

## **Covid – 19: Role of the Lead Worker Representative**

The National Return to Work Safely Protocol document sets out the principal and practical steps required in order that employers and employees can keep themselves and their workplaces safe following a return to work. A key piece of this protocol is the requirement for each workplace to appoint at least one Lead Worker Representative.

During the COVID-19 crisis some workplaces have remained open and workers have continued to provide services throughout the restrictions. The protocol applies to these workplaces and also to workplaces opening up again in the phased return to work.

This guide is designed to aid employers to ensure that they are complying with the protocols relating to selecting, training and supporting their Lead Worker Representative.

### **Lead Worker Representative:**

Adherence to the Return to Work Protocol will only be achieved if employers and workers have a shared responsibility in implementing the measures contained within the protocol in their place of work.

Each workplace must appoint at least one Lead Worker Representative charged with ensuring that COVID-19 measures are strictly adhered to in their place of work. The person(s) undertaking the role must receive the necessary training and have a structured framework to follow within the organisation to be effective in preventing the spread of the virus. Mechanisms must be in place to ensure discussions can take place and a structure needs to be in place whereby a lead worker representative can raise concerns and have them addressed by Management. There is a responsibility on Management to address these concerns without delay.

### **Selection of Lead Worker Representative**

Employers should consult with their employees to select a Lead Worker Representative. The employer must ensure that employees are satisfied with their representative, and that the nominated person is comfortable with the role.

A vulnerable person can be nominated as the Lead Worker Representative; however, employers must ensure that they have supports and facilities in place to carry out the role in a safe manner if this is the case.

The number of representatives appointed will, ideally, be proportionate to the number of workers in the workplace. These key personnel will be identified to employees during their covid-19 Induction on return to work. Every lead worker representative should receive training on this role.

### **Multiple Lead Worker Representatives:**

In determining whether more than one Lead worker representative is required the following should be considered:

- The number of employees to be represented
- The nature of the work

- The operation of shift systems
- The number of workplaces under the employer 's control

### Role of Lead Worker Representative

The Lead Worker Representative role is to work with the employer to assist in the implementation of measures and monitor adherence to these measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The lead worker representative should, together with the management team, support the implementation of the measures identified in this national protocol.

The lead worker representative should:

- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 advice.
- Consult with the employer on the control measures required to minimise the risk of workers being exposed to COVID-19. To assist with this the HSA has prepared a series of checklists which are available [here](#).
- Set up a regular communication channel with their employer or manager which includes an escalation process if they cannot reach agreement on any issue
- On a daily basis walk around their workplace/work area and check that the control measures are in place and are being maintained
- Keep a record and report immediately to their employer/manager any problems, areas of non-compliance or defects that they see and record actions taken to rectify them.
- Consult with the employer/Manager on the company response plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while at work including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area
- Following any incident assess with their employer/manager any follow up action that is required
- Ensure that the contact log is being maintained
- Make themselves available to their fellow workers in order to listen to any COVID-19 concerns or suggestions they may have and raise these where necessary with their Employer/Manager

A Lead Worker Representative may consult with, and make representations to, the employer on any issue of concern in relation to COVID-19. These include issues in relation to

- Hand Hygiene Facilities including their location and whether they are stocked and maintained
- Hand sanitising
- Employee awareness around hand hygiene in the workplace
- Respiratory hygiene
- Physical Distancing including the layout of the workplace

- Implementation of one-way systems in workplaces to ensure social distancing including when entering and exiting the workplace
- Personal Protective Equipment
- At Risk Groups
- Visitors/Contractors

If the HSA send an inspector, the Lead Worker Representative is entitled to accompany them during the inspection and to get a copy of any recommendations or orders.

### Legal responsibilities:

The Lead Worker Representative does not have any legal responsibilities in relation to COVID-19, so they are not responsible for the control measures within an organisation, which remains the employer's responsibility.

### Training and information required by the lead worker representative:

The Lead Worker Representative should be provided with the necessary training to fulfil their role. They should be aware of and consulted in relation to all the measures the employer has put in place to minimise the risk of workers being exposed to COVID-19.

They should also have access to any risk assessments prepared or carried out in relation to COVID-19 and be provided with details of incidents of suspected COVID-19 cases, where they occurred and any actions taken. They should keep up to date with current public health guidance in relation to Covid-19.

### Facilities for the lead worker representative:

The employer should provide the lead worker representative with the necessary facilities to enable them to consult with employees or prepare any submissions or reports. These might include access to a meeting room, photocopier, communications and equipment.