



Oifig Luachála
Valuation Office

Inspection Protocol

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Section 1: Introduction

This document has been produced in response to the global Covid-19 virus pandemic in order to provide guidance for valuers undertaking inspections of property in the course of their work. The health and safety of employees and citizens is of paramount importance. These guidelines have been produced in consultation with staff and by reference to the published guidance of the HSE and the Health & Safety Authority.

The document also accords where relevant with the guidance contained in the joint Sector Protocol for Property Services Providers produced by IPAV, PSRA and SCSi. The Joint Sector protocol has been in operation since August 2020 and is a valuable resource for property professionals in both public and private sector alike.

Staff undertaking field survey work are required to follow the protocols set out in the following sections. If additional guidance is required, staff should consult their line managers.

It is recommended that staff conducting field work download and use the Covid Tracker app to assist with contact tracing.

<https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/covid-tracker-ireland/id1505596721>
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.covidtracker.hse>

Section 2: Training Requirements

Staff should be aware of and observe the following guidelines:

- Understanding and awareness of physical distancing requirements at all times during field work.
- Awareness of and compliance with rules and guidelines in operation within premises during inspection.
- Understanding and awareness of appropriate sanitising measures before, during and after attendance at premises for the purpose of survey/inspection, including disposal of single-use PPE and/or cleaning materials.
- Steps to be taken in the event of infection or onset of symptoms.
- Confirmation that guidelines and other resources have been reviewed.
- Employees must also be provided with suitable information to enable them to make proper and effective use of any PPE used for their protection – see resources below.

HSE Guidance on Hygiene and PPE safety:

1. Face Coverings: <https://youtu.be/sVLZHDdEBR0>
2. Hand Hygiene: <https://youtu.be/lsgLivAD2FE>
3. Glove Removal:



Safe Removal of gloves

Section 3: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The following recommendations are made in conjunction with the following:

- [Safety, Health and Welfare at Work \(General Application\) Regulations 2007, Part 2 Chapter 3](#) covers Use of Personal Protective Equipment at work.
- Health and Safety Authority (HSA)
- Health Service Executive (HSE)

Duty of Employees- Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

There is a duty on employees, having regard to their training and instructions, to make correct use of PPE. Employees should:

- use PPE properly whenever it is required to be used,
- participate in any training or instruction provided on PPE,
- inform their employer of any medical conditions they have that might be affected by the use of the PPE provided to them.

Proper Usage of PPE

Personal Protective Equipment when used correctly can help prevent some exposures. However, it should not take the place of other preventative measures such as; maintaining the 2 metres distance, no hand shaking, regular hand-washing, minimising time in crowded spaces.

Protective equipment is only effective if used properly and fitted properly. In addition to the traditional PPE which is used commonly in industrial and manufacturing settings, standard PPE now includes face coverings, hand sanitising gels or sprays, and in some circumstances, gloves. Please note that in general, the advice is against wearing gloves or, if recommended, using those gloves only once and disposing of them correctly afterwards. They are not a substitute for hand washing.

Staff are required to maintain sufficient supply of or access to these items whilst undertaking field work.

The psychological effect of PPE may be such that the individual wearing the PPE feels more protected than he or she actually is. It is therefore important to maintain awareness of surroundings and circumstances throughout the time spent in the field.

Personal Protective Equipment for use during fieldwork:

The following list of equipment is recommended for staff undertaking field work:

- **Hand sanitising equipment:** such as alcohol-based hand rub and wipes. To be used for personal and equipment (measuring tapes, lasers, telephones, pens, shoes, clothing etc.) sanitation.
- **Facial Protection:** Face masks (reusable/ disposable) and head visors (no longer considered as effective as masks) may be used by staff. It is recommended that reusable masks are used where possible, and that they are properly and regularly washed in accordance with the product instructions.
- **Gloves** can be used at the staff member's discretion. However, as previously stated, the advice is against wearing gloves in general. If they are required, those gloves should be used once and disposed of correctly afterwards. They are not a substitute for hand washing.

Staff will be reimbursed by the office for the purchase of the recommended Personal Protective Equipment.

Used PPE and unused or re-usable PPE should not be stored close together area to prevent cross contamination (see guidelines on disposal in Section 6).

Section 4: Preparation for Inspections

Return to Work Form

The Return-to-Work form should be completed at least 3 days in advance of staff intending to undertake fieldwork. This provides assurance that the staff member has not been subject to Covid-19 and has not been in contact with anyone who has had Covid-19. The return-to-work form is available on the Peoplepoint portal.

Use of Planning Drawings etc where inspection is not possible.

In relation to revision cases where there are no BCMS or Fire Certificate drawings available and where valuers have been unable to inspect properties the standard approach should be an external cursory inspection to verify that the planning drawings etc. are broadly accurate. This cursory inspection should also confirm the location and characteristics of the subject property relative to other comparable properties. A valuation should be estimated based on the available floor areas and existing tone and issued to the occupier. Contact your line manager for any further guidance.

Inspection Not Facilitated, Refused, Cancelled or Property Vacant

Every reasonable effort should be made, and documented, to arrange an inspection or to carry out a restricted access inspection if this is required. Where an inspection is not facilitated, refused or cancelled an external cursory inspection should take place to verify planning drawings etc. and/or other data sources noting the location and characteristics of the subject property relative to other comparable properties. A **valuation** should then be estimated based on estimated floor areas and existing tone and issued to the occupier. In the case where an inspection was in progress and was interrupted a valuation should be estimated using planning drawings and your own initial notes at inspection and issued to the occupier. Where a property is vacant, every reasonable effort should be made to contact the landlord or associated parties to the property (e.g., management companies, Local Authority, and agents) via telephone call, email, and making local enquiries. Contact your line manager for any further guidance.

Revision of Healthcare properties with access issues due to Covid19

In the case of healthcare properties which may have genuine access issues due to Covid19, the procedure is that a valuer contacts the occupier to arrange an inspection similar to other properties. Where it was not possible to gain access internally, the valuer should request as built floor plans and arrange an external inspection (Nursing Homes GEA etc.). In the case of properties that are measured NIA/GIA (surgeries etc.) for valuation purposes, the as-built floor plans should be requested, and a cursory inspection should confirm the location and characteristics of the subject property relative to other comparable properties. A valuation should then be estimated based on estimated floor areas and existing tone and issued to the occupier. Contact your line manager for any further guidance.

If there is concern at any stage that health and safety guidelines cannot be adhered to during an inspection, the inspection should not proceed. The time, date and reason for cancelling the inspection should be recorded and communicated to the occupier.

Inspection letters (See also Section 5)

Inspection Letters should be issued to all occupiers a minimum of 1 week in advance of inspection. VAU will issue the standard inspection letter to ratepayers using the VOS portal once the case is moved by the valuer to the "Issue Inspection Letter Stage".

File preparation

Hardcopy documentation should be kept to an absolute minimum, and papers brought into an inspection should all be brought out. Papers can be stored in plastic folders which can be sanitised post inspection.

Attendance at the office should be kept to a minimum, so it is recommended that valuers prepare larger batches of documentation for use over multiple inspection periods.

Equipment

Pens, pencils, laser, tape, camera/phone etc.

Equipment to be brought on inspection should be kept to a minimum and should be properly sanitised between each inspection.

Contact tracing

The HSE is responsible for contact tracing where the need arises. Valuers entering business premises should comply with on-site request for contact details but should not leave business cards on inspection.

It is recommended the staff download and use the HSE Covid-19 Contact Tracing App.

Accommodation

Staff availing of overnight accommodation whilst on field work should follow the procedures in place in the accommodation in relation to Covid-19. It is prudent to ensure in advance of arrival that such procedures are in place (this can usually be done by visiting the property's website). Valuation Office employees staying overnight whilst on field work are deemed to be essential workers.

Section 5: Communication

There is still much uncertainty for occupiers, many of whose businesses have been affected by closure or changes to trading position resulting from the measures to address the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to ensure consistent and relevant communication is provided whilst conducting this work.

Inspection Letters for revision cases should provide information about the estimated timeline for inspection. This will be confirmed by a telephone call by the valuer closer to the inspection date. The inspection letter should confirm that the latest government health advice is to be followed by both the occupier and the person conducting the inspection. In the context of the Risk Assessment (See Section 5 below) it may be advisable to request data to be made available electronically if possible, or to be sent to you pre- or post-inspection. This data could include any of the following:

- Up to date floor plans.
- Up to date site plans.
- Accommodation schedule.
- Any recent additions.
- In the case of industrial / quarries / properties with plant – request an itemised list of plant, model #, age and MV, if this has not been provided already in a return.

Contact details for the owner should be sought if not available so that the Valuer can ring to confirm the appointment.

By reference to the joint sector protocol for property services providers, guidance should be included in the inspection letter as to how the property should be prepared to facilitate the inspection:

- Secure in an open position all doors to avoid touching handles and / or handrails.
- Open some windows to ventilate the property.
- Turn on all lights.
- Open all storage units.

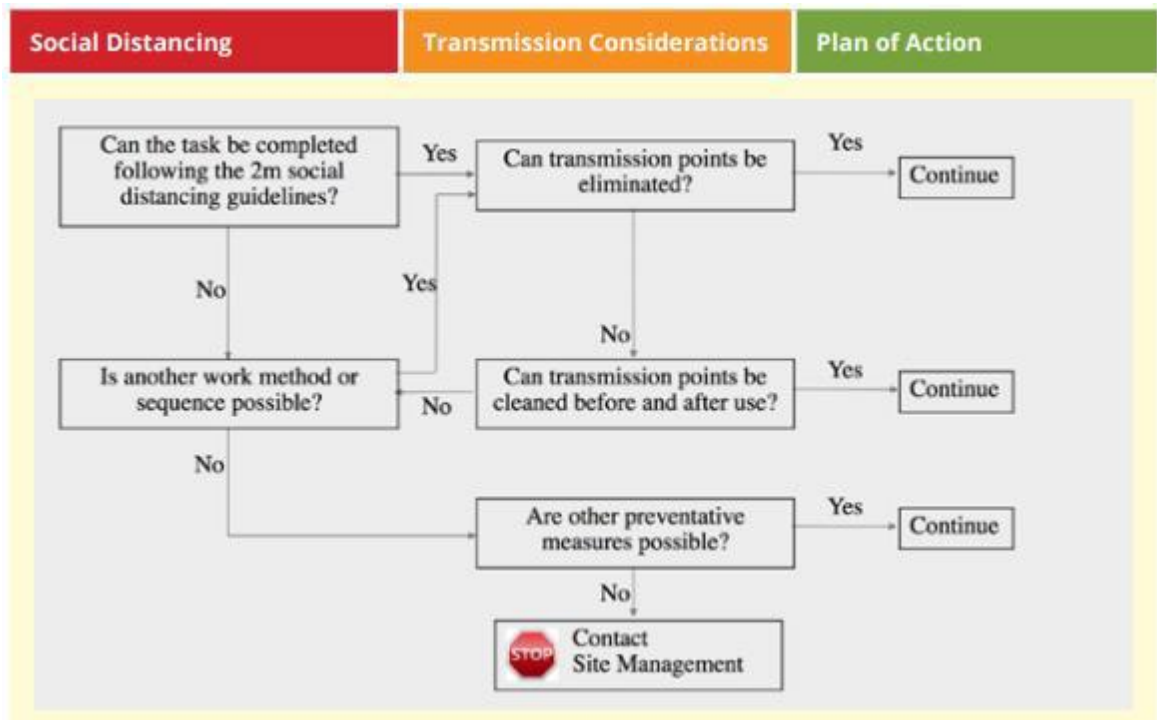
In the case of smaller properties, it may not be possible for the valuer to be accompanied whilst maintaining requisite social distancing requirements and this should be flagged, in writing to the occupier, at an early stage.

On receipt of the response, the Valuer should contact the owner to arrange the inspection confirming a specific date and time.

Section 6: On Inspection

Procedure

1. On-site safety checks pre-inspection
 - Socially distanced & appointment only
 - Agreed contact on-site for inspection & any necessary subsequent follow-up
 - Minimal number of people on-site
 - Risk assessment:



[Modified from CIF Construction Sector C-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedures, V1]

2. Don PPE

Proceed with inspection, conducting any internal survey requirements while observing social distancing and respiratory etiquette. Conduct external survey requirements and record all necessary information. As paper cannot be wiped down and sanitised, it is recommended to take photos of any paper used to draw plans, take notes, measurements, and to dispose of the paper along with any disposable PPE that was used in the inspection.

Please ensure that all photographs of notes are of sufficient quality to be read and understood before disposing of the paper record.

Please also ensure any paperwork is disposed of in a secure manner (not in general waste) respecting the confidentiality of the material.

Section 7: Post Inspection

1. Dispose of PPE and carry out appropriate sanitisation after each inspection.
 - Cleanse equipment used on inspection (phone, laser etc.)
 - Disposable PPE should be placed in a plastic bag stored in the boot of car. When almost full, the bag should be removed from the car, tied off and disposed of in regular waste bins (i.e., not recycling, or organic waste bins)
 - Use Sanitising Wipes for touchpoints in your car and dispose them in the same bag as PPE.
 - Sanitise your hands once the above steps are completed and before departing from the property.
 - Store re-usable masks in such a manner which prevents risk of contamination, such as in a Ziploc plastic bag.
2. Record any issues that arose during that inspection, in order to streamline the procedure going forward – problems with social distancing, interaction with vulnerable individuals or groups and whatever is deemed relevant. This will facilitate ongoing review of the protocol.
3. When finished one inspection and full sanitisation has occurred contact the next planned inspection. This will facilitate the occupier in preparing for your arrival. It may also give the Valuer an opportunity to ensure that it is safe to conduct the next inspection by asking some general questions.
4. If a Valuer feels unwell during the course of an inspection, they should cease all inspections immediately, self-isolate and seek medical assistance. They should report the onset of illness to the Line Manager at the earliest opportunity.

Appendix 1 - Resources

HSE guidance and information:

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

Government advice and information for staff returning to work:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/22829a-return-to-work-safely-protocol/>

Joint Sector Protocol for property professionals:

<http://www.psr.ie/en/PSRA/Amended%20%20Joint%20Sector%20Protocol%20Property%20Services%20Sector%20July%202020.pdf/Files/Amended%20%20Joint%20Sector%20Protocol%20Property%20Services%20Sector%20July%202020.pdf>