



Archaeology and Covid-19

Advice for Archaeologists during the Covid-19 Pandemic

July 2020

Introduction

While we have some experience in the archaeological community in managing disease on-site, with the ever-present potential for Weil's Disease as well as the difficulties arising out of the Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001, the current Covid-19 Pandemic is unlike any challenge which we have faced before. Failure to comply with physical distancing and hygiene measures mean we could not just potentially become ill ourselves, but contribute to a further spread of the disease throughout the population.

To that end the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland have developed the following advice for archaeologists working through this period. This is a rapidly developing crisis and all on-site practices should take due regard of any updates to restrictions and public health advice from the Government and by the HSE, in addition to complying with the Health and Safety at Work Act (2005). A list of useful resources can be found in the appendix to this document for further advice and updates.

The advice outlined in this document is not exhaustive, nor is it legally binding. However, it is incumbent on all of us to take responsibility in successfully managing this crisis. Employers and clients must ensure that safe working conditions have been provided where best practice of physical distancing and hygiene can be observed. It is also crucial that every individual on-site follow guidelines regarding distancing and handwashing. It is only through cooperation and collective responsibility that we can safely return to work, and it is the aim of this document to provide guidance to that effect.

Covid-19

Covid-19 is a new illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus which can affect your lungs and airways. Symptoms of this disease include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above),
- a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry,
- shortness of breath (breathing difficulties),
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

Symptoms	Coronavirus	Flu	Cold
	Symptoms range from mild to severe	Abrupt onset of symptoms	Gradual onset of symptoms
Fever or chills	Common	Common	Rare
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common (usually dry)	Mild
Fatigue	Common	Common	Sometimes
Aches and pains	Common	Common	Common
Sore throat	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Headaches	Sometimes	Common	Rare
Mild shortness of breath	Sometimes	No	No
Runny or Stuffy Nose	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Feeling sick or vomiting	Rare	Sometimes	No
Diarrhoea	Rare	Sometimes in children	No
Sneezing	No	No	Common

On average it takes 5–6 days from when someone is infected with the virus for symptoms to show, however it can take up to 14 days.

Covid-19 can be transmitted by people who are asymptomatic, so it is important to follow health and safety advice to minimise the risk of infection.

If a staff member has come into contact with an individual who shows symptoms of Covid-19, they should restrict their movements for 14 days. This includes not attending work. If that contact tests negative for Covid-19, the staff member may return to work.

If a staff member develops symptoms of Covid-19, they should immediately self-isolate and seek testing. Any other staff member who has had close contact with this individual should also restrict movement and not attend work.

If two or more cases of Covid-19 are confirmed on-site, this should be considered a cluster. It is strongly advised that the site be closed for 14 days and all staff go into self-isolation.

Staff members who are in a high risk category (over 65, asthmatic, pregnant etc.) should consider the risk of working on-site to their personal health.

It is recommended that the Covid Tracker App produced by the HSE and the Government of Ireland be used on-site to facilitate contact tracing.

For further information, visit the HSE Website at <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html> or dial 1850 24 1850 for advice.

Physical Distancing

Physical (or social) distancing requires that all individuals maintain a distance of 2m from each other. This guideline should be adhered to in all aspects of our work as archaeologists, including site work, office environments, field work, travel and break times. Before commencing a task, assess the situation to ensure that this will be possible.

Coughing & Sneezing

Coughing and sneezing should be done into the elbow or a tissue. Immediately dispose of the tissue in a bin and wash hands afterwards.

Hand Hygiene

Hand washing facilities must be available on-site. Ideally, this should comprise of hot running water and soap. If a water-main is not available, tanks should be installed and regularly refilled. Hand sanitising gel should only be relied upon as a last recourse if all other alternatives are unavailable.

All individuals must practice good hand hygiene. Hand washing should take a minimum of 20 seconds and should follow the best practice set out by the HSE.

If there is no feasible way to provide running water, for instance during field walking exercises, an alcohol gel should be used.

Hands should be washed on arrival at site, before and after breaks times, when using toilets and other welfare facilities, immediately following a cough or sneeze, when leaving site and as required throughout the day.

If using work gloves, always wash hands before putting the gloves on to avoid contamination of the inner surface.

If using disposable gloves (nitrile or latex), for instance for first aid, they must be removed properly to avoid cross contamination and disposed of in a bin.

Avoid touching your face.

Planning a Site

Proper adherence to physical distancing and hygiene guidelines will impact the time it takes to complete a task. Bear this in mind when planning a site and applying for an excavation licence.

A Risk Assessment and Covid-19 Response Plan should be completed before commencing any site work.

Advice for employers and staff returning to work can be found in the 'Return to Work Safety Protocol' issued by the Department of Business, Innovation and Enterprise and the Department of Health at <https://dbe.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf>

A Pre-Return to Work form should be issued to all staff at least 3 days in advance of a return to work. Questions should include;

- Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days? Yes/No,
- Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days? Yes/No
- Are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days (i.e. less than 2m for more than 15 minutes accumulative in 1 day)? Yes/No
- Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time? Yes/No,
- Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time? Yes/No

Checklists, templates and posters can be found at https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/return_to_work_safely_templates_and_checklists/return_to_work_safely_templates_and_checklists.html

It is recommended that the Covid Tracker App produced by the HSE and the Government of Ireland should be promoted among staff to facilitate contact tracing. Information about the app and how it works can be found at

https://covidtracker.gov.ie/?gclid=CjwKCAjwLD4BRAiEiwAg5NBFv22mnnrnzUzBWqzXsK435GbGHx0xT1ccdluOILLfwfgjtge7hYbxxoCCEgQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds

National Monuments Service

The Reading Room of the National Monuments Service has been closed until further notice in response to the Covid-19 crisis. They will continue to provide a restricted service for access to collections and to excavation reports, but ask that researchers limit their requests to urgent cases only by email to nmarchive@chg.gov.ie

Interim arrangements have allowed that licence holders may submit licence/consent applications and reports by File Transfer to <https://filetransfer.chg.gov.ie/filedrop/licensingsection@chg.gov.ie> with no requirement for paper copies to be submitted. Include the full 7 digit licence/consent number in the name of the PDF/A formatted reports. For licensing queries contact licensingsection@chg.gov.ie

National Museum of Ireland

Access to the National Museum of Ireland and the Topographical Files will be restricted until further notice. As a temporary measure, and subject to capacity, museum staff will provide a basic list of stray finds for particular townlands in order to allow applicants to complete applications for licences to excavate. Official townlands as per the townland index must be used only. Queries can be submitted to licensing@museum.ie

PPE

Current public health advice is that masks or face coverings should be worn in situations where it is difficult to practice physical distancing. This will include travelling to work on public transport, working in an enclosed space such as a site office, or working in confined spaces. Wearing a face covering may prevent people who do not know they have the virus from spreading it, and it is therefore an important action that staff members can take to protect their colleagues.

All staff should note the correct way to wear and remove the mask or face covering.

- The coloured side of a surgical mask faces out with the white side facing in.
- A surgical mask should form a seal around the mouth and nose by pressing the concealed wire around the shape of your nose.
- Cloth masks should fit snugly against the sides of the face and be made of at least two layers of fabric.
- Do not pull the mask below the nose.
- Do not touch the front of the mask when putting it on, taking it off or while wearing it.
- Do not share masks.
- Do not wear a soiled mask.
- Remove the mask using the strings or elastics to the rear.
- Disposable masks should be disposed of in a bin.
- Cloth masks should be washed daily in a hot wash over 60° with detergent.
- Have a fresh mask for after one has been removed for lunch breaks.

PPE should not be shared. All the usual PPE such as gloves, hard hats, boots, high-vis gear and wet gear should be supplied to each staff member.

Disposable or cloth gloves should be removed safely to prevent cross contamination. Wash cloth gloves every day.



Source: www.globus.co.uk

Travel to work

Only undertake to travel for work if it is for a task that cannot be completed remotely.

Physical distancing should be implemented for travel to and from work. This limits the amount of passengers per vehicle, although this can be relaxed for people sharing the same household.

Staggered start/end times are an option which may be availed of to facilitate workers travelling on public transport, as capacity will be limited on these services.

Welfare facilities

Physical distancing should be maintained in canteen facilities. Additional facilities may be required. Reorganise the space to separate tables and reduce the amount of individuals seated at each table.

Staggered breaks will reduce the amount of staff in need of facilities at the same time.

All surfaces should be cleaned before and/or after break times, including tables, chairs, counter tops, fridge doors, microwave buttons, kettle buttons, light switches, door handles, window handles and any other surface which people may come in contact with.

Eating utensils and dishes should not be shared. To ensure this, it is best that staff bring their own dishes and utensils and bring them home at the end of the day to be washed in hot soapy water.

Advise staff to bring lunch from home to avoid trips to the shop. Appropriate kitchen facilities should be provided for this.

Physical distancing should be maintained in drying rooms. Each staff member should be assigned a hook to avoid the potential for cross contamination.

The drying room should be cleaned regularly, including bench surfaces, hooks, door handles, window handles, light switches etc.

Toilet facilities should be provided with soap and hot running water if possible. Hand sanitisers should only be relied upon if there is no availability of running water.

Posters should be displayed in welfare facilities outlining safety and hygiene protocols.

Managing a Site

It is recommended that a person on-site be assigned with specific responsibilities for Covid-19 policies, either a Covid Supervisor or the Site Director. This person will be responsible for ensuring hygiene and physical distancing are enforced, and that complacency does not lead to a relaxing of policies.

Covid inductions should be given to all staff outlining the safety and hygiene protocols.

Staggered start/end times and break times can facilitate physical distancing on-site and minimise the amount of staff members needing facilities at the same time.

Monitoring of staff health may be facilitated with temperature checks on arrival on-site.

A log should be maintained of all onsite contacts in order to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a Covid-19 diagnosis.

When assigning tasks, consider the ability of staff to complete the task while following physical distancing guidelines. If this is not possible, organise the staff into small teams to minimise the amount of contacts.

If possible, only one staff member should be assigned to paperwork or tasks which require repeated use of limited equipment, such as photography, reading total stations or dumpy levels etc.

If there are tasks which can be achieved remotely, consider assigning this to staff members who are deemed at higher risk for Covid-19, provided they are suitably qualified and all best practice can be followed. This may include processing soil samples or washing bones and artefacts.

Certain tasks will take longer to complete when following physical distancing guidelines, such as removing tools from the tool shed at the beginning of the day and returning them at the end of the day. This should be accounted for within the workday.

Regular tool box meetings should be used to reinforce Covid-19 policies and to provide updates of any changes in circumstances. Physical distancing should be maintained throughout.

Sufficient stocks of cleaning products, paper towels etc. must be maintained.

Tools and equipment

Tool sharing should be kept to a minimum. The handles should be cleaned with an alcohol gel before and after each use.

Tools should not be handed to colleagues. They should be placed on the ground to be picked up.

Each staff member should keep their own pens, pencils and other stationary.

If it is not possible to limit the use of cameras, total stations and levels to one person, they will have to be cleaned after each use.

Please note that while iPads and tablets should be cleaned after use, the manufacturers do not advise the use of alcohol gel or antibacterial sprays as they can harm the screen's oleophobic layer. A paper towel which has been wetted in soapy water is the best way to clean this equipment, provided care is taken of openings.

Phones should not be shared. If it is necessary to include another individual in a call, use speakerphone mode rather than passing the phone to a colleague, or hang up and have your colleague speak to the recipient on their own phone.

Mental health

The Covid-19 crisis has caused considerable stress and anxiety due to social isolation, fear that we or our loved ones may fall ill, and financial loss. This is particularly true for those with ongoing mental health challenges. Our mental health must be valued as much as physical health throughout this crisis, and we would ask that employers and staff give due consideration to the difficulties which other staff member may be suffering.

For work on-site, Employers and Site Directors should provide an environment in which staff can communicate if they feel unsafe or overwhelmed.

Staff working remotely should communicate regularly with colleagues online or by phone to reduce the impacts of social isolation.

All staff should be encouraged to keep a routine, and practice self-care.

The socialising which normally takes place outside of the workplace cannot take place as normal during this crisis. This can impact team building, and the traditional 'end of site party' which can often provide the encouragement to complete the work at the end of a difficult project will be impacted. Consider other ways to provide this social outlet which can maintain physical distancing, through outdoor activities or online services for instance.

Additional information is available at <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

Appendix: Useful Resources

<https://cif.ie/2020/04/15/new-operating-procedures/>

https://covidtracker.gov.ie/?gclid=CjwKCAjwjLD4BRAiEiwAg5NBFv22mnnrnzUzBWqzXsK435GbGHx0xT1ccdluOILLfwfgjtge7hYbxxoCCEgQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf>

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Supports-for-businesses-COVID-19.html>

<https://www.globus.co.uk/how-to-safely-remove-disposable-gloves>

[https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/return to work safely templates and checklists/return to work safely templates and checklists.html](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/return%20to%20work%20safely%20templates%20and%20checklists/return%20to%20work%20safely%20templates%20and%20checklists.html)

[https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Managing Health and Safety/Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005/](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Managing_Health_and_Safety/Safety,_Health_and_Welfare_at_Work_Act_2005/)

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1