

Pandemic-Prevention - CoVid-19 Risk of Infection

Specific Aspects for SHCC at Construction Works

The central task of the Safety and Health Construction Coordinator (SHCC) is to identify the common and comprehensive risks, to coordinate the collective safety measures, to organize the monitoring of implementation in order to ensure the effectiveness and if required to enhance it.

Therefor the ISHCC is especially in the actual situation of CoVid-19 pandemic to contribute essentials for the protection of the health of the staff of construction sites.

The typical additional risk of construction sites compared to most of the other working places can be identified as follows:

- Many companies at one working place
- Employees with changing working location
- Very frequent (and border crossing) traveling from residence to work place(s)
- Temporary often provisional social rooms and devices
- Cultural discrepancy of the standards of hygiene

The specific risk of infection results therefor from:

- Person out of regions with increased risk of infection
- Insufficient hygiene devices and inadequate hygienic behaviour of the employees

ISHCCO recommends for ISHCC to set a focus to this main risks:

- Employees out of risk zones or infected	Identification of and inhibition of the presence at the site
- Insufficient hygiene devices	Facilitating with sufficient washbasins (water, soap & paper towels and skin car)
- Narrow staff rooms	Allocation of sufficient large staff rooms in order to ensure the recommended distance in between persons, on particular for non- working times and fir food intake

As the responsible SHCC take also account of the national specifications and coordinate them the internal instructions of the companies involved.

ISHCCO recommends the information relevant information by EU-OSHA: <https://osha.europa.eu> or <https://osha.europa.eu/en/highlights/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak-and-workplace-safety-and-health>

In addition to the measures listed above, a generally recommended / prescribed safety distance is now considered effective.

Addendum April 2020:

In addition, or rather the general wearing of respiratory masks is in focus.

For a number of activities in the construction industry, there is a high probability that the currently generally recommended safety distance is not or cannot be maintained.

The use of respiratory masks must be considered specifically for use on construction sites - because of the heavy physical work required. It must also be taken into account that no particular frequency of infection has been identified so far, despite continued construction site operations. Both can also apply to similar other work processes.

For the discussed use of respiratory masks, largely simple mouth and nose considering fabric or paper masks are considered useful.

Respiratory protection equipment, as used as personal protective equipment, has no special requirements and is not discussed here. These require a personal assessment before they can be used: is there an adequate supply of breathing air for the individual wearer?

Particularly in the case of increased physical stress, such as that which occurs during construction work, the increased breathing resistance of the protective mask makes breathing more difficult. Sweating and condensed humidity of the breathing air not only considerably reduce the wearing comfort but also create additional hygienic risks. The feeling of not getting enough air and irritations such as itching lead to frequent removal of the mask and to spontaneous gripping of the mask and face in order to "itch" on nose, mouth and eyes. The protective effect can thus be reversed.

For those activities on the construction site where the recommended protective distance cannot be maintained, such as assisting, holding material and tools, a small number of people is usually required: one or two assistants; thus, usually a maximum of three teams. In these cases, the requirement for a fixed assignment of persons to such teams can considerably reduce the possible risk of infection as sufficient preventive measures¹, provided that the operational control and precautionary measures are able to sufficiently prevent the presence of sick or infectious persons.

ISHCCO therefore recommends as a measure of infection prevention for construction sites where the recommended minimum distance cannot be maintained

- No obligational use of simple respiratory masks
- Mandatory assignment of fixed persons to small teams during daily health checks

As the responsible SHCC take also account of the national specifications and coordinate them the internal instructions of the companies involved.

¹ See also: Germany Recommendation of the BAuA FAQ Instructions for tradesmen and construction companies, building owners and coordinators for activities on construction sites from 09.04.2020 Page 2