

COVID-19

# Workplace Ventilation Guide

A free guide from Citation's Health & Safety experts.



Citation

## COVID-19:

# Letting fresh air in

As the UK follows the government's roadmap and emerges from lockdown, many businesses have started to reopen and bring their people back into the workplace.

One of the key control measures in relation to a safe return to the workplace is ventilation. Put simply, the fresher the air that flows through your premises, the less likely any exhaled COVID-19 virus molecules are to accumulate within the area and the less likely your team are to inhale them and become ill.

Our Health & Safety experts have put together this practical guide outlining key considerations when it comes to keeping workplaces safely and comfortably ventilated.

## The current situation





The latest scientific evidence indicates that COVID-19 is transmitted in a number of different ways and that one of the main routes is by suspended particles within the air, called aerosols.

These particles come from those infected, either symptomatically or asymptotically, with the COVID-19 virus and are released into the air by speech, sneezing and general respiration.

This can lead to the build-up of virus particles in the air within densely populated, or poorly ventilated, workplaces.



## Key considerations for all workplaces

-  While ventilation is crucial to reduce the likelihood of a COVID-19 outbreak, it's not a substitute for social distancing or homeworking where practicable. Are you confident you have the right social distancing measures in place? Are you allowing those who can work from home to continue to do so where applicable?
-  Increasing ventilation should not interfere with other safety measures. Have you checked to make sure fire doors aren't propped open? Are window restrictors disengaged? If you keep fire doors open, are they secured with a retaining device, which can close the door in the event of a fire alarm?
-  Will you use natural ventilation (opening non-fire doors and unrestricted windows)? Or will you install mechanical ventilation where natural ventilation isn't possible? Do you know how to properly maintain mechanical ventilation? Does it have a fresh air only setting?
-  Do you have any areas of your premises that aren't well ventilated – e.g. corridors and kitchenettes? Will you need to implement different controls to these areas that can't be adequately ventilated?



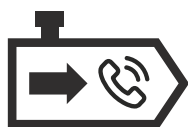
Example of a Fire Door Retainer. These allow the door to close when the alarm sounds.



## Identifying risk areas

There may be a number of different ventilation systems at work in order to keep the air moving, depending on your premises. There may also be some areas where ventilation is inadequate or could be improved.

If you have access to them, you can check out the building plans to find out specific ventilation levels. Or you could carry out an inspection, detailing areas for improvement as you go. If it's not possible to find out how an area is ventilated, it may be because there is no provision in that area.



### CONTACT

#### Need help?

If you need help inspecting your workplace for ventilation points, or finding ways to successfully ventilate a space, give us a call on **0845 844 1111** to chat about your business' needs and how our Health & Safety team can help.

## Other factors affecting risk



### Occupancy

Have you taken into account how many people use a particular area? Are there areas you can't ventilate that you need to stagger access to?



### Size

A larger workspace poses less risk, if there isn't lots of people in there. Are your larger spaces designed with increased ventilation in mind? Are there any spaces you will need to limit access to, regardless of their size? Think busy, communal areas, such as break rooms.



### Activities and tasks

What is the area used for? Do you work with spaces that require people to talk a lot (such as call centres)? Do you have exercise suites in which people will be breathing deeply? Can you put additional controls in place, such as limiting activities or facilitating homeworking?



### Furniture and airflow

Bulky items and equipment can disrupt airflow. Are you confident that you have enough airflow through your workspace to avoid pockets of still air to form?



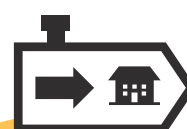
### Desk and ceiling fans

Can you suspend use of fans in areas with poor ventilation?



### Re-circulating air conditioning systems

If your air conditioning system recycles the room air (instead of drawing in fresh air from outside) can you make sure that windows are open and natural ventilation is increased when the system is in use?









## Ventilation in vehicles



Vehicles are, by their very nature, compact spaces with limited airspace. This makes them prone to the build-up of virus particles should an infected person be travelling.

If employees are required to drive on business and there is no alternative to sharing a vehicle, it's vital that, in addition to social distancing, they remember to ventilate the vehicle during use.

Fortunately, most vehicles are equipped to make this possible through their windows and fan systems. Some tips on increasing ventilation in a vehicle include:

-  Open the windows – at least partially, to allow for increased airflow
-  Turn the vents on
-  If the vehicle has automatic air conditioning which recirculates air, turn this off so fresh air is drawn in from outside.
-  Sanitise the vehicle between use/passengers
-  It's a good idea to let all the windows down between passengers.
-  Sanitise any surfaces they may have touched



## How can Citation help?

These are challenging times for employees, business owners and employers. Throughout the pandemic, our team of Health & Safety experts have helped thousands of clients get on top of their regulatory responsibilities and duties.

If you're not yet a client of ours and you want the advice and backing of our team, simply give us a call on **0345 844 1111** to talk through your business needs. Or fill out your details in our call-back form [here](#) and we'll be in touch.



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