

Resumption of work in the building and public works sector

Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine

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In the delicate phase of leaving the containment, the resumption of work is a necessity, when the risk of Covid-19 remains a reality. The Professional Organization for Prevention in Building and Public Works (OPPBTP) has published a guide of recommendations¹ which has received the approval of the Ministries of Labour, Solidarity and Health, Urban Affairs and Housing, and Ecological and Solidarity Transition. Although this guide provides reassuring elements if it is applied, risk factors persist, particularly extra-professional ones.

Concerned about this situation, the National Academy of Medicine recommends that workers without risk factors return to work first, before more vulnerable workers. People who show symptoms, or who have been exposed to the contamination in the previous 14 days should be confined. The decision to return to work should be taken after supplying an individual questionnaire, supplemented by a telephone interview with the company's managers and the occupational physician.

In the current state of availability of diagnostic kits and their analytical performance, the routine practice of RT-PCR for the detection of Sars CoV-2 in the upper airways and the detection of IgM/IgG antibodies by serological tests are not recommended.

The National Academy of Medicine recalls that the reinforcement of barrier measures in institutions is indispensable when returning to work:

- establish safety distances of at least 2 meters between two people, reducible to 1 metre to cross each other, but without stopping or discussing;
- restrict physical presence and maintain teleworking or using telecommunications means;
- occupy each workspace by a single employee, unless it is necessary to move heavy loads, for a limited time;
- respect the distance between employees in company vehicles;
- systematically wear splash-proof masks;
- make available to employees all facilities for hand washing or the use of hydro-alcoholic gel;
- have any worker presenting signs suggestive of Covid-19 infection tested without delay and organize his immediate return home;
- regularly clean the workstation with a virucidal product complying with standard EN 14476;
- reinforce the cleaning of common areas and objects handled by several people with a virucidal product;
- strictly enforce the ban on drinking, eating or smoking in the workplace;
- use work clothes different from those worn on the way to and from work;
- comply with barrier measures (distance and wearing of masks) in public transport.

It is up to each company to assess its ability to implement these preventive measures and to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of its employees without delay.

¹ OPPBTP: Guide to health safety recommendations for the continuity of construction activities-Covid-19 Works - Ref. H5 G 02 20 - Updated on 04/15/2020, available on www.preventionbtp.fr