



The Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP  
10 Downing St  
London  
SW1A 2AA

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

Insulated Render & Cladding Association  
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Dear Prime Minister

### **Concerns by industry contractor members on the impact of Coronavirus (Covid 19)**

Our Association fully understands the crucial part the construction sector plays in the well-being of the economy, both now and in the future, and wholly agree with the bold and necessary measures the Government have recently had to put in place. Due to this we are receiving an increasing amount of anxious communications from our sub-contractor members who are trying their best to keep construction sites operational whilst trying to comply with the Site Operating Procedures recommended in Public Health England's guidance on distancing and hygiene. Concerns regarding the treatment they are currently experiencing by some Main Contractor clients. Despite actively encouraging our members to continue working they are doing very little in the way of making it practically possible for this to happen and their attempts to deflect blame in the way of contractual emails and "delay notices". Examples of some of the difficulties are:

- Insistence of labour driving to site in separate vehicles when some members of gangs don't drive or own a vehicle.
- Lack of hand sanitising liquid and toilet rolls
- Site H&S representatives enforcing the 2-meter social distancing zone when clearly the trade being carried out can't operate on this basis, i.e. fitting boards or cladding panels where 1 or 2 operatives needs to hold whilst a 3rd fixes.
- Continuation of "black hat" meetings in limited spaces
- Site entry / security (mainly fingerprint) systems suspended without any new measures being introduced, allowing "anyone" to enter site therefore compromising material and tool security.
- Scaffold access not suitably erected to allow for the imposed 2-meter distancing recommendation
- Lack of PPE availability
- The closure of locally based builder's merchants causing unduly delays by prohibiting the purchase of building materials and ancillary items.

We therefore ask the Government for clearer guidance on Site Operating Procedures and the Safe Shutdown process and to ensure the information is proactively disseminated to site managers who are tasked in making the decision of when it is deemed to be impossible to carrying on working.





Managing **Cash Flow** during this period is also another area of great concern to our members. The Job Retention Scheme, although welcomed by our members doesn't go far enough so ask you to consider further measures which would go a long way towards alleviating some of the cash flow pressures felt by our members and many more companies within the construction industry:

- Suspension of retention and early retention release would help our members enormously in managing cash flow. Anything between 2.5% - 5% is routinely deducted from our members payment certificates. The Government could take a lead in this by instructing all Government bodies to release all retention money currently withheld and suspend the deduction of retention to projects currently on site. This would filter down the supply chain relieving members cash flow burdens with immediate effect even if only as a temporary measure.
- To defer or cancel training and apprenticeship levy payments for the duration of the pandemic crisis. Our members simply cannot afford to train apprentices right now.
- The temporary suspension of VAT payments to HMRC has been gratefully received by our members. But we feel the Government could go further by suspending PAYE and CIS tax without financial penalty.

We are sorry to learn that you have personally been affected by Covid-19 and hope you make a speedy recovery.

Yours sincerely

Hazel A Turner, Secretariat for INCA; Insulated Render and Cladding Association.

