

RELEASE



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SUPPORTING CONTRACTORS AND PLUMBERS – A NEW APPROACH IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Maintaining a robust and secure supply chain for those working in key areas like plumbing and contracting has been essential during these unprecedented times; after all, a plumbing emergency needs a rapid and effective response.

As the lockdown eases, more routine maintenance is being carried out, and the demand on the supply chain will increase. Manufacturers are slowly returning their teams to work, but having to ensure new and safer working methods.

UK plastic pressure and non-pressure pipe manufacturers have a key role to play in this, and as part of an important supply chain have adapted quickly from the initial lockdown shock to continue delivering a level of service which minimises risk to all those within the contracting and plumbing sectors. Plastic pipe suppliers have been well-prepared and able to provide the robustness needed in the current climate by maintaining their own internal supply chain via forward planning and risk management through to instigating appropriate social distancing measures and safe working practices for those in the manufacturing, administration and distribution areas.

As Caroline Ayres, BPF Pipes Group Director commented: “Our members have been working hard to ensure the supply chain continues to remain safe and secure, so that products required for emergency work in every sector as well as routine construction and maintenance remain available.”

Throughout the lockdown, BPF Pipe Group members have supplied significant amounts of piping to some of the recently constructed Nightingale Hospitals and have been working with UK contractors to ensure pipe materials are on site and ready for use.

Plumbers have had to find new ways of working safely and securely, and struggled initially with shortages of materials like plaster and tile adhesive, although as builders' merchants have reopened these shortages have eased. Construction projects are beginning to pick up again, where worker safety can be ensured, sometimes through phased operations.

Factories where pipe materials and fittings are manufactured are maintaining a level of production to ensure that the supply chain for essential work and emergencies is not broken. The support roles they are playing are vital to keep our water and waste facilities able to function as close to normal as possible. Regarding site deliveries for example, pipe suppliers are photographing delivered items alongside a member of the contractor team as no signatures are currently possible, thus supporting new ways of working around social distancing protocols.

Builders' merchants have different procedures for accepting deliveries and these are also being complied with by pipe manufacturers. All sensible and appropriate safety measures are being taken. But as most of the supplying manufacturers are UK based, they have quickly adapted and developed a more agile way of working with flexibility of stock inventories and staff at regional depots. This means there is little impact on the contractor, plumber or ultimately, the end customer because of the localised aspects of supply, adapting and changing to the differing customer needs.

As there still remains uncertainty on more easing of the lockdown, it is essential that the flexible approach adopted by UK pipe manufacturers continues to reflect the ever changing landscape of the current situation in order to support the water and waste sectors, something BPF Pipes Group members are continuing to do.

The BPF Pipes Group provides several guidance documents on a variety of pipe-related subjects, which can be downloaded at <https://www.bfpipesgroup.com/support-downloads/specification-guidance/>