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Minister publishes Engagement Forum guidance and priority sector list

Date published: 17 April 2020

Economy Minister Diane Dodds today published guidance on making workplaces safer and the list of priority sectors which were drawn up by the Engagement Forum.

The Forum was set up by the Minister to advise the Executive on the list of priority businesses sectors referred to in the Health Protection Regulations. It was also asked to advise on measures required to protect the safety of all workers.



The Forum is chaired by the Labour Relations Agency (LRA) and consists of representatives from business organisations, trade unions, local councils, government, the Health and Safety Executive NI, Public Health Agency and Food Standards Agency.

It drew up a list of priority business sectors and developed guidance on safe working practices during the current COVID-19 crisis. The Minister presented these to the Executive today, which agreed to publish both papers.

Speaking today the Minister said:

“I want to thank the Forum for working collectively and collaboratively to protect workers and to safeguard vital supply chains. It was very important that so many organisations from across our economy were represented and it is reassuring that they are united in their determination to work together towards a common goal.

“The list is published for advisory purposes to allow companies to make their own decisions. If a company can work within the social distancing guidelines then it should do so. The safety guidance will have practical application in the workplace.

“Along with the accompanying guidance on safe working practices, the list is there to protect everyone in the workplace, to ensure our essential supply chains remain solid and to help Northern Ireland be ready to rebuild its economy when this crisis has passed.”

The aim of the priority sectors list, which is fully supported by both business and union representatives on the Forum, is to clarify what constitutes a priority sector at this time, and to support Northern Ireland companies to continue their business operations and protect the incomes of their workforces.

The accompanying workplace safety guidance – ‘COVID-19: Working Through This Together, A Practical Guide to Making Workplaces Safer’ – has been developed and informed by professional advice from the HSE, PHA and the LRA as well as input from an employer and trade union perspective.

Details of the priority list and accompanying guidance are available at:

[nibusinessinfo](https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-workplace-safety-guidance-and-priority-sector-list-published) (<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-workplace-safety-guidance-and-priority-sector-list-published>)

Notes to editors:

1. The following organisations are represented on the Forum:

- the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce
- the Confederation of British Industries
- the Federation of Small Businesses
- Institute of Directors
- Manufacturing NI
- NI Retail Consortium
- The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- USDAW
- UNISON
- NIPSA
- INTO
- UNITE
- Public Health Agency

- Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland
- Food Standards Agency
- SOLACE

An official from the Department for the Economy attends and Junior Ministers Kearney and Lyons are observers on the Forum.

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