

GUIDANCE ON COVID-19 AND WORKING IN THE FORESTRY, WOOD PROCESSING AND NURSERIES SECTOR

The UK Government has provided clear guidance that “with the exception of some non-essential shops and public venues, we are not asking any other businesses to close – indeed it is important for business to carry on.”

Confor is aware that people working in the sector have been challenged, sometimes aggressively, for continuing to work. We have produced a letter that can be printed off to explain why you are working and will support this with further information on our website and in social media explaining the important role that our sector plays.

UK Government Guidance*

Government has advised that employers “should encourage your employees to work from home unless it is impossible for them to do so.

“Sometimes this will not be possible, as not everyone can work from home. Certain jobs require people to travel to their place of work – for instance if they operate machinery, work in construction or manufacturing, or are delivering front line services.”

The guidance goes on to say that:

“If you cannot work from home then you can still travel for work purposes, provided you are not showing coronavirus symptoms and neither you nor any of your household are self-isolating. This is consistent with advice from the Chief Medical Officer.

“Employers who have people in their offices or onsite should ensure that employees are able to follow Public Health England guidelines including, where possible, maintaining a 2 metre distance from others, and washing their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water is not available).”

Feedback if challenged

The planting, management and harvesting of trees is a largely rural industry, as is the growing of young trees in forest nurseries.

Where appropriate you can emphasise that in your daily working lives, there is limited interaction with other people, and that the sector is committed to working safely in accordance with government guidelines for employers and

businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19)** , including social distancing, and in accordance with all existing health and safety standards.

Not all forestry activity may seem to relate directly to the supply of key products, but it is important for society in many other ways, not least in tackling climate change. This includes those growing young trees in nurseries and planting new forests and woods. In the longer-term, those young trees will be needed to help many businesses get back on their feet and to support our ongoing climate change objectives.

Operating safely and responsibly we can deliver important benefits for society – carbon sequestration, rural employment, places for people to walk and wildlife to live, and much more. Please point people towards Confor’s website for further information – www.confor.org.uk

Safe from harrassment

It is important that forestry and forest nursery workers are able to travel to work and to undertake their activities without harassment or obstruction.

The forestry, wood processing and nurseries sector takes its responsibilities seriously during this current outbreak. Further information is available at <http://www.confor.org.uk/covid-19/topics/key-workers/>

Confor
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* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>