

Beat: News

## UK - Protect companies hit by COVID-19

### Vital support to frontline NHS staff

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**USPA NEWS** - Regulations temporarily suspended to fast-track supplies of PPE to NHS staff and protect companies hit by COVID-19

New measures announced today will give vital support to frontline NHS staff battling COVID-19 and support businesses under pressure as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

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From:

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, HM Revenue & Customs, The Insolvency Service, Health and Safety Executive, Office for Product Safety and Standards, and The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP

Business Secretary eases requirements to ensure hand sanitiser and personal protective equipment reaches NHS staff more quickly  
By cutting red tape, new companies will be able to produce and distribute safe hand sanitiser within a matter of days  
Government also announces it will amend insolvency law to give companies breathing space and keep trading while they explore options for rescue.

New measures announced today will give vital support to frontline NHS staff battling COVID-19 and support businesses under pressure as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

To help get personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand sanitiser to NHS staff as quickly as possible, Business Secretary Alok Sharma is easing administrative requirements and barriers to imports of these essential tools, without compromising on their safety.

By reducing the amount of red tape, new suppliers and businesses that produce ingredients for safe hand sanitiser and PPE will be able to bring their products to market in a matter of days.

Companies including Brewdog and Ineos have already stepped forward to offer their services in creating hand sanitiser. This week HMRC confirmed manufacturers of hand sanitisers and gels will have their applications for denatured alcohol fast-tracked.

Efforts to boost availability of essential supplies involve temporary measures including:

Asking the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authorities to fast-track PPE through the product safety assessment process and prioritise this activity over other market surveillance activity

Allowing PPE equipment providing protection against COVID-19 which lack the CE mark onto the market provided products meet essential safety requirements

Providing new guidance for local authorities and ports and borders enforcement officers on the import and safety testing of hand sanitiser

The Business Secretary has also announced he will make changes to enable UK companies undergoing a rescue or restructure process to continue trading, giving them breathing space that could help them avoid insolvency.

This will also include enabling companies to continue buying much-needed supplies, such as energy, raw materials or broadband, while attempting a rescue, and temporarily suspending wrongful trading provisions retrospectively from 1 March 2020 for three months for company directors so they can keep their businesses going without the threat of personal liability.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The government is doing everything in its power to save lives and protect livelihoods during these unprecedented times.

Applying a common-sense approach to regulation will ensure products are safe and reach the market without any unnecessary delay, getting vital protective equipment such as face masks to frontline staff as quickly as possible.

Today's measures will also reduce the burden on business, giving bosses much-needed breathing space to keep their workers employed and their companies going.

Commenting on the new PPE rules, James Watt, Co-Founder of BrewDog said:

We started making hand sanitiser at our distillery in Ellon, Aberdeenshire in response to the national shortage and are providing it free to charities and frontline workers.

We really welcome the government's announcements today, which will mean that making this crucial product will become a much faster and easier process.

The government's flexibility in these unprecedented times allows us to do even more to help those most in need."

Commenting on the new PPE rules Sir Jim Ratcliffe INEOS Chairman said:

We welcome today's announcement. These measures will help INEOS as we build two factories in the UK and Germany in under 10 days, to produce and supply substantial quantities of hand sanitiser gel to the NHS for free.

INEOS is a company with enormous resources and manufacturing skills. If we can find other ways to help in the Coronavirus battle, we are absolutely committed to playing our part.

Speaking about the reforms to insolvency law, Matthew Fell, Chief UK Policy Director, Confederation of British Industry, said:

The CBI welcomes these interventions at a critical time for business. The temporary suspension of wrongful trading provisions, along with other measures, will give much needed headroom for company directors to enable otherwise viable businesses to use the government's support package and weather this crisis."

The Business Secretary also announced today that the government will introduce legislation to ensure those companies required by law to hold Annual General Meetings (AGMs) will be able to do so safely, consistent with the restrictions on movement and gatherings introduced to address the spread of coronavirus.

Companies will temporarily be extended greater flexibilities, including holding AGMs online or postponing the meetings.

This measure follows an announcement earlier this week that companies would automatically and immediately be granted a three-month extension to the filing of their accounts following a fast-track online process.

Over 10,000 businesses have already successfully applied for the extension.

**Article online:**

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-16712/uk-protect-companies-hit-by-covid-19.html>

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