



BRITISH COMPRESSED GASES ASSOCIATION

4a Mallard Way, Pride Park, Derby. DE24 8GX

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Website: www.bcga.co.uk

BCGA Member Briefing – Coronavirus

Introduction

The outbreak of New Coronary Virus 2019-nCoV, commonly known as Coronavirus or Covid-19, in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in Hubei Province, has had a major impact across the globe.

The industrial gases industry is extremely globalised, with suppliers and customers spread across different continents. Moreover, medical gases are in higher in demand, as well as heightened concerns over the disinfecting of cylinders and other equipment.

The world is now three months into the pandemic, and this briefing note aims to provide BCGA members with accurate information about the virus, as well as highlight key issues for its members to consider, specifically relating to: supply chain disruption, impact on employees, prompts regarding safe working, effect on BCGA member meetings, and resources which provide more information.

As of 16th April 2020, the UK Government has extended its lockdown period by at least three weeks. The most up to date information can be found [here](#).

This note is not a replacement for guidance given by medical professionals nor official advice provided by the UK Government on the Coronavirus. Please check the issue date to ensure you are reading the most up to date version of this document.

People

As new cases of the virus are reported daily across different countries, there are several suggestions below for BCGA members to consider relating to employee health and safety:

- **Review staff security and safety**- including looking at where there has been potential exposure or quarantine risk.
- **Remote working**- Many countries have put restrictions in place on citizens travelling to work. Companies should consider whether the facilities are in place for this to happen, such as if there are enough laptops available.
- **Consider travel arrangements**- The UK Government has highly recommended against all non-essential travel. Many countries have now shut their borders, as well as airlines changing or cancelling routes due to government restrictions and low demand. For employees driving for business



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purposes, it would be useful to carry a letter from their employers detailing that they are part of a critical industry and travel is essential, in the event of being questioned by the authorities.

- **Emergency contact information-** make sure everyone's contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date.
- **Staff communication-** providing staff with regular updates on actions being taken to reduce risks of exposure in the workplace.
- **Consult relevant government advice-** the UK government is updating its advice regularly relating to Coronavirus. Below there are links to several different government information websites, including advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on travel and Public Health England on coronavirus symptoms and advice for employers.
- **Insurance-** Members should review travel insurances policies for business travellers, if any, and whether Coronavirus would be covered. Employers and employees should also review whether insurance policies include the likes of home working. Further advice about the impact of Coronavirus on different types of insurance cover can be found on the Association of British Insurers' (ABI) website, [here](#).
- **Public Transport-** Staff who must travel should check what precautions they are likely to face on transport systems and places of public occupancy where they are going and take suitable provisions.
- **Sick Pay-** Each country will have different legislation relating to sick pay, and companies will also have differing policies. In the UK, ACAS, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, has put together a summary of sick pay and leave entitlements relating to Coronavirus, which can be found [here](#).
- In the 11th March Budget, the UK Government announced the following regarding sick pay and the coronavirus:
 - o Statutory sick pay for "all those who are advised to self-isolate" even if they have not displayed symptoms
 - o The government will meet costs for businesses with fewer than 250 employees of providing statutory sick pay to those off work because of coronavirus
- If you suspect an employee has the virus, you should follow best practice guidance relating to the Coronavirus and businesses should consider what to do in the event an individual refuses to quarantine themselves. For further information on what to do if you suspect an employee has contracted



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Coronavirus, please refer to section 8 of the Government's guidance, which can be found [here](#).

It should also be noted that employers must not single anyone out or treat any employee different because of race, age, medical circumstances or ethnicity.

Members' Premises

Coronavirus is thought to be highly infectious, surviving on some surfaces for around 72 hours¹. Cleanliness and hygiene provisions should be at the forefront of planning for the virus. It is worth considering the following:

- Security measures for sites should be reviewed, particularly as the demand for medical gases could increase and inventory could become a target for thieves.
- Ensure visitors wash hands upon arrival onsite. NHS guidance on handwashing can be found [here](#).
- Maintaining records of visitors, as well as ensuring their traceability by having up to date contact details. Members should also consider whether screening questions should be asked ahead of any visitor attending a site. Please note that GDPR responsibilities will still apply and should be adhered to when visitors' personal details are stored.
- Considering provisions to reduce the number of contractors fully entering a site, e.g. restricting access to areas of the site or making provisions such as installing visitor-only facilities outside of the main buildings in use.
- The UK Government has recommended that employees should work from home. In situations where employees must be present in their place of work, companies could consider having employees sitting a safe distance apart from each other.

Member Products

Highlighted below are some key issues for BCGA members to consider relating to cylinders and supply of gases:

- Medical gases and related equipment- the use of medical gases and equipment has increased significantly in medical facilities, particularly oxygen.

¹ https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200221-sitrep-32-covid19.pdf?sfvrsn=4802d089_2



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- Stock levels- Companies will need to ensure continuity of supply, filling, distribution, and return of empty cylinders and related equipment, such as valves etc. Maximising stock will be vital, as well as ensuring that additional cylinders have been fully tested and are ready for circulation if required.
- Cylinder return- Consider how to manage cylinders returned, and exercise caution if they appear contaminated. Please refer to BCGA TIS 37 for further information on gas cleanliness standards, and Guidance Note 24- The distribution, handling and cleaning of gas containers in a biosecurity environment.

Supply Chain Disruption

Supply chains in the industrial gases industry are incredibly globalised, like many other sectors in chemicals and manufacturing. Developing a robust supply chain response to the outbreak will therefore be challenging. BCGA members could consider the following to help keep their supply chains afloat:

- Understand critical vulnerabilities- Map your upstream suppliers back several tiers if not already undertaken, to understand if there could potentially be sourcing issues, either in the short, medium or long-term.
- Assess supply chain risk- Without undermining relationships, consider other purchasing options, which could include looking at minimum purchase levels, suspending or reducing supply as a result of Force Majeure.
- Understand whether to seek legal advice- BCGA members with partners impacted by the outbreak in their supply chains could seek legal advice to gauge whether such failure of performing contractual obligations leads to a breach of contract, or whether these liabilities may be exempt under Force Majeure.
- Review insurance arrangements- Trade finance insurance or other insurance products might apply and maybe subject to exclusions relating to pandemics.
- Long-term planning- Undertake a risk analysis of your business appropriate to the potential impacts of the continuing effects of the virus on a short, medium and longer term basis. Look at running outage scenarios to assess any unforeseen impacts.

UK Government Schemes Relating to Coronavirus

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the UK Government has put together several schemes for businesses to access, relating to the furloughing of works, loans, grants and other types of financial assistance.



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Highlighted below are links to further information on how these can be accessed, as well as eligibility criteria:

- [Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#)
- [The Coronavirus job retention scheme](#)
- [The Coronavirus self-employment income support scheme](#)

BCGA Meetings and Conference

The health and safety of members is at the forefront of the BCGA. Unfortunately, due to the situation, BCGA has cancelled its annual conference, and the AGM has been postponed until further notice. Dependent on how circumstances develop, we may look to arrange a smaller member event later in 2020.

All meetings will now take place virtually. Please await further joining instructions for these.

For further information, please contact admin@bcga.co.uk



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Useful Links

Official Health Advice: UK Government Information on Covid-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Official UK Government response to Covid-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topicalevents/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Travel Advice: Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Travel Advice: China:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreigntravel-advice/china>

Latest News from Public Health England:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/publichealth-england>

Guidance for Employers on Covid-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-toemployers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>

NHS Advice- Coronavirus: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Stay at home guidance for those with suspected Covid-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-homeguidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

World Health Organisation- Covid-19 Outbreak:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novelcoronavirus-2019>

Regulatory Guidance

Carrying out thorough examination and testing of lifting and pressure equipment during the coronavirus outbreak- https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/work-equipmentcoronavirus.htm?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_term=guidance&utm_content=work-equipment-15-apr

Arrangements for regulation of chemicals during the coronavirus outbreak <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/chemical-regulation-during-coronavirus.htm>

COVID-19 regulatory position statements on waste management

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-regulatory-position-statements>



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Business Resources

CBI Coronavirus Support Hub- The CBI has a coronavirus support hub, which all BCGA members have access to. The hub can be found [here](#).

Advice from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS): For individual businesses, the first port of call for advice and support is gov.uk. However, BEIS are also scaling up our Business Support Helpline so businesses in England, of all sizes, can pick up the phone and speak directly to an advisor (Devolved Administrations have their own equivalent services in place). **The number to call is:** 0300 456 3565

HMRC Support: HMRC have launched a tax helpline to help businesses concerned about paying their tax due to coronavirus (COVID-19). Find all the information [here](#). The number is 0800 0159 559.

Companies House Support: Companies House has produced guidance if coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected your company and you need more time to file your accounts. Find all the information [here](#).

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