

# THE “NEW NORMAL” WAY OF WORKING

## Industrial compliance with 1,5 meter social distancing.

The Covid-19 crisis has the world in its grip. We are already witnessing a massive impact on both global health and economic welfare. Entire countries

are in (intelligent) lockdown, making industrial production less effective or, in some cases, even impossible. In order to prevent an even deeper fall into economic recession after the Covid-19 crisis, individual companies need to make preparations to resume business

again as the lockdown is phased out. We would urge you to start thinking about returning to business life not “as usual” after Covid-19, but under the changing conditions of the “new normal.”

## DUTCH GOVERNMENT CALL FOR INITIATIVE

The government of the Netherlands has implemented an intelligent lockdown which has a significant impact on the way we live at the moment. Several companies positioned in different sectors are seeing revenues drop at a shocking rate and how the business will survive is a serious topic of conversation.

A cautious reading of the signs shows that intelligent lockdown is proving effective, with hopes for a flattening of the curve becoming ever closer to becoming reality. On April 21st, the Dutch Prime Minister announced that elementary schools will (partly) open again, in a move that follows the relaxation of stay-at-home measures in for example, certain Nordic countries, and Germany. The Dutch government maintains that this crisis is about perseverance; there is no doubt that the current situation will have a long-term impact on our way of living and working. The government also called upon industry to start thinking about different prospects, about getting ready to operate in a world they're calling “the new normal.” What the new normal will actually embody is not yet clear. We can realistically expect that it will at the very least involve remaining 1,5 meters (approx. 6 feet) apart from each other for the foreseeable future.

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Therefore, the industry should prepare for an intermediate way of working and explore this so-called new normal. As government parties put it: “this will be a marathon that not everyone has trained for.” So let's get started so that hopefully, you can get fit for the new normal marathon on time!

## PREVENT YOUR OWN ECONOMIC CRISIS – MAKE A BUSINESS PLAN!

In our previous publication, we mentioned that now is the time to look forward and be prepared to respond to the next crisis. Nonetheless, we should also think about how we can best develop ourselves during the current crisis. A good place to being is to ask ourselves: What can an industrial company contribute to a safe work environment in this new normal situation?

Be prepared to unleash your creativity and flip-thinking skills to develop your company's best practice!

Don't expect to achieve the same revenues and/or profit in the short-term that you did a few months ago. Accept that you'll have to make compromises for the safety of your employees, third parties, and yourself. In addition, a situation like this calls for measures that are both customized and standardized throughout the industry. But, copy-pasting best practices can only have limited success!



To help you get going, this is how we think you can develop a good basis for a safe working environment in the Covid-19 crisis. We hope this can serve as inspiration for you and your colleagues and that it will help you to find your own way of dealing with the new normal.



**DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT IS CRUCIAL**

Since the Covid-19 crisis is the most changing and unpredictable crisis we have known in the current era, it will be next to impossible to implement one-size-fits-all measures that can ever be adequate. Therefore, be prepared to adopt a continuous and dynamic risk-based way of thinking. As we all know, risk assessment follows four steps:

- Risk Identification
- Risk Analysis
- Risk Estimation
- Risk Prioritization

Right now, you can already identify potential areas or persons in your organization that are at high risk for exposure to Covid-19. A few examples include:

- Functions with increased risk of Covid-19 exposure within the organization (e.g. cleaning personnel and security)
- Hot spots due to crowd formation (e.g. cafeteria or coffee machine)
- Limited personal working space for employees (e.g. workshops and laboratories)
- Shared contact surfaces (e.g. doors, bathroom, equipment, and flex desks)

- Employees traceable to confirmed active cases of Covid-19 or with increased risk to exposure to Covid-19 cases outside work activities (e.g., employee’s partner is a healthcare worker in contact with Covid-19 patients)

To manage these risks on a daily basis, stay close to the operational work floor for flexible risk management. One possible way risk can be identified is Job Safety Analysis, which entails that every work activity is preceded by a risk analysis with special focus on potential Covid-19 exposure. These risk analyses can be compiled in order to identify bottlenecks. This route is likely, however, to come with an enormous administrative burden if not managed with a proper database and workflow.

Measures should always be implemented according to the guidelines of the (Dutch) government, with the option of scaling up to stricter measures. Current practices in grocery stores and similar retail shops show that transparent screens, visual lineation, and a maximum occupancy of 1 person per 10 m<sup>2</sup> are the most common. These steps could be applied in industry as well, depending on the practicability of the work activities. New measures have yet to be announced, but include the possibility of using Covid-19 monitoring apps.

The industry can already make a good start by developing the current common measures to fit a customized purpose. We can seek inspiration in risk management tools that we already know from our current practice, like the occupational hygiene strategy (in Dutch: *arbeidshygiënische strategie*). This strategy normally focuses on exposure to hazardous substances, but could provide a valuable starting point for approaching a Covid-19 exposure prevention strategy as well. The occupational hygiene strategy works as follows:

1. Source measures – Investigate whether the source of the issue can be eliminated.
2. Collective measures – Introduce collective physical or technical measures to reduce risks of exposure.
3. Individual measures – Organize work activities so that risks to the individual employee are minimized as much as possible.
4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Provide employees with proper PPE to reduce exposure risk as much as possible.

This strategy shows that the first measures to investigate are those focused on eliminating the source of the issue. In the case of Covid-19, this might seem impossible.

The Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) guideline states that one type of source measure is actively monitoring and preventing ill and/or recent Covid-19 confirmed employees from coming to work. The government is also proposing Covid-19 monitoring apps. After that point though, measures increasingly require customization for individual companies.

Some ideas for standard starting points are:

- Look at current practices in other sectors; how are they continuing their work now? (e.g. distribution centers, grocery stores, retail stores, take-out restaurants, and the public transport sector)
- Talk to people on the work floor about how they think their work activities could best continue, and which measures could help them proactively prevent exposure. The workforce often has more creative ideas than they ever get a chance to share. Arrange for central point of contact to share initiatives and/or ideas.
- Investigate how contracted parties (e.g. for facilities) can support your business with creative thinking: how can exposure to shared contact surfaces be reduced? Is it reasonable to expect the cafeteria to



### Communication is the key

re-open, or is a different setup going to be needed (e.g. people may only bring a packed lunch)?

- Use LMRA (Last Minute Risk Analysis) as a daily tool to check Covid-19 exposure risk before the start of work activities.
- What can you continue to do now that you are working from home? Don't change a winning way of working.

### COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION, AND MORE COMMUNICATION

Communication is the key. A dedicated crisis management team might seem less important when the lockdown is phased out, but this is far from the truth. A new important focus of the crisis management team is to increase communication to a higher level than you are normally used to. Multidisciplinary information management is crucial in the success of managing changing risks in the organization.

Your crisis management team can already start working now on developing and preparing for implementation of the new normal at work. Be sure to hit the ground running, but beware: if evidence suggests the crisis may again worsen, be prepared to take a step back and have a plan in place for that eventuality. Major Incident Management ([our previous publication](#)) comes into play here too.

### INITIATIVES IN INVESTIGATION AT BILFINGER TEBODIN

Not only are industrial companies stepping up, but Bilfinger Tebodin is thinking about how we can contribute to the industries' safe work environment in "the new normal."

Some initiatives we are working on include:

- Turnarounds in a society practicing social distancing at 1,5 meters,
- Social distancing at construction sites,
- Office work in "the new normal,"
- Safety studies in online settings: the "[GREEN HAZOP](#)" (already performed successfully!),
- New way of conducting visits at Bilfinger Tebodin's partner/client locations,
- Intensified skid production in process industry and engineering, so that time-on-(construction)-site is reduced.

### WHAT WILL REMAIN OF OUR ADAPTED WAYS OF WORKING?

The current crisis has brought out a lot of creativity in the workforce, with initiatives to keep work going in times of social distancing. These initiatives might not only be useful during this time of crisis, but could be embraced as a new best practice even when the future state of business returns back to (almost) normal.

Team building has never been more important than in this time of social distancing. These bonds should be kept strong after the crisis is over. Also, work activities which have been stopped to keep the core business going should be evaluated critically. Why go back to old habits again if they do not add value?

Now is the time to clean up old ways of working and start with a clean slate. For example, which meetings are really necessary when you start up again? Which ones can be terminated permanently? Too often, we have grown into the habit of dedicating excess time to meetings that have lost their value over the years.





**SHARE YOUR STORY – HOW DO YOU CONTRIBUTE?**

We would like to collect best practices, since this crisis is something we have to fight together. Share your company’s initiative for how to get business up and running in the new normal to inspire other companies to rise to the occasion too by commenting on our [LinkedIn](#) page.

Competition is not what these strange times call for. To find a new way of working, collaboration in sharing best practices is vital.

**A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR**

There are many ways to establish safe work environments, and here we have presented just one of our brainwaves on how to shape a safe work environment. In your search for your own “new normal,” try to develop the best practice that suits your company best. Keep yourself and each other safe and don’t forget that safety and health are preconditions to work, not luxuries.

At Bilfinger Tebodin, we are doing everything in our power to continue providing our products and services just as you’ve grown accustomed to. For some of our services, we are currently offering and continuously developing alternative ways of working, so you can continue your work activities as you planned, with or without the corona crisis. Work activities with our partners complying to the measures of social distancing have proven successful over the past month, meaning delays in projects like process safety (e.g. HAZOP) studies can be prevented and proceed with alternative methods.

If your organization would like further information about any of the abovementioned topics (e.g. exposure of employees to hazardous substances, workplace safety and/

or performing all kinds of team studies online and/or at distance), contact us now for a chat, free of obligation. **We are committed to continuing to make your projects work!**



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Denise Harkema has academic degrees in Chemical Engineering and Management of Safety, Health and Environment from Delft University of Technology. She has worked in various sectors, including oil and gas, pharma, chemistry, and feed. As a professional, Denise continuously searches for new insights and creative and innovative approaches to everyday HSE problems in the industry. In her work she strives for a balance between all HSE aspects that play a role in an industrial organization, while focusing on optimization of the interface between these aspects and the rest of the organization to improve overall performance.