



Working Safely During COVID-19

Considerations for Surveying Occupied Properties

Helpful guidance for PCA members undertaking surveys and inspections during COVID-19

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1. POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE SURVEYING OCCUPIED BUILDINGS

It is only acceptable to undertake surveys and inspections on occupied buildings, homes, and commercial premises where this activity can be carried out safely with a minimum possible risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.

The information below sets out what the PCA considers useful considerations that can be read alongside Government advice aimed at preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

This guidance is designed to protect both the surveyor and the occupants of the property to be surveyed.

Much of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is required will be in daily use by the professional specialist surveyors, who routinely visit dusty roofs and unoccupied voids where inhalation or contact contamination hazards are regularly encountered.

Disposable gloves, rigger type gloves, coveralls, good quality respiratory protection (that has been face fit tested to the individual employee) as well as eye protection and safety helmets should be standard equipment for the specialist surveyor. This equipment should be available at all times and used when appropriate.

Above all, it is imperative that the Government guidance regarding COVID-19 is followed (see link below). Any information provided here is subservient to information and guidance issued by the UK Government or other regulatory authorities such as the Health and Safety Executive.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb967e286650c2791ec7100/working-safely-during-covid-19-other-peoples-homes-110520.pdf>

2. FOR THE SURVEYOR

The surveyor must be provided with appropriate training and must be deemed competent to carry out property inspections on occupied buildings safely. The surveyor should be fully aware of the need to comply with the safe operating processes that have resulted from a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. Staff should be consulted as part of the risk assessment process.

The surveyor must be equipped with the appropriate type and quantity of personal protective equipment. This should be put on before entering the occupied building and must not be removed until the survey is complete, and the surveyor is outside the property.

The equipment that should be worn before entering the occupied property will include disposable gloves, face covering and a coverall. Additional PPE may be required if other hazards become apparent during the survey.

Where occupants are in the building, the surveyor must observe the 2-metre distancing rule at all times. The surveyor should never ask for, or accept, refreshments.

Gloves must be worn at all times when handling ladders, handles and doors etc. If disposable gloves are ripped or damaged during the survey, these must be removed safely, hands should be washed, and new gloves should be put on as soon as possible.

After any survey, disposable gloves should be removed in accordance with best practice to avoid direct skin contact. Any non-reusable PPE can be safely removed and stored safely for disposal.

No surveyor should work if they are ill, have tested positive for COVID-19 or are displaying any symptoms, no matter how slight.

Government advice relating to transport should be observed.

The surveyor should avoid bringing any equipment into the occupied building that will not be needed during the survey. Tools and equipment that are used within the property during the survey should be cleaned using disinfectant spray or wipes before it is used in the next survey.

Handwashing facilities must be available to the surveyor to ensure the Government's guidance on regular hand washing is observed throughout the working day.

If disposable coveralls are used these should be worn once and disposed of after each survey. Where cloth coveralls are used, a clean set should be available if the first become dirty or potentially contaminated. These can be washed for reuse.

3. RULES FOR THE OCCUPANT

Before the surveyor attends the property, the residents must be made aware of a list of preconditions that must be met and agreed to before the survey takes place. These must be observed during the process of inspection.

Instruction, agreements, conditions, and any terms of engagement should be communicated to the occupant and the party instructing the surveyor (if different). This correspondence should be retained by the surveyor. If the occupant fails to acknowledge their responsibilities, or is unable or unwilling to observe their obligations, the survey should not take place.

The residents or occupants must be prepared to strictly observe the Government's guidance on social distancing.

For the duration of the surveyors visit, the occupants could be asked to either leave the building or wait in the garden. Alternatively, social distancing rules should be observed.

The occupants should be asked to open all internal doors, access hatches and void access points before the surveyor enters the property.

If the investigation requires any opening up to determine the cause or extent of a defect, this should be done by the occupant before the surveyor attends site. If this is not possible and opening up has to be performed by the surveyor or other trades, then a separate risk assessment may be necessary to determine if and how these operations can be performed safely.

Before attending the property, the surveyor should contact the occupant by email or telephone and ensure they are aware of the surveyors' requirements in preparation for their visit.

In line with Government advice, we would not advise visiting any property to undertake a survey if the building is occupied by people who are 75 years old or older (regardless of medical conditions) or under 70 but have an underlying health condition. Similarly, if occupants are ill, have tested positive for COVID-19 or have recently displayed symptoms regardless how slight, any non-urgent visits should be delayed.

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