situations, professional help could be considered. It is also a good idea to set up HR procedures to alert the factory of family infection or bereavement.

Workers in quarantine

In the unfortunate event that workers should be at direct/elevated risk after having had contact with someone with COVID-19, quarantining this worker(s) at home will help protect the remainder of the workforce. Quarantine is the only safe option if someone shows symptoms.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE IS THAT PEOPLE CAN BE INFECTED WITH CORONA VIRUS WITHOUT SHOWING ANY SYMPTOMS, WHICH MAKES THE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES THAT MUCH MORE IMPORTANT.

In situations where the employer has workers with confirmed cases of COVID-19, please make sure that those workers stay home and consider providing them with daily rations in addition to their regular compensation in terms of paid sick leave. We recommend organising a special taskforce of your staff who are in phone contact with the infected worker(s) while quarantine lasts and take care of their daily needs. Please note: when someone is infected with the virus, his or her entire family needs to be quarantined. Helping workers organise daily amenities can make a big difference for the entire family so please take this into consideration.

In the event of hospitalisation or medical needs, factory management should do everything in their power to help out the worker and his/her family. Brands can play an important support role here as well.

EXTERNAL SOURCES OF CONTAMINATION

Contact with external parties should be as limited as possible

For example:

- Factory management should possibly advise their suppliers to not visit the production facility unless strictly necessary. If they do visit, suppliers should only have contact with a limited number of staff and take all recommended precautions during the visit. It is advised to make a protocol for how to receive visitors and to prohibit external people from accessing the production floor.
- Brands should refrain from visiting suppliers unless it is strictly necessary and only have contact with a limited number of staff, taking all recommended precautions during the visit. Be understanding of the restricted visiting access. It is advised to check the regulations prior to arranging a visit. Always check the restrictions and guidance from local authorities on both sides prior to arranging any travels.
- Auditors may need to visit the factory but should take all necessary precautions and avoid direct contact with workers. Audits can still be conducted but all precautions should be observed, and alternatives measures (such as conducting worker interviews by phone) could be considered.

Links and resources

There are many excellent resources available on COVID-19. Below we have compiled what we believe to be the most relevant:

- [Fair Wear COVID-19 Dossier](#)
- [ETI Occupational Safety & Health](#)
- [BetterWork Bangladesh COVID-19 Management Guidance](#)
- [BetterWork Covid-19 Resource Hub](#)
- [World Health Organisation COVID-19 portal](#)
- [World Health Organisation COVID-19 advice on preparing the workplace](#)
- [Advice for ships by the International Transport Federation](#)
- [ILO safety and health at work](#)
- [IndustriALL COVID-19 advice and guidance](#)
- [Verité on challenges and recommendation for workplaces open during the pandemic](#)
- [Work safe – Stay Health. Poster from Fair Trade Germany](#)

IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALWAYS CHECK THE RESOURCES AND STRICTLY FOLLOW THE ADVICE AND GUIDELINES ISSUED BY LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES AND GOVERNMENTS