



Central Statistical Office

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Covid 19 Risk Assessment

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Central Statistics Office and Warehouse - Swords

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 in the foreseeable future.

The Swords Office is in the Swords Business Demesne and consists of 2 interlinked units - a large warehouse with some office space and an office block. Both are of a modern design. There are normally 120 people employed on the site rising to approximately 200 for censuses and surveys. Currently most staff are working from home with between 9-12 in the office on any given day. There are plans to increase numbers on site initially to a maximum of 50 people. The site operates a flexi system between 08.00 to 19.00 with core hours between 10.00 and 16.00. There is on-site car parking.

1.2 Covid 19 Overview

Overview

Covid 19 is a recent phenomenon and whilst much is known it there remains substantive knowledge gaps. This risk assessment considers 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. 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 groups have also died. The vast majority of infected people do recover, and it is currently believed they will not suffer any long-term where 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.

On the 1st September 2020 RTE presented a report “new evidence of airborne coronavirus spread. A person on a poorly ventilated bus infected nearly two dozen other passengers with coronavirus even though many were not sitting close by. The research suggests that “in closed environments with air recirculation, SARS-CoV-2 is a highly transmissible pathogen,”.

This risk assessment has been made against this uncertainty and takes a cautious approach

1.3 Additional Information

Covid 19 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: -

- 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
- Fresh air
- Face masks: Whilst 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
SFARP	So far as is reasonably practicable

2 RISK ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY:

2.1 Risk Categorisation

Category:		Severity Description
Insignificant Minor	(1)	Minor Injury (first aid treatment >3 days lost time). Infection highly unlikely. Reinfection 0 people
	(2)	Reportable Injury (>3 days lost), Dangerous Occurrence (little or 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

2.2 Risk matrix

		Severity				
		1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood	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

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

3 RISK ASSESSMENT: COVID 19 RETURN TO WORK

Department Name	CSO; Swords Office
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.
Office facility	<p>The modern office operates largely as open plan. There is a separate section for senior management within the open plan area. A corridor runs parallel to the open plan area; a number of meeting rooms are situated along this corridor as well as the first aid room and back up first aid room. Desks are mainly in pods of 4 with low desk separators fitted between desks. There are some 2-pod side by side desks separated with low desk separators. Desks in the senior management area are sectioned off with partitions 140cm in height. Staff and visitors enter the building at reception and either sign or clock in. In so far as is possible a 1-way system is in operation and occupied desks spaced at 2m or more. There are kitchen facilities, but these are currently limited to the supply of hot water and use of one small fridge. Access to the kitchen is restricted to a max. of 2 people at any one time. The building has filtered recirculation ventilation. Toilet use is also restricted to 2 people at a time. The building has single unit ceiling mounted recycling air conditioning units fitted. There are no opening windows.</p> <p>Warehouse: There is a large warehouse used for the storage and distribution of census forms. There is a large room off the warehouse that is used for scanning during the processing of census forms – but it is currently being used as storage.</p>

	Unit 5: This is an open plan office area that is accessed via the warehouse. Unit 5 has a mezzanine that is accessed by a stairwell in the centre of the open plan office area and contains meeting rooms and a small kitchen. Unit 5 is currently not in use.
Equipment	Computers and associated equipment, Workstations and chairs, kitchen and canteen, physical and virtual board and meeting rooms and associated equipment supporting shared office equipment – photocopiers, shredders, telephones etc. Warehousing equipment – powered pallet trucks, racking, cardboard compression plant. The equipment is in good condition.
Departmental Staff	120 staff consisting of statisticians, administrators, supervisors, IT, Facilities and warehouse personnel.
Other People Involved	Contractors – maintenance, technical, cleaners etc. Visitors

Covid -19	Activity	Hazard	Persons at Risk	Existing Controls	Current Risk			Further Action	Completion Date	Residual Risk		
					L	S	R			L	S	R
	Returning to the Office (RTO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread of Covid 19 • Catching Covid-19 • RTW anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A qualitative risk rating assessment has been carried out. • A “Return to the Office (RTO)” booklet has been prepared. • All RTO staff have/will be provided with a 	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add precautionary guidance on what actions RTO staff should take on returning home e.g. not to have social contact with cohabittees until they have changed out of work clothing and washed/showered. • Consider adding to the RTO form a question regarding any foreign travel 	Implemented 21/08/2020	2	2	4

				<p>copy in advance of returning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff must complete and return the RTO health form in advance of being given permission to return. • RTO staff must complete a "Daily Contact Log" • Explanations and instructions for completing the above have been agreed with staff representatives 			<p>undertaking by them or any cohabitor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 to work. On balance cycling is safer than using public transport/car sharing regarding the risk of catching/spreading Covid 19. However, shower users should ensure showers are rinsed down after use. • Implement system for managers to have informal 1 - 2 – 1s with returning staff to provide reassurance regarding Covid 19 controls and tease out and manage any residual anxieties or concerns staff might have about returning to work or fears for those at home. <p>(Note: Studies of people who have been out of the workplace for 6 weeks or more indicate that they take time to settle back in and may suffer depression and underperform unless sympathetically managed. Whilst none of the studies directly relate to the</p>	<p>Implemented and included in the revised RTO Booklet, 22/09/2020</p>			
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								current circumstances many identified conclusions hold good across a range of different scenarios.)				
	Reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spread of Covid 19• Catching Covid-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reception staff	2m distancing in place and signed. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff/visitors entering the building instructed to sanitise hands at the entrance sanitising station.				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fit transparent screen at reception desk.• Consider setting a table aside for setting deliveries of mail/parcels• Consider leaving mail/parcels for 24hrs before opening. (Highly unlikely contents will be infectious) or• Instruct receptionist to, after opening mail and to sanitise hands before distributing mail.• In SFARP leave parcels unopened for 72 hrs	Completed 04/08/2020 Implemented 27/07/2020 Implemented 23/03/2020			
	RTO Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spread of Covid 19• Catching Covid-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff• Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A set of bespoke “House Rules (HRs)” are included in the RTO booklet (Content headings are given in appendix 1).• The HRs have been consulted	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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° C should not be admitted).	Not current public health advice	2	2	4

				<p>on and agreed with staff representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 achieve 100% before RTO permission is given. • Ceiling mounted recycling air conditioning (RAC) units in offices. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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). • Staff should be instructed, in so far as is practicable, to maintain a “clean desk” policy 	<p>Not all rooms in use. Rooms in use have signage on seats that are 2 meters apart.</p> <p>Sensor and fire alarm magnets installed on 23/06/2020 and 28/08/2020 respectively on appropriate doors.</p> <p>CSO policy already in place</p>			
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							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider raising the height of partitions between desks to 1m above desk height. This should be mandatory where social distancing cannot be assured between occupied workstations. • Each staff member should be made responsible for cleanliness of their workstation and chair and instructed to sanitise their desktop and workstation equipment at the end of each day or as often as they deem appropriate. • Confirm that the current air conditioning system is suitable and operating in line with industry guidance and there are sufficient fresh air changes in offices. • Recirculated air ventilations should be supported by the introduction of fresh air. • Ensure service records for the air conditioning are up to date. 	<p>Social distancing in place, so not required</p> <p>Implemented on 17/07/2020 – all staff provided with hygiene kits on their return to the office</p> <p>OPW confirmed on 02/09/2020 that fresh air is supplied via AHU located on the roof.</p> <p>As above. There are no windows in the Swords facility</p> <p>All air con maintenance is up to date.</p>			
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								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor the latest advice and guidance in relation to air conditioning. Limit the number of people allowed in the toilets & kitchen area to ensure physical distancing 	<p>Ongoing – maintaining contact with OPW for advice</p> <p>Toilets limited to 2 people max. Cubicles have 'do not use signage' and urinals and sinks have been taped off to ensure 2 meter distancing. Kitchen limited to 2 people max.</p>			
	Visitors/Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spread of infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors rarely attend premises. All visits pre-arranged. In so far as is practicable virtual meetings are held. Visitors are always accompanied and follow same hygiene practices as staff. 	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure cleaning contractor has Covid 19 Control Policy and the means to monitor its effectiveness Consider introducing OPW Covid 19 protocols for contractors. 	<p>Completed – documentation received from Ailesbury on 23/07/2020</p> <p>Completed – All contractors are required to wear appropriate PPE as per OPW protocol</p>	2	3	6

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No physical contact (e.g. hand shaking) permitted. Contractors required to wear masks Social distancing practiced. 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to visits request visitors to declare if they have been in contact with anyone likely to be infected. 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° C should not be admitted). 	<p>Implemented 01/07/2020. Contractors/visitors have to complete a Covid 19 questionnaire at reception prior to entry into the facility.</p> <p>Not current public health advice</p>			
	Warehouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spread of Covid 19 Catching Covid-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warehouse staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTO and HRs apply 	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide masks when warehouse staff engaged in team working closer than 2m and particularly when carrying out manual handling. Ensure staff sanitise share equipment (pallet trucks, trolleys etc. 	<p>Implemented 17/07/2020</p> <p>Implemented 13/07/2020</p>	2	2	4
	Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-Covid 19 Fire evacuation plan in place 	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review pre-Covid 19 Fire evacuation plan to ensure: - 	.	2	2	4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asphyxiati on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractor s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Escape routes clearly marked Alarm and fire-fighting systems regularly checked Record of persons in the building at any one time available Regular removal of waste 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire Marshall/Wardens list is still valid. Changes to HR has not adversely impacted on fire evacuation routes. Consider carrying out fire drills as numbers RTO increase. Consider adding any changes or additional information on fire management to RTO packs Ensure high standards of housekeeping (e.g. clean desk policy, 5 "S" program etc.) 	Complete Complete			
	Contract Cleaners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spread of Covid 19 Catching Covid-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Contract Cleaners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under contact through CSO Professional Cleaners Recent deep clean carried out High touch points cleaned regularly Cleaners instructed to flush showers, taps, toilets regularly to prevent legionella 	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Cleaners use products that kill viruses Ensure cleaning contractor has Covid 19 Control Policy and the means to monitor its effectiveness 	Completed – as per Ailesbury policy received on 23/07/2020	2	3	6
	General well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress Anxiety Back pain Eye strain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Employment Assistant Scheme 	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise staff to take regular breaks from intensive computer use. Encourage staff to take some form of breaks or exercise away from their 	CSO policy already in place CSO policy already in place	2	2	4

								<p>desks (A walk at lunchtime, reconfigure the canteen to enable limited use taking account of social distancing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Display Screen risk assessment and ensure staff know how to make adjustments to their workstation to maximise comfort and reduce eye and MSD strain during the day. • As part of the well-being program introduce advice and guidance on: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Simple exercises that staff can do at their desks ○ Healthy pack lunch eating. • Consider implementing layered 1-2-1 sessions with returning staff particularly focusing on their psychosocial well-being. 	<p>CSO policy already in place</p> <p>Well being post advices to the bulletin board</p> <p>CSEES in place for any staff who wish to avail of the service</p>			
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