



Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From the Chair

Sarah Albon

Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive

1 April 2020

Dear Sarah,

I write to raise with you concerns I have received about the safety of UK workplaces.

There have been widespread reports of businesses which are not following government guidance on social distancing. There also seems to be confusion about how the Government's guidance to protect workers from COVID-19 should be applied, which businesses should close, and which stay open. There are worrying reports that some employers may be ignoring the guidance without penalty and putting staff at risk.

In light of this, might you please let us know:

1. How many calls has HSE received which have expressed concern about or asked about the protection of workers from coronavirus transmission?
2. Is HSE enforcing the Government's specific guidance on coronavirus protection or continuing to enforce the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)?
3. If only the latter, which organisation is responsible for enforcing the specific guidance on coronavirus protection?
4. How should workplaces such as warehouses and construction sites practise safe physical distancing? What action can be taken to enforce distancing?
5. In your view, is the guidance on what counts as essential work clear enough?
6. Is there clear communication and division of responsibility between Environmental Health Officers and HSE regulators?
7. Have you had any discussions with the police about the application of the law and the Government's guidance?

The Committee is currently awaiting your reply to our letter of 10 March. That letter asked important questions about the provision of Personal Protective Equipment to frontline staff. We understand this will be a busy and difficult time for you, but we would nevertheless be grateful for a response to these urgent questions on the safety of workers during the coronavirus pandemic.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP

Chair, Work and Pensions Committee