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A guide to supporting track-and-trace in the workplace

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on economies all over the world. 'Track-and-trace' is being discussed as a means for economies to recover as they end their respective lockdowns. Here we look at what this means for organisations and workers alike.

Broadly speaking, a track-and-trace system consists of a smartphone application (app), designed to inform people if they have been in close contact with someone who later reports positive for Covid-19. A system that can record these details will enable governments to manage and advise individuals to take a test and quarantine themselves if testing positive. Although the intricacies of apps may differ from country to country, the systems are designed with the same purpose – to track down quickly anyone who may have been infected and alert them of the need to self-isolate.

After downloading the app to their smartphone, the user can opt in to record details of their symptoms when they start to feel unwell. The app keeps a trace of others who have been in close contact through Bluetooth signals. Bluetooth signals perform a digital "greeting" when two users come into close contact.

What might track-and-trace look like in the workplace and how will it benefit my organisation?

An organisation can use a track-and-trace system to pinpoint the workers, equipment and work areas that have may have been contaminated by a worker testing positive for Covid-19. This enables the organisation to trace and inform other workers who may have become infected through working with that individual, with the same equipment or in the same area. Organisations can then direct that any potentially infected equipment or product should be deep-cleaned and, if necessary, that an area should be evacuated.

What kinds of measures can my organisation implement to make it easier to track and trace?

Whichever track-and-trace app an organisation adopts, there are many measures which they can put in place that can help to reduce the potential for exposure to the Covid-19 virus. Together, these make a workable system that can be documented on paper or stored electronically on computer spreadsheets.

The following suggestions are a starting point for measures that health and safety professionals can introduce to manage the risk of transmissions in the workplace. These practical actions can help to identify infected individuals or groups.

Identify and create fixed teams, groups and production lines (maintain these teams unchanged as far as possible until government restrictions suggest otherwise) – this might help an organisation to limit the spread of the virus to just one team rather than the whole workforce.

Any equipment used by a worker should be personal and clearly identified and recorded.

Record routes taken by workers as part of their work activities that may compromise social distancing measures. This will help identify potential cross-over points and inform any tracing with other workers or teams should any worker test positive for Covid-19. If there is a need for shared equipment, this should be limited to as few workers as possible.

Document any shared equipment, along with users of that equipment.

Arrange the timing of meal breaks team by team, containing any potential spread of virus to one team or area at a time. Establish and record each team's regular break time and try to keep this slot.

A deep clean after a team uses common areas such as canteens is necessary and should be documented.

Record all other cleaning practices such as deep cleans or general wash-down of equipment or areas.

Make a record of meetings – room, time, participants.

Record workers' entrance to and departure from the site.

Document any contractors or visitors to the site and manage their access to areas.

Record any workers and areas a visitor or contractor comes into contact with.

For more information visit
www.iosh.com/covid-19-track-and-trace