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Glass and Glazing Federation

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The Safe Guide for:

Home improvement companies working in domestic homes during the Covid-19 crisis



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Welcome to your Safe Guide

The outbreak of a worldwide COVID-19 pandemic combined with the Government's new guidelines and changing consumer behaviour and perceptions, has seen an immeasurable impact on the glass, glazing and fenestration sectors.

Perhaps the worst affected has been installers of replacement windows, doors and conservatories. To support Member companies in this sector, the GGF has produced this Safe Guide as well as a Safe Guide for Homeowners to help ensure that any work undertaken is done with an even greater respect and attention to health and safety than ever before.

This GGF Guide has been produced with four key aims to help you:

- keep your staff and customers safe and healthy
- and your staff operate within the Government's safety guidelines
- decide whether your working environment is safe or not
- assure your customers that it is safe to work in their home

Please use this Safe Guide as your reference to help your company and your employees adhere to the advice and guidance underpinned by central and devolved Governments' guidance and legislation.

This guide underlines the key checkpoints for you to operate in a safe working environment, whether you are installing windows, doors, interiors, conservatories or extensions. Inside you will find, the Guide covers the several stages involved when working with homeowners from selling to surveying right through to installation and inspection.

In the coming months as the COVID-19 crisis continues, this Safe Guide should prove more than useful and should give you the peace of mind that during these extraordinary times, you will have the information you need to help you decide whether you can work in a domestic residence. If you decide it is safe to work, then this Guide will help your company operate safely and professionally in domestic homes.



SECTION 1

Current Government Guidance

On 11 May 2020, the UK Government issued detailed guidance for those working in domestic homes. The guidance, titled, “Working safely during COVID-19 in other people’s homes” applies directly to work undertaken in England only. If you are working in the other UK nations (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) please visit their websites and follow the guidance of the respective devolved Governments.

The current UK Government guidance (as of 11 May 2020), to Companies and their employees working in people’s homes in England, is detailed below:

A. Risk Assessment

- Companies need to carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment for each individual project, just as you would for other health and safety related hazards. This risk assessment must be done in consultation with unions and/or workers.
- Company owners and/or senior managers must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn’t one, a representative chosen by workers. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.
- If you are a company of fewer than 5 people or are self-employed you don’t need to write anything down for your risk assessment
- The results/outcome of the risk assessment should be shared with the homeowner or occupant of the property
- The Risk Assessment should help you decide to undertake work or not and should show that you have taken all practical and reasonable steps to ensure you and your employees are operating in a safe environment
- You should collaborate with workers and homeowners if there are concerns about safety and look for ways to resolve the concern. If it can’t be resolved then you should contact authorities such as HSE (Health and Safety Executive) or your local council building control department.

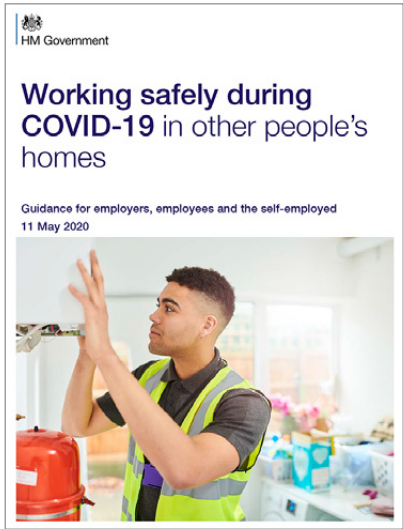
B. Managing Risk – Prior to Working in the Home

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures.

Employers must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody’s health and safety is protected. In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps in order:

1. In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
2. Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option.
3. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible).
4. Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff.

Use the Government’s Risk Assessment interactive tools
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm>.



Government Guidance document:
“Working safely during COVID-19 in other people’s homes

- Further mitigating actions include:
 - Increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
 - Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
 - Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other.
 - Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.
 - Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using ‘fixed teams or partnering (so each person works with only a few others).

If people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

If you are currently operating, you are likely to have gone through a lot of the above processes already. The Government recommends that you use the “Working safely during COVID-19 in other people’s homes” document to identify any further improvements you should make.



C. Working in People’s Homes

- Employees who can work remotely should, this would include Salespeople, Specifiers, Project Managers and/or those providing quotations
- A Surveyor, Tradesperson and Inspector can work in a domestic home, providing that he/she is well and has no symptoms of COVID-19.
- A Company/Tradesperson should notify all homeowners in advance of arrival.
- On entry to the home, Tradespeople should wash their hands using soap and water for 20 seconds.
- If working in confined spaces, it is advisable to wear a face covering.
- Leave internal doors open to avoid repeatedly touching door handles.
- Open windows to increase ventilation in enclosed areas.
- Tradespeople/company employees should wash their hands regularly, particularly after blowing their noses, sneezing or coughing, and when leaving the property.
- Where facilities to wash hands are not available, hand sanitiser should be used, and Tradespeople/ company employees should carry this with them at all times.
- Tradespeople/company employees should maintain a safe distance of 2 metres (where possible) from any household occupants at all times.
- Tradespeople/Company employees should ensure good ventilation in the area where they are working, including opening the window.
- No work should be carried out in any household which is isolating or where an individual is being shielded, unless the work is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household, such as emergency glazing or repair.
- No work should be carried out by a Tradesperson or company employee who has COVID-19 symptoms, however mild.

SECTION 2

Key Criteria

Below is the GGF's clear three-point criteria for installers to help make the decision to work or not to work in domestic properties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Only continue to work if it is safe to do so within the health and safety guidelines as published on the Government website and in line with Public Health England Guidance. If you are operating in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales, please check the guidelines on the devolved government websites.
2. Conduct a thorough health and safety risk assessment.
3. Check with your insurers that you are covered for Public Health and Health and Safety Employer liability.



SECTION 3

First Contact with Homeowners

The Government guidance is to work from home if you can, so selling or providing a quotation for a homeowner should be done remotely, by phone, email, video conference, messenger, text or any other digital/electronic means.

When contacting your customers, please tell them your company and installers are operating within the Government guidance and to the GGF Safe Guide for Homeowners. The GGF strongly advises that you send your customers a digital copy of the Safe Guide for Homeowners.

During the selling/quoting process, ask the homeowner to either show you their property by video or by sending images so you can assess the property and the products required. You can ask the homeowner to measure the window or door, but when doing this please advise on how the windows should be measured and double check they have measured correctly. Please inform your customer that the exact sizes and products will be subject to final site survey and to ensure the products ordered are to the customer's satisfaction and as agreed.

Initial Contact Quick Checklist. It is advised that when dealing with homeowners and making initial contact to:

- Sell/quote remotely if possible
- Ask for images or video of the existing windows and property
- Ask the homeowner to measure the windows. Please feel free to use this video clip to explain. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqD7iol40Zo>
- Send a digital copy of the GGF Safe Guide for Homeowners during the COVID-19 Crisis
- Send a digital copy of the GGF Consumer Code of Practice
- Send a digital copy or reference the link to the Government Guidance document "Working safely during COVID-19 in other people's homes"



SECTION 4

First Entry to a Home

It may be that you have to enter a domestic property for the first time to survey the window and confirm measurements and specifications.

Please ensure that your surveyor or your company representative follows the same guidance as a tradesperson would when entering and working in a domestic property. This has been outlined in Section 1C – Working in People’s Homes.

In addition all salespeople, surveyors and other employees should conduct all conversations outside the building e.g. in a garden, porch and/or driveway and keep 2m apart.

Following the site survey it is advised that contracts and or quote letters should be provided electronically wherever possible. In addition, any subsequent payments should be taken by contactless means e.g. BACS, PayPal, online card payment wherever possible.



SECTION 5

The Working Environment

Most companies aim to do the best job they can to ensure they leave their customers satisfied and with a healthier and improved home. Your working environment may change from day to day, for example one day they may be installing windows in a small flat the next day they could be starting to

build a conservatory on a huge house. Regardless of the environment you should adjust your safety equipment and practices to suit. Below are some of the safety measures homeowners may expect from the company they employ in the current climate.



SECTION 6

Homeowners’ Safety Expectations

Before you carry out any work, you should consider the homeowners safety expectations. Listed below are just a few of the kind of things homeowners will expect of companies in the current climate.

- That you are working to the GGF Safe Guide or something similar aligned to the Government health and safety guidelines
- That all your employees should be safety aware and adhere to Government health guidelines.
- That all those working in the home will be working 2m apart wherever possible and to conduct any conversations with the homeowner outdoors (e.g. in a porch,driveaway or garden).
- That all those working in the home should wear gloves at all times and face coverings in exposed areas
- That all those working in the home, should have hand sanitiser available and make a commitment to frequently clean/wash hands
- That all employees, should be aware of the areas of your home where they can enter or not – (please confirm with the homeowner if any parts of the property are prohibited)
- That all conversations with homeowners should be outside the home and preferably for no more than 15 minutes.
- That you should have floor coverings (dust sheets) laid out and in some cases taped to the skirting
- That you should clean down with disinfectant all surfaces your employees have handled or installed at the end of each day – including cleaning any new window or door frames and any glass/seals or beading
- That your employees should eat and drink away from the property – either in their van or outside
- That your employees should bring their own food and drink for refreshment breaks and lunches
- That your company has made its own plans for any access to washroom/toilet facilities
- That your employees should make the working area safe and clean at the end of each day



SECTION 7

Approaching and Working in the Home

It is important to give your customers complete reassurance when you approach and start work in their home. So be prepared.

When you decide you want to carry out work in someone's home, please ensure your employees;

- show identification – particularly at the point of approach to the home
- are aware of and are following the Government Guidance (as per Section 1)
- meet the homeowner's expectations (or those listed in section 4)
- have proof that a risk assessment has been carried out to the Government Guidance (as outlined in Section 1)
- are operating in a Competent Person Scheme such as FENSA (only applicable in England and Wales) and can legally certify the windows/doors.
- are wearing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)
- have confirmed with the homeowner that none of the workers entering the home have shown signs of Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- have received a briefing or training on health and safety awareness in line with the Government Guidance
- have proof that they have received a briefing on working safely in homes in line with government guidance.
- advises the homeowner to hold any conversations outside the home (e.g. in the garden/porch or driveway)



SECTION 8

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE or Personal Protective Equipment is an often used phrase since the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19), but what exactly does it include?

It is advisable that any tradespeople or company representatives entering a domestic home wear:

- Gloves at all times
- Face coverings (masks or visors or scarves) in enclosed areas
- Protective footwear
- Overalls
- hard hats
- goggles

Though not all PPE will be directly related to COVID-19, it is worth insisting that the tradespeople working in your home are wearing gloves and face coverings in contained areas.

Worth noting that the coronavirus can be transferred from PPE and other surfaces such as fabrics, plastics, metals, wood and glass. So it is advisable not to touch or share any other employee's PPE, tools or other materials that are being used for the home improvement until the job has been completed and all surfaces have been thoroughly cleaned.



SECTION 9

Health and Safety Risk Assessment Checklist

Government Guidance clearly states that you must carry out a Risk Assessment for each individual project (as highlighted in Section 1). The assessment should be done in consultation with those working in the home and the outcome/results should be shared with the homeowner/occupant.

The Assessment should include questions such as:

- Can employees work 2m apart wherever possible?
- If it is not possible to work 2m apart, do employees have face coverings such as masks or visors?
- Have any of employees shown symptoms of coronavirus?
- Are any employees shielding or living with anyone who has shown signs or symptoms of the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?
- Have customers or suppliers shown any signs of coronavirus?
- Can employees frequently wash their hands or use sanitiser at work?
- Do all employees have sufficient appropriate and fully adequate PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) such as face coverings and gloves?
- Have all employees been given health and safety awareness training?
- Can you show evidence that your employees have received information and briefing on the health and safety measures included in this Guide and in line with Government Guidance.

SECTION 10

Insurance, Warranties and Contracts

When carrying out work in a customer’s home make sure you show evidence of your guarantees and insurances.

Every company should be able to provide evidence of Employer’s Liability & Public Liability insurance policies.

Contracts

Health and Safety should be included within any contracts. Prior to signing make sure that companies are committed to following the Government Health and Safety Guidance.



SECTION 11

Deciding to Undertake Work

Taking the decision to install windows, doors or a conservatory/extension in the current climate should be easier if you have taken the steps as outlined in this guide and you are comfortable that all reasonable precautionary measures have been taken to ensure it is safe to carry out the work.

Please see below the quick and final checklist before deciding to safely work in a domestic property

Check with the homeowner that the home is safe to enter	
Check the occupants in the home are safe and are not at risk	
Check the latest Government Guidance as referenced in this guide and ensure you have briefed your employees on the guidance	
Check you have carried out a through Health and Safety Risk Assessment in consultation with your employees and has been shared with the homeowners/occupants	
Check you have the appropriate PPE for your employees entering the home	
Check you have valid insurance cover and that the Contract of their terms and conditions includes the latest Government health and safety legislation	



Further Information

This Safe Guide is covers the key checks and balances you should ensure before you decide to undertake installation, repair or maintenance work in a domestic home.

There is further information available via the following websites:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance>

<https://www.ggf.org.uk/category/covid-19/>



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