



**EMBARGOED: 00.01HRS TUESDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Social distancing solution launched to protect employees returning to work**

**Reactec repurposes tried and tested technology to protect workers from potential exposure to COVID-19**

Edinburgh-based Reactec, has repurposed its proven system for monitoring workers' exposure to health risk to create "**Safedistance**", which enables employers to manage the social distancing of their workforce within construction, rail, manufacturing and other workplaces.

**Safedistance** is based on an industrial grade wrist-worn device and it:

- Alerts workers if they have strayed to within two metres of a colleague
- Informs employers of the frequency and severity of breaches of social distancing protocols
- Can assist with contact tracing of those who have been close to employees subsequently displaying COVID-19 symptoms
- Can facilitate contact tracing across employers on busy infrastructure projects
- Ring fences work teams who need to work more closely together in controlled cohorts
- Can be expanded to enable real time intervention by a supervisor in the event of social distancing breaches

Jacqui McLaughlin, CEO of Reactec, said:

"Social distancing will clearly be with us for some time and it's vital that when people get back to work they can do so safely. Our team has moved quickly to repurpose our technology to help businesses to ensure that their teams are working safely.

“Reactec, is already dedicated to helping reduce the damage to workers’ health from exposure to vibration, so developing our technology to include social distancing was a logical next step in response to COVID-19. We want to play our part in getting everyone back to work safely and with confidence.”

Reactec has discussed the capabilities of **Safedistance** at Ministerial level with the Scottish Government. Ivan McKee, Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation, said:

“In response to this pandemic, companies right across Scotland have been diversifying production lines, increasing capacity or exploring new distribution routes to help deliver what is needed, when it’s needed. Technology is going to play a crucial role in helping us overcome the long-term challenges presented by COVID-19 so it is great to see innovative, dynamic companies repurposing existing technology to help us protect workers from potential exposure in the future.”

More than 45,000 of Reactec’s Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) monitor, HAVwear, on which **Safedistance** is based, are already in circulation in the UK. Reactec is offering to enable these devices remotely by adding the safe distancing software free of charge – meaning that its existing clients can ensure safe distancing of employees while also continuing to protect them from harmful vibration.

**Safedistance** was developed by technical experts at Reactec – which is backed by Scottish business angel syndicate, Archangels, and Scottish Enterprise’s investment banking arm, Scottish Investment Bank – as a direct response to the COVID-19 crisis and the Scottish and UK Government’s introduction of social distancing protocols. Recognising that the company had a significant deployment of its existing hardware within its customer base, Reactec mobilised its innovation team to repurpose its product offering. Development work that would normally take months was completed in 15 days, allowing Reactec to test and launch the product in record time. A number of leading companies within the construction and rail sector are now trialling the technology.

One of the companies trialling **Safedistance** is the leading civil engineering group, Keltbray. Paul Deacy, Managing Director Demolitions and Civils, said:

“Keltbray already uses HAVwear as it’s a robust product and the analytics reporting with its automation and GDPR compliance are critical factors to Keltbray providing actionable intelligence. So when Reactec approached us to trial the new social distance functionality we already had confidence in the product. Keltbray is encouraged by this new offering. This could truly assist us in managing social distancing across our projects.”

The **Safedistance** technology works by using Bluetooth enabled Reactec devices to detect other Reactec devices within a two-metre range. Should users become closer than two metres apart, both device users are warned with both vibration and audio alerts.

The device is returned to its recharging docking station at the end of each shift, at which point details of any safe distancing breaches are uploaded to the Cloud and combined with other data to produce employer reports to assist in the management of social distancing. All data use is entirely GDPR compliant. The system can be expanded to provide real-time transmission of distancing breaches to enable supervisors to act immediately in managing social distancing.

Jacqui McLaughlin:

“**Safedistance** is based on a robust, tried and tested personal monitoring technology specifically designed for harsh environments and the strongest requirements of corporate ownership of GDPR compliant data. While the repurposing of the technology to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 is innovative, it is a software amendment to a well-used system. Like everyone else, we long to see the country get back to work and for the economy to be kickstarted once more. I’m confident that **Safedistance** can play an important part in helping to make this happen.”

Launched in 2016, HAVwear – on which **Safedistance** is based – is a wearable wrist device that monitors in real time an individual’s exposure to vibration when using power tools. Reactec’s on-line Cloud-based data analytics turns the HAVwear and **Safedistance** data into manageable intelligence to empower proactive management of risk. HAVwear has enjoyed significant sales since its launch and is in use by a number of leading companies in the UK, including British Airways, Network Rail, Murphy Group, Morgan Sindall, Balfour Beatty, Costain, the Environment Agency, Siemens and Babcock. Reactec’s technology is in use across major infrastructure projects including HS2

Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS), which is also known as Vibration White Finger, is one of the most common industrial diseases in the UK. The condition is usually caused by the prolonged use of power hand tools, whose vibrations can damage the blood vessels, nerves, muscles and joints of the hand, wrist and arm. 300,000 people in the UK suffer from the condition, for which there is no known cure, only prevention.

Ends

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### **Free-to-use picture captions**

Pics 1 & 2: Reactec team members demonstrate Safedistance in action

Pic 3: A close-up view of the Safedistance device

Pictures credit: Reactec

### **Notes to editors:**

#### **About Reactec**

THE COMPANY: Founded in 2001 as a spin out from Edinburgh University, Reactec began as experts in the characterisation of vibration and its impact. Following the release of the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 the company innovated monitoring technologies to help protect employees from harmful exposure to vibration. The automation and analysis of the large data sets being gathered by Reactec's vibration monitoring technologies has positioned the company now to offer more holistic connected worker information management.

PRODUCTS: From the first to market on tool monitor of exposure to HAV, the HAVmeter, Reactec raised the bar on giving a practical real-time assessment of HAV exposure by releasing the wrist worn HAVwear in 2016. Reactec's monitoring technology is supported with automatic data management infrastructure and hosted on-line analytics. Under strict GDPR compliant technology and protocols, Reactec process monitoring data for over 75,000 UK workers. Reactec released their RASOR communications hub technology in 2019. RASOR enables live data from Reactec's HAVwear and other third-party Bluetooth enabled monitors to be collated in a single powerful data Analytics while also providing the critical elements of lone-worker functionality.

INDUSTRY: As an industry leader, all of its products are manufactured in the UK and are used in a wide range of different applications within the construction, transport, aviation, manufacturing, grounds maintenance and facilities management sectors.

ACCREDITATION AND ISO: Reactec is an ISO 9001:2015 Registered Company and is certified as compliant to the requirements of Cyber Essential Plus Scheme. Reactec's HAV monitoring technology has been developed to help organisations meet their legal obligations under the Regulations and their moral obligations in protecting employees from HAV exposure. This includes ground-breaking research published in the International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics.

#### **What is HAV / HAVS?**

- Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) is the cause of one of the most common industrial disease in the UK, Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) – also known as Vibration White Finger – with estimates that over 1 million UK workers are currently exposed to vibration over the HSE limit (source: HSE).
- There is no cure for HAVS, there is only prevention (source: HSE).
- 2 million\* people in the UK are at risk of HAVs. But currently there are under 100,000\*\* using monitoring systems, around 5% (source: \*HSE \*\*Reactec).
- 300% rise in financial penalties relating to HAVS fines since new sentencing guidelines were introduced in 2016
- 42% rise in the number of 'Hand Arm Vibration' non-compliances recorded through 20,000 site inspections in 2016 (source: BSG).
- There are 300,000 people suffering from HAVS in the UK (source: HSE).
- Successful HAVS related industrial disability claims have increased by 69% in last eight years (Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit).