

COVID-19 : INDUSTRY GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICE FOR AUTOMOTIVE RETAIL

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COVID-19 Protective Measures: Automotive Retail Sector Industry Guidance and Best Practice

Introduction

During this unprecedented time, companies of all sizes will be challenged with how to safely operate while minimising the risk of Covid-19 transmission amongst employees or their wider community.

This industry guidance and best practice document has been developed by the National Franchised Dealers Association (NFDA) and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd (SMMT) for use by the automotive retail sector. It has been compiled from a wide range of best practice and guidance documents but is by no means an exhaustive list. Given the unique nature of automotive retailing premises compared to other retail settings, it is intended to complement official guidance but provide more sector-specific detail. It should, therefore, be used in accordance with the latest government advice which may change over time.

This guidance may be used as part of a full risk assessment, which should be carried out for each retail site. Such a risk assessment would normally be required to be carried out in cooperation with staff or workforce representatives and in advance of (re)starting operations.

It is important to ensure all guidance is available to staff and customers in advance of any opening and any visit, in addition to onsite direction, support and signage. Engaging with staff will help overcome any anxiety but also help deliver improvements to the guidance.

This guidance is not a final draft; it should evolve as improvements and issues come to light and will reflect feedback from staff and customers.

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Section 3 (3.1.vi & 3.5.ii) amended in line with new Government guidance on use of face covers in shops and branches

Updated: 24 September 2020

Section 3 (3.5.i) amended in line with new Government guidance on use of face coverings by staff in retail.

Updated: 12 April 2021

Section 3 (3.3.x) amended in line with latest guidance and legislation.

Section 3 (3.6.v) amended in line with latest reopening of non-essential retail in England (12 April).

1. Disclaimer

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Whilst NFDA and SMMT endeavour to ensure that the content of information in its industry guidance is accurate and up-to-date at the date of publication, no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to its accuracy or completeness and therefore the information in the Industry Guidance should not be relied upon. It is each company's responsibility to comply with the current COVID-19 legislation and related government guidance. Therefore, NFDA and SMMT information and guidance are not legally binding. Readers should always seek appropriate advice from a suitably qualified expert before taking, or refraining from taking, any action. NFDA and SMMT disclaim liability for any loss, howsoever caused, arising directly or indirectly from reliance on the information in its industry guidance relating to COVID-19 as published on their websites.

2. Objectives of Guidance

- Ensure a safe environment for employees, customers and other visitors to the premises
- Provide reassurance to employees and customers that appropriate steps have been taken to maintain a clean and safe environment
- Demonstrate to Government and other stakeholders that the automotive retail sector is prepared for any easement/adaptation of existing coronavirus safety measures
- Secure Government and third party support for the approach which reflects a gradual and staggered return to operations

3. Scope of Guidance

3.1. Guidance and Support

- i. See the Government's guidance - [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – Shops and Branches](#) – for the latest guidance on operating safely.
- ii. Make staff aware of the [Government guidance on sickness and symptoms](#) – both at home and in the workplace.
- iii. As required by Government guidance, undertake a full risk assessment to put in measures and safeguards appropriate for premises – in consultation with staff or workforce health and safety representatives (as appropriate).
 - a. See 'How to carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment' on the Health & Safety Executive website - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm#>
- iv. Determine who should return to work and when in light of ongoing and changing government guidance, as well as existing legal health & safety obligations to ensure necessary support for any individuals with special circumstances, i.e. employees who classify as 'vulnerable' or 'clinically extremely vulnerable'. N.B. Working from home if at all possible, remains Government advice
- v. Clear messaging for customers – online and on arrival – communication is essential – see below.
- vi. Protocols for customers – clearly setting out the experience they will have on site. From 24 July 2020, in England it is a requirement for all customers to wear a face cover when in a shop or supermarket (this includes car showrooms and dealerships). There are also exemptions for children under the age of 11 and those with a medical condition preventing them from wearing a face cover. Check guidance for the Nations, which may differ.
- vii. Protocols for staff, including training in advance and appropriate monitoring of health and well-being.
- viii. Protocols for all deliveries to site, by 3rd party or other.
- ix. Clear policy and process to deal with staff or customers displaying symptoms on site.

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- x. Clear policies on shielding of vulnerable staff or, in the event, customers
- xi. Appropriate protocols for suppliers – inbound and outbound deliveries in accordance with Government guidelines.

3.2. Communication and education of customers and colleagues

- i. **Print off and display the government's online notice – [Staying COVID-19 Secure](#) - to illustrate to employees and customers that you have followed the government's guidance.**
- ii. Highlight the importance of clear communication to customers, employees and other visitors to site. This will need to be done in advance of any return to work or visit to the premises.
- iii. Colleagues should be briefed ahead of re-opening on new procedures – online and through other communication as appropriate.
- iv. Appropriate training provided to colleagues before any reopening and in the event of guidance changing/evolving.
- v. Communication given to customers ahead of their visit on what to expect – online, in any marketing materials, on arrival.
- vi. Signage and posters in place to remind customers to observe social distancing measures.
- vii. Markers in place, as necessary, to direct customers on where to go, 2m distancing etc.
- viii. Posters in appropriate areas providing guidance on use of sanitisers, hygiene and all facilities etc.

3.3. Social Distancing

- i. Provide clear guidance to customers and staff - signs, markers, posters – regarding the need to maintain 2m social distancing, wherever possible, in line with government guidance.
- ii. Introduce one-way systems for entrance and exits, i.e. door and corridor markers.
- iii. Consider staff transport issues especially if car sharing or using public transport.
- iv. Implement process to manage “walk ins” to ensure social distancing.
- v. Avoid any bottlenecks either on arrival or on premises.
- vi. Provide guidance on greetings – zero contact i.e. no handshakes, elbow bumping etc.
- vii. Maintain social distancing throughout premises (i.e. showrooms, technical sites, office spaces, waiting areas, toilets etc.). Where this is not possible, consider what additional steps are required.
- viii. Careful management of sales staff with customers – request customers only attend in small groups (e.g. no more than two persons, wherever possible).
- ix. Minimise off-site journeys for all staff and limits to on-site access.
- x. Test Drives – Unaccompanied test drives on trade plates are allowed; ensure appropriate measures are in place. If operating accompanied test drives, ensure appropriate measures are in place e.g. adequate ventilation, face covers, limit numbers in the vehicle, appropriate cleaning of vehicle post-test drive.
- xi. Workshop distancing – consider flexible hours, a drop box for vehicle keys, restrictions of access.
- xii. Office and other area – consider layout, avoid face to face configuration, no desk sharing, avoid touching/ sharing the same objects or equipment where possible.
- xiii. Toilets and other communal areas – clear guidance on social distancing measures, remove newspapers, magazines, vending machines etc.
- xiv. Cessation of other complimentary services e.g. removal of children's play areas.

3.4. Sanitisation and Hygiene

- i. Clear guidance for employees and customers on hygiene for people, property and vehicles
- ii. Regular sanitisation of all facilities, surfaces etc. including, but not limited to: smart phones, desk phones, printers, payment devices, computers, door handles, intercoms etc.
- iii. Ensure sanitising hand gel is available at entry points, desks, service areas, waiting area, toilets.
- iv. Recommended - liquid soaps (not solid soaps), disposable paper towels instead of hand dryers.
- v. No provision of refreshments to customers until wider lockdown measures released (e.g. coffee shops open); then single use items only.
- vi. Regular cleaning / disinfecting of tooling pre and post use, keys, pens etc.
- vii. Regular cleaning / disinfecting of vehicle - clean the contact surfaces in the vehicle interior after each inspection or use disposable protective sets for the seat, steering wheel, gear lever, handbrake lever during the inspection.
- viii. Showroom and forecourt vehicles to be locked and protocols introduced for moving and viewing.
- ix. Ventilation of premises and vehicles – maximise ventilation of the premises, wherever possible. Ventilate vehicles after each viewing and before any vehicle delivery / handover.

3.5. Use of Protective Personal Equipment (PPE)

- i. In line with Government legislation, from 24 September 2020 it will be compulsory for retail (and leisure and hospitality) staff to wear a face covering in areas that are open to the public and where they come or are likely to come within close contact of a member of the public. Businesses are also subject to legal obligations to protect their staff under existing legislation. This includes taking appropriate steps to provide a safe working environment, which may include providing face coverings where appropriate, alongside other mitigation such as Perspex screens to separate workers from the public. For other indoor settings, employers should assess the use of face coverings on a case by case basis depending on the workplace environment, other appropriate mitigations they have put in place and whether reasonable exemptions apply. However, if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then you must provide this PPE free of charge to workers who need it. Any PPE provided must fit properly. Consider what, if any, appropriate PPE and materials is to be made available to customers on arrival. From 24 July 2020, in England it is a requirement for all customers to wear a face cover when in a shop or supermarket (this includes car showrooms and dealerships). There are also exemptions for children under the age of 11 and those with a medical condition preventing them from wearing a face cover. Check guidance for the Nations, which may differ.
- ii. Drivers to be provided with, and advised of appropriate use of, equipment and sanitisation products when undertaking a delivery.
- iii. Provision of appropriate PPE to staff if social distancing and other measures cannot be maintained as set out in 3.5 (i).
- iv. Consider utilisation of clear glass/Perspex screens between customers and employees, or between employees, if appropriate (NB if social distancing measures cannot be maintained).
- v. Consider temperature checks for employees prior to the start of work.
- vi. Disposable covers in workshops.

3.6. Digital and other additional mechanisms

- i. Maximise online presence – clearly communicate the consumer experience being offered.
- ii. Strongly advise the use of appointments for sales and aftersales (NB flexibility for emergencies).
- iii. Removal of all physical material – e.g. brochures, magazines, newspapers.

- iv. Utilisation of live (e.g. pre-visit video calls) and recorded video technology for brochures, vehicle demonstrations and handover guidance.
- v. Online Vehicle Sales – customer collections (so called ‘click and collect’):
 - a. From 12 April 2021, all non-essential retail in England is allowed to open while maintaining current COVID-19 secure measures (e.g. use of face coverings, social distancing etc.).
In the event of future mandated closure of non-essential retail premises, but with click and collect allowed, the following guidance should be followed:
 - b. Collections must be undertaken outdoors, following all necessary social distancing including the restrictions on meeting others outside, as well as appropriate vehicle sanitation / hygiene measures as identified by your COVID-19 risk assessment.
 - c. Check guidance for the Nations as this may differ.
- vi. Collection and delivery service (from / to a customer’s address) for Aftersales and Vehicle sales if appropriate (local discretion).
- vii. Part Exchange – use digital technology and follow all social distance, sanitisation and PPE guidance as appropriate.
- viii. Use electronic payments only (e.g. credit card, bank transfers).
- ix. Use of digital signatures and paperwork if possible; use DVLA online digital services, such as Register a Vehicle (RaV) (information at GOV.UK); and, if unavoidable, avoid sharing pens or hard copy documents.
- x. Clear protocol for inbound and outbound goods (drivers to stay in vehicles, limit interactions).
- xi. Assess workforce rotas and shift operation (pairing system if appropriate) to limit interaction.
- xii. Encourage online “virtual” meetings rather than face to face.
- xiii. Be mindful of the differing needs of your workforce and consider any measures that may need to be put in place to support certain individuals to help prevent accidental discrimination, i.e. reasonable and necessary adjustments for disabled workers.

4. UK Contacts for Further Information

- Public Health England (PHE): <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>
- Health & Safety Executive (HSE):
https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm?utm_source=hse.gov.uk&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_content=home-page-banner
- SMMT: <https://www.smmt.co.uk/industry-topics/covid-19-automotive-business-support/>
- NFDA: <https://www.nfda-uk.co.uk/guidance>

Links to Government Guidance on COVID-19 and Workplaces:

- Guidance for people who work in or run shops, branches, stores or similar environments:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>
- HSE Guidance - ‘How to carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment’
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm#>
- Covid-19: guidance for employees, employers and businesses:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
- Coronavirus (Covid-19): guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

- COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings (If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then refer to the specific guidance):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
- Government guidance on when to use a face cover:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>
- Government guidance on what is covered under the definition of a shop (or branch):
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>
- Clinically extremely vulnerable: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/if-youre-at-very-high-risk-from-coronavirus/>
- Respiratory hygiene: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>"><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>
- Vulnerable people: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

Health and safety is a devolved matter. See the guidance for business in other nations of the UK:

- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)

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