

Fire Sector Federation Revival Planning

The weekend consultation organised by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the anticipated imminent announcement by the Prime Minister on the progressive release of the lockdown restrictions raises important questions about how to safely return to work in the fire sector with its myriad of different activities. If and where we can the Federation wants to help in that process.

For some, perhaps associations and professional bodies currently operating between home and office, the situation may be easier to envisage than for those having to work on construction sites. For all there are added pressures arising from economic and managerial responsibilities.

It is true that recovery is often longer and harder than response. So rather than waiting for new “rules” it may be better to try develop suitable ones, suggest ideas or request support to reopen business and ease revival. With this in mind the Federation outlines below some planning thoughts which it hopes will prompt thinking and planning, to raise questions or requests for action, including speaking with government and others.

Workforce Health and Safety

The workforce needs confidence they will be safe in their workplace to return so:

- Engage meaningfully with staff and trade unions
- Remember confidence, that going to and being at work will be safe and healthy, is critical
- Maximise and ensure personal protective equipment is appropriate
- Avoid depleting NHS, Social Care and Essential Services supplies with PPE purchases
- Redesign workplaces, procedures and work patterns to allow social distancing
- Remove ‘hot desking’ and ‘equipment sharing’ that cannot be fully decontaminated after each use
- Introduce entry controls and use of lifts with more hand cleansing on handles and buttons
- Accommodate more hand washing, sterilisation and hygiene waste disposal facilities
- Look again at workplace cleaning practices to ensure safe surroundings
- Use barrier screens and shields between staff
- Use single person delivery systems and no customer contact
- Re orientate operator positions to let people face away from each other or screen
- Manage numbers in a specific workplace with controls like wrist bands
- Schedule work and numbers to reduce physical contacts
- Operate safe pairing systems of workers for two handed tasks
- Develop one way routing and floor marking to ease crowding and reduce contact
- Develop options to keep safe at break times
- Carefully manage how food and drink are taken and consider closing restaurants
- Stagger opening times to reduce public transport risks
- Use home-working where it can be efficient and reduce travel
- Remember the wellbeing of home based staff
- Examine technology requirements now and going forward to support recovery
- Introduce and enhance virtual and other methods to maintain effective staff interaction
- Provide transport to travel alone or with safe paired colleagues
- Consider practical downsizing issues for those unable to return to usual operation levels
- Add training to improve skill deterioration lost through the coverage shutdown.
- Invest in new training to cover new practices like health, safety and social distancing
- Review any workforce procedures liabilities and practices to allow working in different situations
- Use trade and professional associations to assist rebuilding skilled workforce
- Check if apprenticeships and other government supported schemes can help
- Stay up to date with advice like within the construction sector [CLC](#)

Management Responsibilities

Management, especially in small businesses, can be overwhelmed by their responsibilities so again:

- Reduce uncertainty by introducing those changes that are under your control
- Identify and describe the business strategic imperatives over realistic timescales

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- Anticipate what the new normal business services and delivery will look like
- Clarify important endurance and resilience issues in your business
- Review the culture and psychology to check it meets any new ways of working
- Remember to focus on opportunities not just losses for business recovery
- Identify priority staff and tiers of managers essential in staging the recovery
- Plan furloughed staff into the recovery process to meet key growth gateways
- Think about staff returning to work issues like increased welfare demands
- Consider the issues surrounding essential business related travel
- Consider impact on your market and on your customers' requirements
- Use government finance schemes to help cash flow
- Use bank option schemes and stay in touch with bankers
- Seek options for capital investment if it's a key business feature.
- Avoid unnecessary investments in capital and short-term loans.
- Understand how long the recovery might take to reach a level to sustained business
- Estimate the severity and implications of the action taken to respond to the pandemic
- Plan routes between optimistic recovery route and deep recession
- Develop practical scenarios to help evaluate options
- Decide and define important decision criteria that will assist evaluations
- Update cost assumptions regularly to ensure projections are realistic
- Consider scale back and suspension of some operations
- Think about changing the service or product using learning from the lockdown and impacts
- Consider legal corporate and personal liabilities arising lockdown restrictions on business
- Review contractual issues like penalties for service failure
- Talk to Insurers on concerns arising from liabilities and losses and reinsurance
- Think about changing the business model to meet lasting economic impacts
- Seek help with clarifying and resolving legal issues arising from the pandemic
- Establish any new authorities, triggers and procedures for implementing the recovery plan
- Stay alert to new fire legislation that may alter responsibilities in the sector
- Keep alert for new ideas and useful concise intelligence for recovery
- Stay up to date with advice [BEIS Advice](#) [HMG Finance Support](#)

Enabling Success

All services and industries require customers and suppliers to enable success so a few thoughts are:

- Invest in effective communications in whatever way works best
- Keep talking to staff, unions, customers, colleagues, professional associations and the Federation
- Stay alert to conversations between government and sector organisations
- Recognise who and where your customers are and maintain regular communication
- Be open and helpful in communications on the difficult issue of erratic finance affecting cash flow
- Consult with suppliers on measures they are taking that affect supplies
- Examine the supply chain from base up to identify the essential and difficult to manage links
- Identify trade restrictions, licencing and border controls to ease supply flow from abroad
- Seek alternatives to meet failures or potential disruptions to supply chains
- Examine logistics and similar handling storage and delivery issues to identify weaknesses
- Source alternative logistic services or re-engineer workflow to meet supply schedules
- Review the procurement system to eradicate or duplicate likely supply chain disruption
- Re-examine procurement procedures to make the fit any revised work practices
- Seek options to sustain higher resilience in primary or critical supplies using UK companies
- Coordinate with suppliers to manage backlogs and material flow
- Explore options to grow export business to EU and beyond
- Join with others in the sector to rebuild capacity and capability
- Stay up to date with advice [Business Abroad](#)