The Covid-19 outbreak is the biggest public health emergency in a generation. The United Kingdom (UK) is doing everything it can to tackle the pandemic and mitigate its impact. The UK has already taken several steps. These include reducing dwell times for shipments to allow for quicker permission to progress, assessing the need for personnel to be on site if such functions can be discharged remotely and changes to site opening hours to allow for greater facilitation.

We have also introduced the use of email in lieu of postal applications for authorisations to reduce cross contamination and viral spread and we are allowing the use of estimated figures for the completion of supplementary declarations.

We are advising traders, their agents and relevant government agencies to exchange documents electronically. This can be by email, fax or digital photograph. Traders may also apply for their existing authorisations to apply to additional locations. We will also be publishing online an exhaustive list of government agencies at the border and their email addresses and contact details.

We have also taken a number of measures in relation to transit movements. These include goods moving under transit procedures being taken directly to any approved Temporary Storage Facility even if the facility is not located with a Transit Office of Departure.

Providing relief from import duties (customs and import VAT) for medical equipment to assist in the fight against Covid-19 has been a key part of the UK response. We have also activated our disaster relief clearance route to allow for faster clearance through the ports of goods to combat Covid-19.

The Chancellor has announced an unprecedented package of support for businesses. This includes enhanced Time to Pay arrangements, £330 billion worth of government-backed and guaranteed loans and a workers’ support package. VAT registered businesses can also defer their domestic VAT payments due with their VAT returns between now and the end of June and will have until the end of the financial year to pay the VAT due.

These changes have been published on the Gov.uk site and we have interacted with trade bodies to maximise the distribution to businesses across the country. Please follow these links to the relevant guidance:
https://www.gov.uk/difficulties-paying-hmrc

The government has announced new plans for passengers arriving in the UK from abroad. As expected, these introduce new measures at the UK border to guard against a second wave of coronavirus (Covid-19) infections and include 14 days self-isolation for anyone entering the UK, bar a short list of exemptions.

FTA is pleased to confirm that road haulage and freight workers are exempt from the requirements in order to ensure the supply of goods is not impacted. Exemptions also include anyone travelling within the Common Travel Area, covering Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The Home Office announcement may be found here.

Source: FTA

In response to unprecedented pressures on local and national supply chains, the Department for Infrastructure has introduced a temporary and limited urgent relaxation of the enforcement of EU drivers' hours rules in Northern Ireland. It has also introduced a temporary and limited urgent relaxation of the enforcement of NI drivers' hours rules in Northern Ireland.

This relaxation began on 23 March 2020 and was due to end on 21 April 2020.

A specific review of the continuation of the relaxations past 21 April 2020 has been conducted and on the basis of the current evidence, a decision has been made to continue with the relaxations (apart from the relaxation on break requirements) until 23:59 on Sunday 31 May 2020.

The Department will keep these temporary arrangements under review and the relaxation may be amended or brought to an end earlier if circumstances change.

The Department would like to remind all transport operators and the customers who influence their practices that:

- The standard drivers’ hours rules are important safety-related rules. They are in place to improve road safety and the working conditions of drivers, and reduce the risk of drivers being involved in fatigue-related accidents.
- Therefore, these temporary relaxations should only be used where absolutely necessary. Operators should, wherever possible, attempt to recruit additional drivers from other sectors who are out of work or facing being furloughed.
- The temporary relaxations are designed to support the transport of vital goods, including the supply chains related to medicines, health, fuel, food and other necessities.

The current situation is being kept under review and the relaxation may be amended or withdrawn earlier than 31 May 2020 if circumstances change. Operators should use this period to increase resilience.

If any drivers or operators consider that they are being asked to use the relaxation without correct justification then they can email their concerns to drivershours@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk.

Retrospective checking of the use of these relaxations will take place as necessary, including by the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA).
Temporary and limited relaxation of the enforcement of driving and rest times for the drivers of vehicles transporting essential goods

The UK has notified of a temporary and limited relaxation of the enforcement of driving and rest times for the drivers of vehicles transporting essential goods. This relaxation is granted pursuant to Article 14(2) of Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 and the purpose of this document is to notify the Commission accordingly. It will apply to those drivers involved in the delivery of food, non-food (personal care and household paper and cleaning) and over the counter pharmaceuticals when undertaking certain journeys in England, Scotland and Wales.

Start date: 18.03.2020
End date: 16.04.2020

Further information: https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/temporary-relaxation...
e) The requirements for daily breaks of 45 minutes after 4.5 hours driving replaced with a break of 45 minutes after 5.5 hours of driving.

Drivers must not use relaxation ‘a’ and ‘d’ at the same time. This is to ensure drivers are able to get adequate rest. DfT guidance can be found here.

From Monday 23 March all road user charging schemes in the capital will be temporarily suspended until further notice. This includes the Congestion Charge, the central London ULEZ and the London-wide LEZ.

Source: FTA