Central Statistical Office

Skehard Road

Mahon

Cork

T12 X00E

Covid 19 Risk Assessment

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Central Statistics Office: Cork

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is Ireland's national statistical office and its purpose is to collect, analyse and make available statistics about Ireland's people, society and economy.

Its mandate comes from the Statistics Act 1993 and is "The collection, compilation, extraction and dissemination for statistical purposes of information relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions in the State".

At national level, CSO official statistics inform decision making across a range of areas including construction, health, welfare, the environment, and the economy. At European level the CSO provides an accurate picture of Ireland's economic and social performance and enable comparisons between Ireland and other countries.

The CSO has 3 offices, 2 in Dublin (Swords and Ardee) and its headquarters in Cork. In total CSO employees approximately 900 people. Employment numbers are increased for surveys and censuses. There are plans to hold an agricultural survey this year.

1.2 Covid 19 Overview

Overview
Covid 19 is a recent phenomenon and whilst much is known there remains substantive knowledge gaps. This risk assessment takes into account the known knowns and, where reasonably practicable, the known unknowns. Like any risk assessment the assessment is dynamic and should be updated as additional relevant information becomes available.

Covid 19 is a contagious respiratory virus with person-to-person transmission. It is believed the virus can remain infectious on the surface of materials for between 3 – 72hrs* depending on the surface type and can be transmitted by hand to face action. There is also some evidence that it can be transmitted through infected aerosols. It can be fatal, causing respiratory failure within a range of groups thought to be more vulnerable than the general population (elderly, people on autoimmune drugs are immunotherapy treatments, diabetes, pre-existing heart/respiratory problems and the like). A relatively small number of people outside of these

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groups have also died. Most infected people do recover without any long-term effects. There is currently no known specific treatment or vaccine. It is also thought that the numbers infected will peak and trough until enough people either build an immunity barrier to slow down and/or prevent its spread or control measures effectively combat its spread. However, it is not clear whether all those infected can build immunity or if they do how long the immunity may last. This will require long term studies and as Covid 19 is a relatively new virus this is a work in progress. Studies on other Coronavirus strains suggest immunity can last between approx. 5 months (SARS) to 34 months (MERS – Cov). Current studies on Covid 19 show no reinfections within 40dys. All these figures are based on small scale studies so confidence is low.

On Thursday the 9th July 2020 the WHO released a new scientific brief that acknowledged "emerging evidence" of airborne transmission of Covid-19 and suggested that recycling air conditioning units should not be used as they may contribute to the spread of Covid 19. HSE (UK) advised that recycling air conditioning can continue to be used however a good supply of fresh air ventilation in the room should be maintained.

This risk assessment has been made against the background of changing science and expert opinion and takes a cautious approach

1.3   Additional Information

COVID-19 is an enveloped virus. This means that the RNA (nucleic acid – the viral genetic material) is coated in a lipid (fatty) layer.

Covid 19 virus is thought to remain infectious as follows: -

Airborne	30min in still, enclosed spaces
Hands	2/3 hrs (Inconclusive)
Cardboard	24hrs
Plastic/steel	72hrs
Clothing and cloth	Currently thought to present a low risk

Controls include: -

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- Hand Hygiene: Soap dissolves the lipid layer causing the virus to fall apart and stops it from binding to human cells.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitisers work in a similar way, inactivating the virus by breaking down the lipid layer. The alcohol content must be at least 60% by volume to be effective. Tends to be harder on the skin.
- Alcohol free sanitisers (usually foam) can be gentler on the skin but the scientific evidence as to their effectiveness against Covid 19 varies greatly. Most contain ingredients such as benzalkonium chloride or chlorhexidine digluconate. A recent study in the Journal of Hospital Medicine (March 2020) found these ingredients less effective in deactivating viruses like COVID-19 (although the study looked at surfaces not hands).
- General Cleaning products – Those that contain alcohol, detergents, hydrogen peroxide, extremes of pH and bleach inactivate COVID-19 best.
- Not touching the face after washing/sanitising hands.
- Social Distancing – currently 2m is advised although there are some relaxations down to 1m.
- Turning off recycling air conditioning or using it in conjunction with natural ventilation to refresh the internal building air.
- The information on the effectiveness of wearing masks is currently inconclusive but gaining in popularity.

1.4   Definitions and Abbreviations

Current Risk	The estimated risk before any additional controls have been implemented
Residual Risk	the estimate of the risk remaining after any additional controls recommended have been implemented
HR	House Rules
RTO	Return to Office
SFARP	So far as is reasonably practicable

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2   RISK ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY:

2.1   Risk Categorisation

Category:		Severity Description
Insignificant	**(1)**	Minor Injury (first aid treatment >3 days lost time). Infection highly unlikely. Reinfection 0 people
Minor	**(2)**	Reportable Injury (>3 days lost), Dangerous Occurrence (little of no damage), Industrial Disease (<7days lost). Reinfection (1 person)
Moderate	**(3)**	Major Injury, Multiple Minor Injuries) Dangerous Occurrence with Damage, Industrial Disease (>7days Lost). Reinfection (2 people).
Major	**(4)**	Fatality, Multiple Major Injuries, Dangerous Occurrence with attendant injury and/or production disruption >3days. Multiple Reinfection (3-5 people).
Catastrophic	**(5)**	Multiple fatalities, Dangerous Occurrence with attendant major Injury and/or production disruption >7 days. Multiple Reinfection (6 or more people).

Category:		Likelihood
Rare	**(1)**	< 1% chance of being exposed during a working lifetime.
Unlikely	**(2)**	Event exposure is once annually
Possible	**(3)**	Event exposure is once monthly.
Likely	**(4)**	Event exposure is once weekly
Almost Certain	**(5)**	Event exposure is once daily

Risk rating = Severity x Likelihood

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2.2   Risk matrix

Severity					
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	3	3	4	5
2	2	4	6	8	10
3	3	6	9	13	15
4	4	8	12	16	20
5	5	10	15	20	25

Likelihood

Key

	Risk is acceptable; however, risk should be reduced further if this involved minimal cost or effort.
	Risk is broadly acceptable but should be reduced to a low as is reasonably practicable. Higher scored items should be prioritised for risk reduction with a general objective to have no risks scored higher than a 5 within x years.
	Risk is intolerable and work must be stopped until the risk is eliminated or reduced

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3   RISK ASSESSMENT: COVID 19 RETURN TO WORK

Department Name	**CSO: Skehard Road, Mahon, Cork**
Activities Carried Out	The collection, compilation, extraction and dissemination for statistical purposes of information relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions in the State. Warehousing and distribution of census and other forms. Much of the work involves use of computers. Part of the ground floor is sublet to Ordnance survey and is not covered in this risk assessment.
Office facility	The Cork Office is situated on the Skehard Road, Mahon, Cork. It is a modern 3 story building, opened in 1992, with each floor having 4 wings. Currently all people enter the building through a manned reception. This is situated between the north and west wings. There are 2 further entrances/exits which are currently not in use. Staff have no touch fob access that also registers their attendance. Each floor shares a central staircase and each wing has an emergency escape staircase at the end furthest away from the central staircase. There are three lifts that service all floors. There is on-site car parking with grassed surrounds. Where practicable a one-way system has been introduced. In shared areas where a one-way system has not been introduced staff have been instructed to walk on the left. Ground Floor: The reception area is manned during opening hours and visitors and contractors must register at reception. The north wing has been sublet to Ordnance Survey (OSI) and approx. 20 people are based there. Whilst this risk assessment does not specifically include this area an

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outline risk assessment is included for completeness and this should be discussed with OSI management and amended as appropriate. CSO are advised that Ordnance staff should be made aware of the Cork CSO House Rules. A Central Storage and catered canteen occupy most of the south wing. Currently catering has been suspended but there is boiling water and milk for tea making. The seating in the canteen has been arranged to comply with social distancing. The grass area outside the canteen has some seating and can be used on good days. The east wing contains a separate Post Room and Print Room. The smaller west wing is given over to a small conference/meeting room, offices and open plan office space.

1st & 2nd Floors these are broadly similar in layout. The north and south wings are largely open plan with some single occupancy offices. The open plan offices contain 6, 4 and 2 pod workstations. Workstations are separated from each other by a low divider. The east wing is mainly open plan with similar pod arrangements and single unit offices. The open plan areas are separated from the offices by a narrow walled-in corridor. A Comms Room is situated on the second floor. The west wing is given over to single occupancy offices, some of these have small group meeting space. In addition to natural ventilation (opening windows) there are some ceiling mounted recycled air conditioners. It was reported that these are rarely used. There are toilet facilities on each floor with a maximum of 3 people allowed at any one time. There are also shower and changing facilities, but these have been closed as a precautionary measure.

A flexi system operates between 08.00 to 19.00 with core hours between 10.00 - 12.30 and 14.30 - 16.00. Normally 550 staff work from the site but with most working from home there are

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	approximately 20-30 employees in the office on any given day. There are plans to gradually increase numbers on site to 50.
Equipment	Computers and associated equipment, Workstations and chairs, kitchen and canteen, physical and board and meeting rooms and associated equipment, supporting shared office equipment – photocopiers, shedders, telephones etc. The equipment is in good condition.
Departmental Staff	Normally 550 staff, but currently between 20-30 on any one day. Staff consist of Executives, managers, statisticians, administrators, supervisors, IT and Facilities personnel. An extra 20 staff will be employed in August to assist with an Agricultural survey.
Other People Involved	Contractors – maintenance, technical, cleaners, canteen staff, visitors, etc.

Covid-19	Activity	Hazard	Persons at Risk	Existing Controls	Current Risk			Further Action	Completion Date	Residual Risk		
					L	S	R			L	S	R
	Coming back to work	• Spread of Covid 19 • Catching Covid-19	• Staff	• A qualitative risk rating assessment has been carried out. • A "Return to the Office (RTO)" booklet has been prepared.	3	3	9	• Consider moving to a semi-quantitative risk assessment as per this example as it provides improved definitions which leads to more accurate risk assessment. Subject to construction of the definitions it can also be	Completed with this RA	2	2	4

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			• All RTO staff have/will be provided with a copy in advance of returning. • All staff must complete and return the RTO health form in advance of being given permission to return. • All staff must complete and pass an on-line RTO training course before being allowed to return. • On return all staff must complete a "Daily Contact Log" • Explanations and instructions for completing the above have been agreed			adapted to provide a risk ranking system. • Consider reviewing the Introduction to the RTO booklet to take the opportunity to acknowledge the changes in office procedures and practices, help allay any anxieties RTO staff might experience and seek their cooperation in keeping the workplace virus free. • Consider providing precautionary guidance on actions RTO staff should take on returning home e.g. not to have social contact with cohabitees until they have changed out of work clothing and washed/showered as part of the training package. • Ascertain if staff share transport to/from work and ensure they report this in the daily contact log. • Consider reinstating the use of showers for those cycling/jogging to work. On balance cycling is safer than using public transport/car	Implemented 21st August 2020 Implemented and included in the revised RTO

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				with staff representatives				sharing regarding the risk of catching/spreading Covid 19. However, shower users should ensure showers are rinsed down after use. • Consider banning the use of lifts for other than people with medical conditions that impede movement/breathing. (Note: Lifts are small enclosures with no natural ventilation and constructed of hard surfaces/ controls. They provide an excellent environment for Covid 19 to survive for long periods)	booklet 22nd September 2020 Advise on use of lifts included in RTO booklet			
	Reception	• Spread of Covid 19 • Catching Covid-19	• Receptio n staff	• 2m Distancing in place and signed. • Staff/visitors entering the building instructed to sanitise hands at the entrance sanitising station. • General rules for approaching reception given in the Cork	3	2	6	• Fit transparent screen in front of the reception desk and/or install a moveable barrier 2m distance in front of the reception desk. • Consider leaving mail for 24hrs before opening. (Highly unlikely contents will be infectious) or • In SFARP leave parcels (cardboard/plastic outers) unopened for 72 hrs. • Instruct post room staff to sanitise or wash hands after opening mail/parcels and	Transparent screen installed around Reception desk during July 2020 Post for Census of Agriculture survey being left for 24 hrs before Agric. Staff process. All staff advised of the importance of	2	2	4

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				House Rules (HR) that is given to all staff before they RTO • A table is set to one side for mail/parcels to be set on. • Mail/parcels are collected and taken to the post room by dedicated staff.			16	disposal of outer wrappings before distribution.	sanitising and washing of hands. Table in Reception area for parcel deliveries. This is a Services Officer function.			
	Ordnance Survey (OS)	•Spread of Covid 19 • Catching Covid-19	• OS Staff • CSO Staff	• OS staff mostly work away from the office or WFM • Approx 2 may be in the office at any one time • The office is spacious and can accommodate social distancing	4	4	16	• Ensure OS staff have a copy of the Cork CSO House Rules and they apply them • Consider requiring OS staff to follow CSO's RTO requirements as given in the RTO Booklet and training package. • Confirm with OS that they their own Covid 19 control measures and they are at least equivalent to CSO's	Copy of CSO Cork House Rules issued to OSi in August 2020 CSO held meeting with OSi staff and outlined procedures to be followed. OSi sent their Risk assessment and Standard Operating Procedure(SOP)	2	2	4

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								documents to CSO on 1st September 2020.		
	RTO Controls	• Spread of Covid 19 • Catching Covid-19	• Staff • Visitors	• A set of bespoke HRs (House Rules) are included in the RTO booklet (appendix 1). • The HRs have been consulted on and agreed with staff representatives • The HRs are comprehensive • The HRs are supported with an online mandatory training package – "Return to Work Safely Protocol". • Participants understanding of the protocols is assessed and they must	3	3	9	• Although not currently included in current Public Health advice consider installing no touch thermometers or thermal imaging at access points to the building and instructions in its use. • (Note; People whose temperature exceeds 37^0 C should not be admitted). • Consider removing extra chairs from meeting rooms and offices to reinforce social distancing. • Subject to security requirements, consider wedging all internal doors in shared spaces (corridors, lobbies) (except toilets) and occupied offices open during office hours to reduce touching. (Ensure doors are closed before last person leaves the office at the end of the day or in the event of a fire) or fit automatic fire door closers	Not current public health advice Removed where possible, where not possible they have been cordoned off All non fire doors that have been wedged open where possible. Other measures have been the siting of hand sanitisers at doors that cannot be held open.	2	2	4

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achieve 100% before RTO permission is given. • Where possible doors have been fitted with magnets to hold them open (if a fire alarm is raised the doors release) also sensor door openers have been fitted. • There is currently sufficient office space and workstations to facilitate staff and social distancing • One-way system suitable for numbers currently on the premises		• Staff should be instructed, in so far as is practicable, to maintain a "clean desk" policy. • Consider raising desk partitions to a minimum of 1m above desk where social distancing cannot be maintained as more staff RTO. • Staff should be made responsible for cleanliness of their personal workstation and chair and instructed to sanitise their desktop, workstation equipment, desk separators and chairs at the end of each day or as often as they deem appropriate. • Staff should avoid using non-personal equipment such as answering other staff's phones etc. • Staff with single occupancy offices should be instructed to sanitise their own workstation and associated equipment and any surfaces they touch at the end of the working day or as often as they deem necessary.	Clean desk policy already in place. Not required as staff can social distance in current office attendance pattern Implemented, all staff provide with hygiene packs on return to the office As above.		

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							• (Note: Sanitiser should be left to dry naturally if applied at the end of the day.) • As more people RTO consider modifying one-way system to: - • Main staircase "up" and emergency fire escapes "down". • In narrow corridors where social distancing cannot be achieved introduce a Corridor Use Protocol where people in the corridor have priority over those entering it. • Modify HR and signage accordingly • Consider dividing staff into balanced teams and rotate or introduce staggard working to ensure team separation and business continuity.	This is not possible in the Cork office but staff are encouraged to stay left going up or down main stais. Staff are attending the office only to attend to essential work or elective attendance approved by HoD's so attendance is controlled.			

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							• Consider making mask wearing compulsory when staff are moving about the building and passing behind workstations.	Not currently a requirement of the office.			
	Print Room	• Spread of Covid 19 • Catching Covid-19	• Print room staff	• Self-contained area with restricted access • Natural ventilation • Forced air natural ventilation • Some machines with forced air extraction	3	3	9	• Consider dividing print staff into 2/3 balanced teams and rotate or introduce shift working to ensure team separation and business continuity. • Consider introducing a 5 "S" program to reduce and/or standardise material storage in SFRP. • Ensure extraction is turned on to create additional room air changes particularly for 2 hours after work finishes. • Consider using long tailed anti-viral cleaning products on multi-touch machine/plant surfaces/controls	This has been implemented by Printing section since August 2020 Extraction system being used by Printing section as required	2	2	4
	Visitors/Contractors	• Spread of infection	• Staff	• Visiting has been significantly curtailed during the Covid 19 pandemic. • Visitations are currently discouraged	3	3	9	• Continue discouraging visitations. • Consider asking visitors to declare 3 days in advance of visits if they have been in contact with anyone likely to have been infected within the last 10 days. (Note: If visitors declare on arrival at	Guidance in RTO booklet Visitors/Contractors completed required forms on arrival at Reception.	2	2	4

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				OPW have confirmed that contractors: - ○ have to prior notify their intention to attend sites. ○ Have had Covid training and should wear PPE. • Visitors/contractors are required to sign a declaration on arrival at reception as to their likelihood of having been in contact with anyone who has been in contact with Covid 19. • In so far as is practicable virtual meetings are held in preference to face 2 face.			reception that they have been in close contact with an infected person it may be too late at that stage to stop the infection spreading within the building.) • Consider installing no touch thermometers or thermal imaging at access points to the building and instructions in its use. (Note; Visitors/contractors whose temperature exceeds 37^0 C should not be admitted).	Not current Public Health advice.			

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				• Visitors are always accompanied and follow same hygiene practices as staff. • No physical contact (e.g. hand shaking) permitted. • Social distancing practiced.							
	Fire	• Burns • Asphyxiati on	• Staff • Visitors • Contracto rs	• Pre-Covid 19 Fire evacuation plan in place • Escape routes clearly marked • Alarm and fire-fighting systems regularly checked • Record of persons in the building at any one time available	2	3	6	• Review pre-Covid 19 Fire evacuation plan to ensure: - o Fire Marshall/Wardens list is still valid. o Changes to HR has not adversely impacted on fire evacuation routes. o Consider carrying out fire drills and numbers RTO increase. o Consider adding any changes or additional information on fire management to RTO packs o Ensure high standards of housekeeping (e.g. clean desk policy, 5 "S" program etc.)	Confirmed Confirmed	2	2	4

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	General well-being	• Stress • Anxiety • Back pain • Eye strain	• Staff	• Regular removal of waste					
				• Access to Employment Assistant Scheme	3	3	9	• Reiterate at regular intervals RTO instructions and training (There is growing evidence that in the general population people are becoming complacent regarding Covid 19 protection measures). • Advise staff to take regular breaks from intensive computer use. • Encourage staff to take some form of breaks or exercise away from their desks • Review Display Screen risk assessment and ensure staff know how to adjust their workstation to maximise comfort, reduce eye and MSD strain during the day. • As part of the well-being program introduce advice and guidance on: - ○ Simple exercises that staff can do at their desks ○ Healthy pack lunch eating.	CSO Policy in already in place. CSO Policy in already in place. VDU self-assessment available on H&S homepage Well being are actively promoting this area.	2	2	4

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							• Consider implementing layered 1-2-1 sessions with returning staff particularly focusing on their psychosocial well-being.	CSEES available to all staff.			

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