

Adaptability is the key for nuclear worker Kay

When she left her house for work for the first time after the coronavirus lock down was announced, Kay Mulhatton felt nervous.

While other people were urged to stay at home, as a key worker keeping one of our nuclear plants safe, Kay was asked to continue to come to work.

It felt strange the first time I set off for work. I didn't know what to expect. Thankfully, as time has moved on, things have felt more normal.

Kay works 12-hour shifts in the vitrification plant. While the plant isn't currently turning radioactive waste into glass, work in the facility cannot stop. This has meant a change in Kay's role.

Our team of 5 process engineers would ordinarily be working to keep the plant running. As the plant's normal processes are paused, we're carrying out other work that must continue, and are supporting our colleagues in other parts of the facility and at home. In fact, we've been doing quite different sets of tasks to normal.

We've all adapted to our new circumstances, and it's reassuring to see just how seriously all key workers on the site are taking this. It did take time though. At first people were trying to work as usual, but we all support each other and call out behaviours that are unsafe. This means pointing out when people are not social distancing.

Thankfully we've had to point this out less as people have become accustomed to it. But we obviously remain nervous about what happens when more people return to work. With more people on site it will be harder to social distance. But the measures we are seeing being put in place should help this.

These include reconfiguring canteen areas so people can keep their distance in the workplace, more robust cleaning regimes and new stations for hand sanitising and cleaning down kit.

Since the changes to working arrangements, only a small number of people have been based in the plant, but this will increase slowly, over time, as a phased return to operations takes place.

Until that point, Kay is reassured by the way those on site are working, and

the camaraderie they are showing.

I've been working with a fantastic team, and we're all chipping in to help each other. We're continuing to have good conversations about both work and our wellbeing and are enjoying some lovely home-made food. Thank you!

While there are far fewer of us on plant and on site, we're certainly a team.

Kay recognises the importance of mental health. As well as supporting colleagues and checking in with other team members, she keeps her mind busy outside of work with crocheting, knitting and DIY, as well as walking her dog.

Kay was keen to thank her colleagues for their efforts during this time. She is happy to speak to anyone who feels overwhelmed at the moment.

[Vernacare increases production by 60% to fight Coronavirus](#)

- Coronavirus wards across the NHS and in more than 60 countries are using infection control products from UK exporter, Vernacare
- The Department for International Trade has worked with Vernacare to increase supply to global healthcare providers, contributing to a 60% rise in production

Vernacare has been providing the NHS with infection control products for 50 years, but since the outbreak of Coronavirus the global demand for its single-use disposable containers and macerators has reached an unprecedented scale.

The Lancashire based healthcare company has increased production by 60%, as healthcare facilities follow World Health Organisation (WHO) advice that 'single use and disposable' equipment is needed to minimise the risk of transmission of Coronavirus. The company's infection control products are now being used by 95% of NHS hospitals. With the assistance of the UK government's international trade advisors, these are also exported to more than 60 countries, including Spain, Italy, India, Australia, New Zealand and Mexico.

Vernacare has revolutionised the healthcare sector, not only through its range of disposable containers such as urinals, washbowls and jugs, but also through its hospital macerators, bathing alternatives and disinfectant wipes.

As the largest medical grade pulp manufacturer in the world, Vernacare has shone a light on UK innovation by being adaptive and resourceful throughout the pandemic. Producing its goods in-house has allowed Vernacare to fulfil all of its domestic orders as well as meeting international demand.

Hakeem Adebisi, International Sales and Marketing Director of Vernacare, said:

With no current cure, it is vital that we focus on curbing the spread of Coronavirus, which is exactly what our products are made to do.

At the heart of this fight are our frontline workers and it is our duty to help protect them from infection, so that they can continue to save lives. That is why we ramped up production by 60%, so that we can meet the growing demand.

The response of our team has been magnificent, and it is extremely rewarding to see our products being used in hospitals and age care facilities in the UK and worldwide.

Since the start of the Coronavirus outbreak, Department for International Trade (DIT) officials around the world have introduced the company to a wide range of healthcare contacts, generating further business for Vernacare in countries like Australia and Singapore.

Minister for Exports, Graham Stuart, said:

Vernacare is one of the many UK businesses working incredibly hard to supply crucial products to frontline workers across the world, helping to save lives and prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

Through innovation and manufacturing excellence, Vernacare's infection control products are transforming the global healthcare sector and will continue to do so long after the pandemic.

My department is doing everything it can to support UK businesses to continue trading, and I'm glad DIT has been able to ensure Vernacare's products reach those across the globe who need them the most.

Alexander Dalrymple Award presented to Vice Admiral Vinay Badhwar

The 2019 Alexander Dalrymple Award has been presented to Vice Adm Vinay Badhwar, National Hydrographer to the Government of India, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Indian hydrography and across the wider Indian Ocean region.

The Alexander Dalrymple Award was first awarded by the UKHO in 2006 and is named after the first Hydrographer of the Admiralty. Recipients of the award are selected by the Executive Committee of the UKHO for their efforts in raising the standards of hydrography, cartography and navigation around the world.

Having joined the Indian Navy in 1982, Vice Admiral Badhwar has extensive hydrographic surveying experience. This includes work in the Gulfs of Kutch and Khambhat, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands – widely recognised as some of the most challenging environments to survey in the world.

In his capacity as National Hydrographer, Vice Adm Badhwar has been a pivotal member of the International Hydrographic Organization's Capacity Building Sub-Committee since its creation. He also leads the Indian Naval Hydrographic Office's own regional Capacity Building programmes. In this role, Vice Adm Badhwar coordinates efforts to help Indian Ocean coastal states to develop their hydrographic and cartographic capabilities – an important step to unlocking each of these states' blue economies.

Vice Adm Badhwar's contribution to the sustainable development of Indian Ocean coastal economies was also recognised in 2019, when he received the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal for 'distinguished service of an exceptional order during peacetime'.

Commenting on the 2019 Alexander Dalrymple Award, RAdm Peter Sparkes, the UK's National Hydrographer at the UKHO, said:

Vice Admiral Badhwar is a true champion of the hydrographic profession. He has helped to unlock the economic potential of marine geospatial data and further hydrographic science in both India and the wider Indian Ocean region.

The important capacity building contribution of our friends and partners at the Indian Naval Hydrographic Office, who work in concert with the IHO, is helping to usher in a safer, more prosperous and more sustainable world. We look forward to continuing to work with Vice Admiral Badhwar and his team as we help all nations unlock the power of their blue economies.

Adding his thoughts on the award, Vice Admiral Vinay Badhwar said:

This recognition would not have been possible without the support of my colleagues in the National Hydrographic Department, who worked tirelessly towards achieving the goals set forth by the United Nations and IHO. Last but not the least, I am also grateful to all my fellow hydrographers worldwide for acknowledging our work.

Joint Statement on the Occassion of IDAHOT Day

World news story

27 Embassies in Romania have signed a joint statement on the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Romania.



Joint Statement on the occasion of the IDAHOT Day: International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Romania

Bucharest, 17 May 2020 – On the occasion of the International Day against

Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, we express our solidarity with all persons in Romania, who are discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics.

LGBTI persons continue to face discrimination, violence and stigmatization all around the world. Our countries seek to combat such discrimination by promoting human rights for everyone. This respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and dignity obliges governments to protect all citizens from violence and discrimination and to ensure that all people enjoy equal treatment and equal opportunities.

We believe that only when diversity is appreciated and supported can a country achieve its full potential. The current COVID-19 pandemic does not allow groups or individuals to gather for festivals and marches, but we reaffirm on this day our full support for the peaceful fight for the cessation of all forms of discrimination and violence, including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics.

The joint statement is issued by the embassies of: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and the European Commission Representation in Romania.

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[Helping to tackle lockdown waste crimes in the North East](#)

The Environment Agency is urging residents and owners of land and property across the North East to be extra vigilant in the protection of their property, and also checking out the credentials of any independent waste carriers to avoid becoming victims of waste crime during the continued Coronavirus lockdown.

Don't get dumped on as it could cost you! If it sounds too good to be true – it probably is.

These uncertain times are the perfect opportunity for criminals to take advantage of unsuspecting victims especially when householders are creating more refuse and sorting through unwanted items during the clearance of outhouses and garages.

That coupled with the recent temporary closure of most Household Waste and Recycling Centres has meant that people have been desperate to clear some much-needed space and remove their clutter. So it may be tempting to answer that advert on Facebook for someone to come and clear the waste – but be aware.

The annual economic impact of waste crime in England is an estimated at £604M. The Environment Agency is working hard to address this. Its specialist crime unit uses intelligence to track and prosecute organised crime gangs involved in illegal waste activity and to ensure any necessary action is taken against them.

David Edwardson, the Environment Agency's Enforcement Leader for the North East, said:

Waste crime is something that not only affects the environment in which we live and work but it can be an awful experience for residents, landowners and businesses who fall victim to these acts of criminal activity.

This is why, as the regulator for the commercial waste industry, we are urging individuals, businesses and organisations to be cautious, extra vigilant and responsible with the management of their waste. This will prevent it getting into the hands of criminals – who cause damage and heartache to properties and the local economy.

Did you know that in a court of law it's not only the waste carrier who can be prosecuted if waste is fly tipped? It's expected that the customer knows the final destination of the waste [duty of care]. If you pass your waste to someone else to take away for you, you must first check they are registered with the Environment Agency.

There is a risk to landowners too. Waste criminals can target your land and property. They may offer you cash to store waste, promising to come back and remove it but don't. Or they may dump the waste without your knowledge.

The threat to those land and property owners comes in various means from baled waste appearing unexpectedly through to people answering adverts on social media platforms placed by illegal unlicensed waste carriers promising to remove items for a one-off fee.

Large scale illegal dumping of waste is often co-ordinated through organised crime groups. These criminal groups approach property and landowners to lease warehouses, barns, open land, farms and private property. Lease agreements are put in place that appear to be legal and above board.

Organised crime groups then leave waste on land, where the clearance of the waste becomes the responsibility of the landowners, often at great expense.

The criminals involved often provide false details to secure their lease agreements making them harder to trace and to recover costs from.

The Coronavirus is not an excuse for criminals to get away with operating illegally. The Environment Agency is still actively responding to reports of illegal activity and waste sites operating illegally during this pandemic.

Check out the Environment Agency's operational update at www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-agency-operational-update-3-april-2020

David Edwardson continues:

We are working closely with our partners to deliver a programme of preventative measures to help protect individuals especially in these current times when criminals prey on people's vulnerability.

You may even be committing an offence yourself by allowing waste to be stored on your land or in your property without the relevant permissions which could leave you liable to prosecution.

There are hundreds of commercial properties across the North East thought to be empty, all of which are potential targets for waste criminals.

Northumbria Police's Designing Out Crime Officer, Sandra Killeen, said:

We all have to be accountable for responsibly disposing of our waste as it can have damaging effects on the environment and the economy.

We are working alongside our partners to ensure anyone linked to criminal activity and illegal disposing of waste sees the full consequences of their actions.

We are urging the public to remain vigilant and report anything suspicious.

James Copeland, Senior Environment & Land Use Adviser, said:

When accepting any material, especially waste onto farm, there are a number of waste regulations you must be aware of. Depositing unsuitable materials could leave you with an expensive clean-up costs or facing prosecution. There are a number of key checks and questions you need to ask when accepting waste and if in doubt, contact the competent authority for advice.

Everybody has a part to play to help solve the waste crime problem and make sure waste is managed responsibly. Anyone who sees waste crime taking place, or who has been a victim of illegal baled waste deposit is advised not to approach as these people can be dangerous. Report it by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Also if people are paying for a company to take away waste from their property, then we would always advise them to check they are a registered waste carrier with the Environment Agency by visiting environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers .