

## Security Considerations for the use of COVID-19 Countertop Screens

### Purpose of COVID-19 countertop screens

Countertop screens provide a physical barrier between face-to-face interaction and are one of a range of mitigation measures available in support of 1m+ social distancing, helping reduce the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 which causes COVID-19. The screens reduce the risk of short-range transmission and also limit contact between staff and members of the public, reducing contact-based transmission. As such, their design (including any pass-through openings) needs to be appropriate for the scenario and location it is installed i.e. ensuring they provide a physical barrier at head height.

A complete list of government mitigation measures for COVID-19 can be found on the following website - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

### Security considerations

Whilst meeting the COVID-19 requirements, the security implications of the screen should also be considered:



In the event of a blast threat, will the screens create an additional hazard from fragments?



Will the screens hinder general observation?

Do the screens interfere with CCTV coverage and the line of sight of guard patrols?  
Does the visibility through the screens change at different angles?



Will the screens obstruct potential escape routes from the location in the event of a security incident?

### Impact of screens in areas where you need to consider a blast threat

These screens have the potential to cause significant hazard if an improvised explosive device (IED) is detonated nearby, as the screen may break up and create hazardous fragments or detach as a complete unit.

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## Screen design

The primary aim of the barriers is to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Against a blast threat, the secondary aim is to reduce as far as possible the risks of hazardous fragments. To achieve this the material, frame, fixing and size all need to be considered.

Below are considerations to help achieve both aims

	 COVID-19 Requirements	 Blast Requirements
<b>Material Type</b>	Non-porous materials are preferred from a COVID-19 mitigation perspective as they will facilitate regular disinfecting (see below).	There are many types of plastic sheet material available. Polycarbonate / PETG are preferred, as they break into larger pieces than acrylic sheets.
<b>Size of the Screen</b>	The screen area (in particular, the screen height) may interfere with ventilation within the environment it is installed. If possible, don't make screens bigger than necessary.	The larger the screen area, the more blast load it will be subjected to. Again, if possible, don't make screens bigger than necessary.
<b>Design and Connection of the Screen</b>	Avoid pass-through openings at head height and ensure these are only as large as necessary.	<p>The screens should be fixed to the counter and designed to be flexible and fail safely. Fixing the base of the screen to a sealed countertop using multiple strips of high strength double sided tape achieves a more flexible performance than mechanically fixing the screen.</p> <p>Use a robust connection between the base and the screen. Avoid thermally formed connections.</p> <p>Limiting the amount of metal used within the design may reduce the number of potentially hazardous fragments.</p>

## Screen maintenance



Regular disinfecting of the screens with government recommended disinfectants is recommended to prevent a contact transmission hazard and ensure visibility. However, some plastics have a low resistance to chemicals in disinfecting products and if certain disinfectants are used, the plastic may become opaque or lose structural integrity, which may impact the blast performance. For example, acrylic has a low resistance to alcohols, including ethanol, and polycarbonate may become discoloured by them. Check with the manufacturer which chemical disinfectants are compatible with their product. Government guidance for COVID-19 disinfectants can be found on the HSE website <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/hand-sanitiser/choosing-hand-sanitiser-surface-disinfectant.htm>

## Other factors to be considered

Before installing screens, the following other factors should also be considered:

- Does the fire rating of the screens meet the fire regulation requirement?
- Does the position of the screen affect general accessibility and planned evacuation routes?