COVID-19 for Workplaces Pack
For the Small Business in the Taxi & ride share industry

Total supporting material in this pack: 23

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About COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

For more WHS information and resources for small business, go to the COVID-19 Small business hub.

Some business operations are restricted under state or territory government public health directions. If you want to know what restrictions on business operations apply to your workplace, go to your state or territory government website .

You can also go to our Public health directions and COVIDSafe plans page for links to enforceable government directions.

Businesses must only operate to the extent permissible in each state and territory. The information provided below outlines measures which cover all aspects of services offered by the industry – depending on what is permissible in your jurisdiction, some sections may not be currently relevant to your business.

Safe Work Australia does not regulate or enforce WHS laws or COVID-19 restrictions on business operations. If you want to know how WHS laws apply to you or need help with what to do at your workplace, contact the WHS regulator in your jurisdiction.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that is caused by a newly discovered form of coronavirus.

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection that was unknown before the outbreak that started in Hubei Province, China, in December 2019. Other known forms of coronaviruses include Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever and cough.

Other symptoms include headache, sore throat, fatigue, shortness of breath, aches and pains, loss of smell, altered sense of taste, runny nose, chills and vomiting.

Most people infected with COVID-19 will have a mild to moderate illness and will recover without special medical treatment. Some people, such as those with underlying medical problems or disease and older people, are more likely to suffer from more serious symptoms of the diseases. See also our content on vulnerable workers.

How is COVID-19 spread?

- The most likely way someone will catch the virus is by breathing in micro-droplets a person close to them has released by sneezing, coughing – or just breathing out
- A person can, however, also catch it via the hand-to-face pathway: touching a surface where live virus material is present, then touching their mouth, nose or eyes
- Spread of COVID-19 is highest from people with symptoms
- Spread of COVID-19 before symptoms appear is less common

More information

For more information about COVID-19 please see the resources available from the Australian Government Department of Health .

You can also call the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080 if you have questions about COVID-19. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you require translating or interpreting services, please call 131 450.

Case studies

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

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Case Study – Hygiene

John is a taxi driver and has been continuing to drive passengers as an essential service during the COVID-19 pandemic. John knows he must make sure he does everything he can to minimise the risk of him or his passengers being exposed to COVID-19. He looks at Safe Work Australia's guidance for taxi and ride share industry and also considers what he needs to do to meet public health requirements.

To protect himself from the risk of exposure to COVID-19, John frequently washes his hands and when on the road uses alcohol-based hand sanitiser especially after opening and closing doors, exchanging payment or other contact with passengers. He has also increased cleaning and disinfecting the vehicle. For example, cleaning frequently touch surfaces after each passenger including seat belts and clips, door handles and EFTPOS machines.

While it isn't possible to ensure physical distancing in his vehicle, John asks his passengers to sit in the back seat, use contactless payment and handle their own luggage, if possible. He also places signs in the vehicle asking passengers to practice good hygiene and buys alcohol-based hand sanitiser and tissues for use by both him and passengers. As some passengers may not speak English and there isn't enough space for signs in multiple languages, John also creates a sign using 3 well-known images – sneezing into elbow, hand washing and staying home if unwell.

John knows he should immediately stop driving if he is feeling unwell or displaying symptoms of COVID-19, have been tested for COVID-19 and awaiting results or have been required by health authorities to self-isolate.

Cleaning

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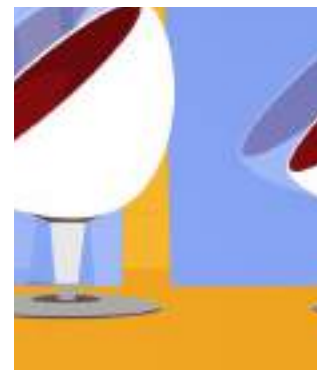
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Watch our video for information on cleaning to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your small business.

0:00 / 0:36

Watch on YouTube	Download Transcript

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The main way COVID-19 spreads from person to person is through contact with respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets may fall directly onto the person's eyes, nose or mouth if they are in close contact with the infected person. Airborne transmission of COVID-19 can also occur, with the greatest risk in indoor, crowded and inadequately ventilated spaces. A person may also be infected if they touch a surface contaminated with the COVID-19 virus and then touch their own mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands. Research shows that the COVID-19 virus can survive on some surfaces for prolonged periods of time.

A key way you can protect workers and others from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is by implementing appropriate cleaning and disinfecting measures for your workplace.

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus.

Workplaces must be cleaned at least daily. Cleaning with detergent and water is usually sufficient. Once clean, surfaces can be disinfected. When and how often your workplace should be disinfected will depend on the likelihood of contaminated material being present. You should prioritise cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that many people touch.

Alternatively, you may be able to do a 2-in-1 clean and disinfection by using a combined detergent and disinfectant.

How to clean and disinfect

Cleaning means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. A detergent is a surfactant that is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water. Anything labelled as a detergent will work.

Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It's important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. The following disinfectants are suitable for use on hard surfaces (that is, surfaces where any spilt liquid pools, and does not soak in): alcohol in a concentration of at least 70%, chlorine bleach in a concentration of 1000 parts per million, oxygen bleach, or wipes and sprays that contain quaternary ammonium compounds. These chemicals will be labelled as 'disinfectant' on the packaging and must be diluted or used following the instructions on the packaging to be effective.

> The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has published a list of disinfectant products   that are permitted to claim they are effective against COVID-19.
>
> As long as you use a disinfectant of the types described above, in accordance with the manufacturer's directions, they will be effective. They do not need to be on the TGA list.

Cleaning should start with the cleanest surface first, progressively moving towards the dirtiest surface. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of slips and falls, as well as spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets.

Before a surface is disinfected, it is important it is cleaned first because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. Disinfectant may not kill the virus if the surface has not been cleaned with a detergent first.

The packaging or manufacturer's instructions will outline the correct way to use disinfectant. Disinfectants require time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for ten minutes before removing.

You should provide your workers with suitable cleaning and disinfecting products and personal protective equipment, and ensure they are trained on how to use them.

After cleaning, any single-use personal protective equipment (PPE), disposable cloths and covers should be placed in a plastic bag and disposed of in general waste. Any reusable cleaning equipment, including mop heads and reusable cloths, should be laundered and completely dry before re-use.

Our cleaning guide provides more information on cleaning and disinfecting, including for specific surfaces.

What is the difference between cleaning and disinfecting?

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Which areas should be cleaned and disinfected, and how often?

Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, such as tabletops, counters, door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, desks, toilets, taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles, phones, EFTPOS machines and workplace amenities. . Any surfaces that are visibly dirty, or have a spill, should be cleaned as soon as they are identified, regardless of when they were last cleaned.

You should regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that many people touch. At a minimum, frequently touched surfaces workplaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least once daily. If your workplace has many customers or others entering each day, more frequent cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is recommended. If your workplace is only attended by the same small work crew each day and involves little interaction with other people, routine disinfection in addition to daily cleaning may not be needed.

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As long as you use a disinfectant of the types described above, in accordance with the manufacturer's directions, they will be effective. They do not need to be on the TGA list.

Which areas should I prioritise for cleaning?

Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning and disinfection. These include tabletops, counters, door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, desks, toilets, taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles, phones, EFTPOS machines and workplace amenities.. You should also prioritise cleaning and disinfecting surfaces which are visibly soiled (dirty) and which are used by multiple people (e.g. trolleys, checkouts, EFTPOS machines).

How often should I do a routine clean?

Regular cleaning is key to minimising the build-up of dust and dirt and allows for effective disinfecting when required.

Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces must be undertaken at least once per day. Cleaning should be more frequent if surfaces become visibly dirty, there is a spill, or if they are touched by a different people (for example, if your workplace has a high volume of workers, customers or visitors that are likely to touch surfaces such as tabletops, counters, door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, desks, toilets, taps, TV remotes, kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles, phones, EFTPOS machines and workplace amenities). If your workplace operates in shifts, it should be cleaned between shifts. If equipment is shared between workers, it may also be cleaned between uses, where practicable.

For more information, refer to our cleaning guide.

Cleaning and disinfecting should also be done after a person with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID 19 has recently been at the workplace, in line with advice from your state or territory's health authority. For more information, including the contact details for your local health authority please see What to do if a worker has COVID-19.

How often should I do a routine disinfection?

You should regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that many people touch. You should consider disinfecting frequently touched surfaces at least once daily.

All surfaces should be cleaned with detergent prior to disinfection. Alternatively, you may be able to do a 2-in-1 clean and disinfection by using a combined detergent and disinfectant.

What's the difference between frequently touched and infrequently touched surfaces?

A frequently touched surface is a surface that is touched multiple times each day, regardless of whether it is touched by the same person or different people. Door handles and taps are examples of frequently touched surfaces.

An infrequently touched surface is any surface that is not touched more than once each day. If you are unsure, you should treat your surface as if it is frequently touched.

Does every surface need to be cleaned and disinfected?

You don't need to clean and disinfect every surface. The virus is transmitted by breathing in droplets produced by an infected person coughing or sneezing, or contact with contaminated surfaces, so you only need to clean surfaces that are touched or otherwise contaminated. This is true whether the touching is deliberate (e.g. a door knob) or incidental (e.g. brushing a door when reaching for the door knob). There are some surfaces that are never touched (e.g. ceilings and cracks and crevices in machinery) and these do not need to be cleaned and disinfected.

Do I need to clean and disinfect areas or equipment daily if no one has entered the area or used the equipment recently?

Not necessarily. If a surface has not had human contact for several days, it is less likely to be a potential source of infection. You may wish to consider how frequently a particular surface is touched or otherwise comes into human contact when deciding how often an area or equipment needs to be cleaned and disinfected. However care should be taken, as research shows that the COVID-19 virus can survive on some surfaces for prolonged periods of time. If there is any doubt, it is better to clean and disinfect an area rather than risk infection.

You can refer to our cleaning guide for more detailed information on how to clean a range of different surfaces and items, as well as for assistance on how to clean if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in your workplace.

What about workers' personal items?

You should instruct your workers to clean and disinfect personal items used in the workplace such as glasses and phones regularly using disinfectant wipes or sprays.

What should my workers wear to clean?

In most circumstances, it will not be necessary for workers to wear protective clothing to clean your workplace. However, workers should use personal protective equipment (PPE) that is necessary for the products they are using for cleaning. As a starting point:

- Gloves are the minimum requirements
- Gowns and disposable suits/aprons are not required. Clothes that can be washed afterwards are suitable.
- You need to provide any PPE and train your workers on how to use it safely.

If you have a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case in the workplace, surgical masks should be used to cleaning any impacted areas.

See also our information on PPE and masks.

What if there is a case of COVID-19 in my workplace?

If you have a case of COVID-19 in the workplace, your state or territory health authority should provide you with advice on what you need to do in your workplace. Follow their instructions.

Your workplace will need to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before people can return to the workplace.

- Using an ISO accredited cleaner is not required.
- Fogging is not required and is not recommended by the Australian Government Department of Health for routine cleaning against COVID-19
- Swabbing surfaces following disinfection is not required.

For more information on what to do if there is a case of COVID-19 see our infographic What to do if a worker has COVID-19.

What are the best products for cleaning and disinfecting?

When cleaning it is best to use detergent and warm water. This will break down grease and grime so that the surface can be wiped clean. Anything labelled as a detergent will work. Disinfectants should only be used once the surface is fully cleaned.

Disinfectants that are suitable for use on hard surfaces (that is, surfaces where any spilt liquid pools, and does not soak in) include: alcohol in a concentration of at least 70%, chlorine bleach in a concentration of 1000 parts per million, oxygen bleach, or wipes and sprays that contain quaternary ammonium compounds. These chemicals will be labelled as 'disinfectant' on the packaging and must be diluted or used following the instructions on the packaging to be effective.

If using a store-bought disinfectant, choose one that has antiviral activity, meaning it can kill viruses. This should be written on its label. Alternately, diluted bleach can be used. If using freshly made bleach solution, follow the manufacturer's instructions for appropriate dilution and use. It will only be effective when diluted to

the appropriate concentration. Note that prediluted bleach solutions lose effectiveness over time and on exposure to sunlight.

More information about disinfectant selection and preparing bleach solutions can be found in the Department of Health's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for health and residential care facilities   .

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Is a sanitiser a disinfectant?

A sanitiser is a chemical that is designed to kill some bacteria and some viruses that can cause disease in humans or animals. These chemicals are not as strong as disinfectants, which makes them safe to use on skin. If you're disinfecting a hard surface or inanimate object, a disinfectant is the best option.

If everything is sold out, can I make my own disinfectant?

Store-bought disinfectants meet government standards, so you know they will work. However, if you don't have store bought disinfectant available, you can prepare a disinfecting solution using bleach and water. Do not use products such as vinegar, baking soda, (bicarbonate of soda), essential oil, mouthwash or saline solution – these will not kill COVID-19.

If preparing a disinfecting solution, make sure you handle chemicals carefully, as they can be dangerous. Always read and follow the instructions and safety directions on the label. If the solution is not prepared and used as described in the instructions, it is unlikely to be effective. More information about the preparation of chlorine (bleach) disinfectant solutions can be found on the Department of Health's website   .

Can I use a product that claims to clean and disinfect at the same time?

Yes, some products can be used for both cleaning and disinfecting, which can save time and effort. If using these products, make sure that you read and follow the instructions on the label to ensure they work effectively.

Does heating or freezing kill the virus?

Extreme heat will destroy COVID-19 but is not recommended as a general disinfection method. Steam and boiling water can easily burn workers and should only be used by trained personnel with specialised equipment.

Viruses are generally resistant to the cold and can survive longer if frozen than if left outside at room temperature.

Will an antibacterial product kill COVID-19?

Antibacterial products are designed to kill bacteria. However, COVID-19 is caused by a virus rather than by bacteria, so an antibacterial product may not be effective against COVID-19.

Detergent and warm water are suitable for cleaning surfaces and should be used prior to using a disinfectant.

For cleaning hands, regular soap and warm water is effective.

Should I be using hospital grade disinfectant for normal cleaning in the workplace?

The Department of Health only recommends the use of hospital grade disinfectant when cleaning in a hospital, beauty or allied health care setting where an infectious person has been present.

What is the difference between household grade disinfectant and hospital grade disinfectant?

Hospital grade disinfectants must meet government standards for use in health care, beauty and allied health settings. A household or commercial grade disinfectant must also meet government standards, but the testing is not as comprehensive as it is for hospital grade disinfectants and the standards to be met are lower.

Household or commercial grade disinfectant are suitable for use in workplaces that are not health care, beauty or allied health settings.

Are there any cleaning methods I shouldn't use?

The best cleaning method is to use warm water and detergent. You should avoid any cleaning methods that may disperse the virus or create droplets, such as using pressurised water, pressurised air (including canned air cleaners), dry cloth and dusters.

Fumigation or wide-area spraying (known as 'disinfectant fogging') is not recommended for general use against COVID-19. Additionally, if not done correctly it can expose workers and others to hazardous chemicals."

I prefer to use environmentally friendly or natural products, do I have to use detergent to clean?

Yes. Using only water and a cloth, or other forms of cleaning agents, such as vinegar and baking soda (bicarbonate of soda), will not be as effective as using detergent.

What is disinfectant fogging, and do I need to do it?

Disinfectant fogging (sometimes called disinfectant fumigation) is a chemical application method where very fine droplets of disinfectant are sprayed throughout a room in a fog. The disinfectant has to reach a certain concentration for a certain length of time to be effective.

Disinfectant fogging is not recommended for general use against COVID-19 and can introduce new work health and safety risks. Physically cleaning surfaces with detergent and warm water, followed by disinfecting with liquid disinfectant, is the best approach. If you are looking for a faster or easier method, consider a combined (2-in-1) cleaning and disinfecting agent.

Note that if you already use fogging as part of your normal business processes (such as in health care or food manufacturing) you should continue to do so.

The chemicals used in fogging solutions also introduce work health and safety risks which must be managed. Chlorine and hydrogen peroxide-based products are highly irritating to the skin and eyes. Alcohol based products are highly flammable, which may lead to fire or explosion if an ignition source is present.

In all cases, sufficient time must be allowed following fogging for the chemicals to disperse to ensure that workers returning to the area to ensure they are not exposed to hazardous chemicals. If fogging is undertaken, it must only be performed by trained persons and using appropriate controls in accordance with the manufacturer's directions. It should not be undertaken as a response to, or element of a response to contamination of an area with COVID-19.

How do I clean linen, crockery and cutlery?

If items can be laundered, launder them in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest setting possible. Dry items completely. Do not shake dirty laundry as this may disperse the virus through the air.

Wash crockery and cutlery in a dishwasher on the highest setting possible. If a dishwasher is not available, hand wash in hot soapy water.

More information about how to clean specific items refer to our cleaning guide.

I run a cleaning business, how do I manage the risk of infection to myself and my workers?

You should consult with the business engaging you to clean and with your workers to ensure that that the risks of the job are fully understood and can be managed. For example, you should know if there have been any recent cases of COVID-19 at the workplace and the level of public traffic at the workplace. Once you understand the risks associated with the job, you must put appropriate control measures in place. These may include:

- physical distancing measures, such as cleaning when other workers are not present (e.g. after hours if cleaning an office) to reduce the chance of contact with others
- training workers on the use of good hygiene practices and safe cleaning techniques. This should include information on how COVID-19 is transmitted and how the use of good hygiene and safe cleaning practices reduces the risk of COVID-19 spreading, and instructions for staff to avoid touching their face whilst cleaning
- ensuring that correctly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) is supplied and that your workers know how to use it. More information about PPE is available on our website, and
- ensuring regular communication with the business that has engaged you so that you are kept up to date on any cases or suspected cases at the workplace.

My job involves going into other persons' homes. Do I need to clean and disinfect all of my equipment and personal effects after each visit?

It is generally not necessary to clean and disinfect all equipment before or after each visit.

You should consider cleaning and disinfecting your equipment:

- before entering the home of a vulnerable or at-risk person, such an elderly person or a person with a pre-existing medical condition
- before and after sharing equipment with the resident of the home or with other people.

Regardless, you should still practice good hygiene and ensure that your equipment and effects are kept clean. More information about working in other persons homes can be found in the In-house services: Minimising the risk of exposure to COVID-19 fact sheet.

What else can I do?

- Minimise touching of surfaces; put up signs and support your workers in reminding customers
- Reduce the number of touch points for workers
- Provide hand washing facilities or hand sanitiser at entry and exit points if possible.
- Dispose of used paper towel in a waste bin that is regularly emptied to keep the area clean, tidy and safe. See our hygiene information for further advice on hand washing and paper towel.
- Ensure used PPE is disposed of appropriately. Unless contaminated, masks can be disposed of with the general waste, preferably in a closed bin. Contaminated PPE items should be disposed of into a closed bin

with two bin liners or be double bagged separately. Refer to our PPE and masks information for detailed advice on correct disposal.

Is there someone I can talk to for more information about Coronavirus?

The Department of Health runs the National Coronavirus Hotline - 1800 020 080.

You can call this line if you are seeking information on coronavirus. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You can find more contact options for the Department of Health on their website   .

What about information published by other organisations?

- Department of Health: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Physical distancing for coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Department of Health: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information about routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community
- Department of Health: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for health and residential care facilities
- Therapeutic Goods Administration: Disinfectants for use against COVID-19 in the ARTG for legal supply in Australia
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand: Novel Coronavirus and food safety
- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: COVID-19 Business support
- Australian Industry Group: Coronavirus COVID-19 Advice and resources
- Australian Council of Trade Unions: Coronavirus updates - Workers' rights, tools & resources for dealing with COVID-19

Consultation

> The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.
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You must consult with your workers on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19. Workers could include drivers for taxi and ride share service providers, even if under employment laws they are considered independent contractors. This means you must consult when:

- assessing the risk COVID-19 presents to the health and safety of workers
- deciding on control measures to eliminate or minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19
- deciding on the adequacy of facilities for the welfare of workers (e.g. hand washing facilities), and
- proposing other changes to the workplace as a result of COVID-19 which may affect health and safety.

If you and your workers have agreed to procedures for consultation, the consultation must be in accordance with those procedures. If workers are represented by Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) you must include them in the consultation process.

You must allow workers to raise and express their views on work health and safety issues that may arise directly or indirectly because of COVID-19. You must genuinely take the views of workers into account when making decisions and advise them of your decision.

Do I still have to consult with workers if I am following advice from health authorities?

Yes. You must consult with workers about all the things you are doing to identify and manage the risks to keep workers safe during the pandemic. Workers are most likely to know about the risks of their work, including new risks introduced as a result of COVID-19 control measures. Involving them will help build commitment to this process and any changes you make .

Consultation does not require consensus or agreement but you must allow your workers to be part of the decision making process. You must genuinely take into account their views.

Some or all of my workers aren't coming into the office, does consultation have to be face to face?

No. When you or your workers aren't sharing a work space you may not be able to consult with them face to face. You must find other ways of consulting with them such as emails, video conferences or calling workers individually to discuss their concerns.

Make sure you update your consultation policies and procedures to reflect the new arrangements you need to put in place.

What else do I need to consider?

You must consult with your workers in accordance with any agreed procedures, including involving any HSRs. However, if working arrangements have changed (e.g. doing shifts or changing work groups) you may need to review and update these procedures to suit the current pandemic conditions. This may mean electing new HSRs for different work groups or changing procedures to allow for consultation through electronic communications.

What do my workers need to know?

You must provide workers with clear direction and guidance about what is expected including:

- when to stay away from work
- what action to take if they become unwell
- what symptoms to be concerned about, and
- that workers have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and to not adversely affect the health and safety of others.

What other information should I share with my workers?

You must share relevant information with workers about health and safety issues, such as any COVID-19 WHS policies you've put in place or updated to taken account of the pandemic conditions (e.g. how to report any incidents) and any changes to emergency plans.

You must provide this as early as possible and ensure that it can be easily understood by your workers.

You should also remind workers about contacts to discuss their concerns such as HSRs, and access to support services, including employee assistance programs.

Is there any one else I should be talking to?

Yes. You must also consult, cooperate and coordinate with other businesses you work with, or share premises with, about how they will discharge their WHS duties when they interact with your workers. To do this you should:

- exchange information to find out who is doing what. For example:

- talk to your suppliers about how to safely manage deliveries
- talk to other businesses that share your worksite or premises about how to manage shared areas such as cars, lifts, bathroom and kitchen facilities
- talk to other businesses that share your worksite or premises about what you will do if there is a case, or suspected case, of COVID-19 at the worksite or premises, and
- talk to other businesses you interact with, for example, the onsite food van or the contract cleaner.

- work together in a cooperative and coordinated way so risks are eliminated or minimised so far as is reasonably practicable (e.g. how to manage shared areas such as lifts, bathroom facilities)

The model Code of Practice: Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination provides more information about your duties to consult.

COVID-19 in your workplace

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

For more WHS information and resources for small business, go to the COVID-19 Small business hub.

What to do if a worker has COVID-19
Download as PDF or JPEG Version>

COVID-19 Incident notification fact sheet
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You can also go to our Public health directions and COVIDSafe plans page for links to enforceable government directions.

Businesses must only operate to the extent permissible in each state and territory. The information provided below outlines measures which cover all aspects of services offered by the industry – depending on what is permissible in your jurisdiction, some sections may not be currently relevant to your business.

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Anyone who is unwell should not be at a workplace. If anyone develops symptoms at work such as fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath, you should ask them to seek medical advice.

It is important to remember that if a person becomes sick with these symptoms at work they may be suffering from a cold, the flu or other respiratory illness and not COVID-19.

If, after seeking medical advice your worker is confirmed as having COVID-19 your state and territory public health unit   will trace and contact the people the infected worker was in close contact with and provide them with instructions to quarantine.

What action should I take if I suspect someone at my workplace has the virus or has been exposed?

You are not expected, and should not try, to diagnose workers. However, you have a work health and safety duty to minimise the risk of workers and others in the workplace being exposed to COVID-19 so far as reasonably practicable.

If you reasonably suspect someone has the virus, or has been exposed, this creates a health risk at your workplace, and you will need to follow the steps below. Do not wait until confirmation that a worker has COVID-19. You must act promptly to take reasonable steps to manage the risks.

This information is provided to assist you in the workplace. However, you must always follow the advice of your state and territory public health unit and WHS regulator, even if it is different to this guidance.

Steps to take when the person you are concerned about is at the workplace now

If someone is confirmed as having COVID-19 or is getting tested for COVID-19, they should already be at home. However, there may be circumstances where a person in your workplace is displaying COVID-like symptoms or shares information (e.g. they have been in close contact with someone that has the virus) that causes you to have reasonable concerns about their health and the health of others in your workplace.

The person could be a worker, a client, customer or other visitor to your premises. Where this occurs:

1. Isolate the person

If the person has serious symptoms such as difficulty breathing, call 000 for urgent medical help. Otherwise, you must take steps to prevent the person from potentially spreading the virus by isolating them from others. You must also provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to the affected person, such as disposable surgical mask, and hand sanitiser and tissues, if available. Also provide protection to anyone assisting the person.

2. Seek advice and assess the risks

Next, to determine if it is reasonable to suspect the person may have COVID-19, talk to the person about your concerns and see what they say.

Seek government health advice by calling your state or territory helpline . Follow the advice of your state and territory public health unit. You can also contact the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The National Helpline can provide advice on when and how to seek medical help or about how to get tested for COVID-19.

Ensure that you have current contact details for the person and make a note about the areas they have been in the workplace, who they have been in close contact with in the workplace and for how long. This will inform you about risks to others and areas to clean and disinfect. This information may also assist your state and territory public health unit if they need to follow up with you at a later time.

Your state or territory WHS regulator may also be able to provide specific WHS advice on your situation.

3. Transport

Ensure the person has transport home, to a location they can isolate, or to a medical facility if necessary.

Wherever possible, if a person is unwell or travelling to a location for mandatory isolation, they should use a personal mode of transport to minimise exposure to others. They should not use public transport unless there is no other option.

If the person needs to use a taxi or ride share service (or public transport) then the person should avoid contact with others including the driver to the extent possible. This includes:

- wearing a surgical mask, if available
- avoiding direct contact with the driver, including sitting in the back seat to achieve as much separation as is reasonably possible
- practising good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze hygiene, and
- paying by card.

4. Clean and disinfect

Close off the affected areas and do not let others use or enter them until they have been cleaned and disinfected. Open outside doors and windows if possible to increase air flow.

All areas, for example offices, bathrooms, kitchens and common areas and equipment or PPE that were used by the person concerned must then be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Further information on how to clean and disinfect can be found in our Cleaning to prevent the spread of COVID-19 guide and also the Cleaning information for your industry.

Cleaners must wear appropriate PPE, for example disposable gloves or gloves appropriate to the cleaning chemicals being used, and safety eyewear to protect against chemical splashes. If there is visible contamination with respiratory secretions or other body fluids in the area, the cleaners should also wear a disposable apron.

Your state and territory public health unit   may also provide you with further information about how and where to clean. You must follow those instructions.

5. Identify and tell close contacts

The state or territory public health unit will identify close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case and provide them with instructions, for example, in relation to quarantine requirements.

In the meantime, for the purposes of undertaking a workplace risk assessment and to assist your state and territory public health unit, consider who the affected person may have had recent close contact with. If instructed by health officials, tell close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and the requirements for quarantine. You must maintain the privacy of all individuals involved.

Seek information about the areas that close contacts have been in the workplace, who they have been in close contact with in the workplace and for how long. This will inform you about possible risks to others, and additional areas that may also need to be cleaned and disinfected.

6. Review risk management controls

Review your COVID-19 risk management controls, in consultation with your workers and their representatives, and assess and decide whether any changes or additional control measures are required.

You must continue to meet your WHS duties at all times. This may mean taking steps above and beyond public health requirements to eliminate or minimise, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risk of workers and others in the workplace (such as customers) contracting COVID-19.

See also our information for managing COVID-19 risks in your industry. This information provides practical guidance on managing risks in your workplace.

Steps to take when the person you are concerned about has recently been at your workplace

A person who has recently been at your workplace such as a worker, client or customer may inform you they have, or may potentially have, COVID-19. Depending on the circumstances (e.g. how recently the person was at your workplace and how closely they were in contact with others) you may have reasonable concerns about the health of others in your workplace.

You must continue to meet your WHS duties at all times. This may mean taking steps above and beyond public health requirements to eliminate or minimise, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risk of workers and others in your workplace (such as customers) contracting COVID-19.

1. Seek advice and assess the risks

To determine if it is reasonable to suspect the person may have COVID-19, talk to the person about your concerns and see what they say. You do not have to do this if the person has already informed you that they have or may potentially have COVID-19

Seek government health advice by calling your state or territory helpline . Follow the advice of your state and territory public health unit. You can also contact the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The National Helpline can provide advice on when and how to seek medical help or about how to get tested for COVID-19.

Ensure that you have current contact details for the person and make a note about the areas they had been in the workplace, who they had been in close contact with in the workplace and for how long. This will inform you about risks to others and areas to clean and disinfect. This information may also assist your state and territory public health unit if they need to follow up with you at a later time.

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The state or territory public health unit will identify close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case and provide them with instructions, for example, in relation to quarantine requirements.

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Close off the affected areas and do not let others use or enter them until they have been cleaned and disinfected. Open outside doors and windows if possible to increase air flow.

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Cleaners must wear appropriate PPE, for example disposable gloves or gloves appropriate to the cleaning chemicals being used, and safety eyewear to protect against chemical splashes. If there is visible contamination with respiratory secretions or other body fluids in the area, the cleaners should also wear a disposable apron.

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Review your COVID-19 risk management controls, in consultation with your workers and their representatives, and assess and decide whether any changes or additional control measures are required.

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Do I need to close my workplace for cleaning?

There is no automatic requirement to close an entire workplace following a suspect or confirmed case of COVID-19. It may be unnecessary if the person has only visited parts of your workplace or if government health officials advise you the risk of others being exposed are low.

Whether you need to suspend operations in your workplace will depend on factors such as the size of the workplace, nature of work, number of people and suspected areas of contamination in your workplace.

See also our information about Cleaning to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

When can workers return to work following recovery from COVID-19?

Workers who have been isolated after having tested positive for COVID-19 can return to work when they have fully recovered and have met the criteria for clearance from isolation.

The criteria may vary depending on circumstances of the workplace and states and territories may manage clearance from isolation differently. Clearance may be by the public health authority or the persons treating clinician.

There are specific criteria for clearance which apply to health care workers and aged care workers. As these may change, these workers should check with a medical practitioner or the public health authority as to whether the criteria for clearance from isolation has been met before they return to work.

Contact your state or territory helpline   for further advice.

When can workers return to work following quarantine?

Workers who have completed a 14-day quarantine period (either after returning from travel or because they were a close contact with a confirmed case), and who did not develop symptoms during quarantine, do not need a medical clearance to return to work.

You should not ask these workers to be tested for COVID-19 in order to return to work.

Is my worker's case of COVID-19 a notifiable incident?

If someone at your workplace is confirmed to have COVID-19, you may also need to notify your state or territory WHS regulator – see our Incident Notification fact sheet for further information.

What are the state and territory helplines?

- New South Wales - 1300 066 055
- Queensland - 13 432 584
- Victoria - 1800 675 398
- South Australia – 1800 253 787
- Tasmania - 1800 671 738
- Western Australia – 13 26843
- Australian Capital Territory - (02) 6207 7244
- Northern Territory - (08) 8922 8044

Duties under WHS laws

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

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The model Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws require you to take care of the health, safety and welfare of your workers, including yourself and other staff, contractors and volunteers, and others (clients, customers, visitors) at your workplace.

This includes:

- providing and maintaining a work environment that is without risk to health and safety
- providing adequate and accessible facilities for the welfare of workers to carry out their work, and
- monitoring the health of workers and the conditions of the workplace for the purpose of preventing illness or injury.

The model WHS laws have been implemented in all jurisdictions except Victoria and Western Australia.

For information on WHS duties in Victoria, refer to WorkSafe Victoria – Occupational health and safety – your legal duties.

For information on WHS duties in Western Australia, refer to WorkSafe WA – Employers – your responsibilities and Employees – your rights and responsibilities.

Duty to workers

You must do what you can to ensure the health and safety of your workers. You must eliminate the risk of exposure to COVID-19 if reasonably practicable.

If you are not able to eliminate the risk of exposure to COVID-19, you must minimise that risk, as far as is reasonably practicable.

Protect workers from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 by, for example:

- considering working from home arrangements
- requiring workers to practice physical distancing
- requiring workers to practice good hygiene (e.g., through workplace policies and ensuring access to adequate and well stocked hygiene facilities)
- requiring workers to stay home when sick, and
- cleaning the workplace regularly and thoroughly.

Duty to other people in the workplace

You must take actions to ensure that the work of your business or undertaking is not putting the health and safety of other persons (such as customers, clients and visitors) at risk of contracting COVID-19.

Protect others from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 by, for example:

- Requiring them to practice physical distancing, including through contactless deliveries and payments
- Requiring them to practice good hygiene, and
- Requiring others to stay away from the workplace, unless essential, e.g., such as family, friends and visitors.

Duty to maintain the workplace and facilities

You must maintain your workplace to ensure the work environment is not putting people at risk of contracting COVID-19.

Maintain a safe work environment by, for example:

- cleaning the workplace regularly and thoroughly
- restructuring the layout of the workplace to allow for physical distancing, and
- limiting the number of people in the workplace at any given time.

You must also provide adequate facilities in their workplace protect your workers, as much as possible from contracting COVID-19.

Provide facilities such as:

- washroom facilities including adequate supply of soap, water and paper towel
- hand sanitiser around the workplace, where it is not possible for workers to wash their hands, and
- staff rooms that are regularly cleaned and allow for physical distancing

Provide workers with regular breaks to use these facilities, particularly to allow workers to wash their hands, or to access hand sanitiser where this is not possible

Duty to provide information, training, instruction and supervision

You must provide your workers with any information or training that is necessary to protect them from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 arising from their work.

Information and training may include:

- providing guidance on how to properly wash hands
- training workers in how to fit and use any necessary personal protective equipment (PPE)
- training workers to exercise adequate cleaning practices throughout the day
- providing workers with instructions on how to set up a safe home workplace, and
- providing workers with instructions on staying home from work if sick.

Duty to consult

You must consult with workers on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19. When consulting, you must give workers the opportunity to express their views and raise WHS concerns. You must take the views of workers into account and advise workers of the outcome of consultation.

You must consult:

- when you conduct a risk assessment
- when you make decisions on control measures to use to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 (e.g. decisions on working from home arrangements, or restricting the workplace to allow for physical distancing)
- when you make decisions about the adequacy of the workplace facilities to allow for control measures such as physical distancing and hygiene

- when you propose other changes that may affect the health and safety of workers, and
- when you change any procedures that have an impact on the WHS of workers.

If you and the workers have agreed to procedures for consultation, the consultation must be in accordance with those procedures.

You must allow workers to express their views and raise WHS issues that may arise directly or indirectly because of COVID-19. You must take the views of workers into account when making decisions and advise workers of your decision.

Workers are most likely to know about the risks of their work. Involving them will help build commitment to any changes you need to implement in the workplace.

Consultation does not require consensus or agreement but you must allow your workers to be part of the decision making process for COVID-19 related matters.

If workers are represented by health and safety representatives you must include them in the consultation process.

The model Code of Practice: work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination can provide more information about your duties to consult.

Emergency plans

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All businesses must have an emergency plan. Where working operations have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency plans must be reviewed and, if necessary, updated.

You should think about how you would deal with a case of COVID-19 in your workplace and how the changes to your business practices may affect your existing procedures and other information included in your plan.

What is an emergency plan?

Businesses must prepare an emergency plan.

An emergency plan is a written plan that sets out requirements and instructions for workers and others in the case of an emergency.

An emergency plan must include the following:

- emergency procedures, including:
  - an effective response to an emergency
  - evacuation procedures
  - notifying emergency service organisations at the earliest opportunity
  - medical treatment and assistance, and
  - effective communication between the person authorised to coordinate the emergency response and all people at the workplace

- testing of the emergency procedures—including the frequency of testing, and
- information, training and instruction to relevant workers in relation to implementing the emergency procedures.

See the Emergency plans fact sheet for more information on emergency plans.

Will COVID-19 affect my emergency plan?

You must ensure emergency plans are maintained to continue to capture the business or undertaking's circumstances.

Where working operations have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency plans must be reviewed and, if necessary, updated.

Emergency plans must provide for workers who work at multiple workplaces, including at home.

You must consider a range of factors when reviewing your emergency plan. You should think about how you would deal with a case of COVID-19 in your workplace and how the changes to your business practices may affect your existing procedures and other information included in your plan.

What new information should be included in an emergency plan?

If you have workers working away from their usual workplace (i.e. working from home), then you will need to consider how this affects your plans and procedures.

Communication practices may also need to be considered, even when you are still working from your usual workplace, if physical distancing or other measures mean that you are operating differently to when you prepared your plan.

When reviewing and revising your plan you should also consider the application of all relevant laws, including public health laws (for example, workplaces that are also public places) and state or territory disaster plans.

Think about practical information that your workers may need. For example, you may need to update:

- emergency contact details for key personnel who have specific roles or responsibilities under the emergency plan, for example fire wardens, floor wardens and first aid officers
- contact details for COVID-19 information lines
- a description of the mechanisms for alerting people to an emergency or possible emergency – this may be affected by remote working
- any changes to evacuation procedures or assembly points
- the post-incident follow-up process, including who must be notified. (This may include the process for notifying the business if a worker experiences an emergency while working from home.)

You should also consider including triggers and processes for advising neighbouring businesses about emergencies, such as a diagnosis of COVID-19 where you share facilities with that business.

Procedures for testing the emergency plan, including the frequency of testing must be included.

Access to the emergency plan

Emergency plans, or a summary of key elements of emergency plans, should be readily accessible by workers.

If some or all of your workers are working from home, you should make sure they still have access.

Make sure emergency contact details are kept up to date.

Training in emergency procedures

Workers must be adequately informed and trained in emergency procedures. Arrangements for informing and training workers must be set out in the emergency plan itself.

If your emergency procedures as a result of changes to business practices from COVID-19, then workers may require additional information or training.

For instance, if you have fewer workers on site as a result of physical distancing or working from home measures, you may need to provide additional information or training to ensure that key roles are capable of being performed and that all workers understand their responsibilities in an emergency.

Shared workplaces

In shared workplaces, you must consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with all other persons who have a work health or safety duty in relation to the same matter, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes when reviewing and revising emergency plans.

In shared workplaces (such as shopping centres, construction sites or office buildings) where there are multiple businesses, you may have a master emergency plan in place that all relevant duty holders use.

Template

We have developed a template to help you prepare your emergency plan.

Family & domestic violence

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If you or someone you know is impacted by family and domestic violence, you can contact 1800 RESPECT , the national counselling service for family and domestic violence for advice.

If a worker is in immediate danger, call 000.

Family and domestic violence can become more frequent and severe during periods of emergency. Public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, such as self-isolation and working from home arrangements, may increase workers' exposure to family and domestic violence. Financial pressures, increased stress and disconnection from support networks can also exacerbate the underlying conditions that lead to violence.

What are my WHS duties?

You must ensure workers and others are not exposed to risks to their health and safety, including from family and domestic violence in the workplace. This includes where the workplace is a worker's home. You must take a systematic approach to managing risk with the aim of eliminating the risk, or if this is not possible, minimising the risk so far as is reasonably practicable. In the event that it is not possible for the worker to be safe at home, an alternative work environment must be provided, so far as reasonably practicable.

You have a duty to do what is reasonably practicable to ensure workers and others are not exposed to risks to their health and safety while undertaking work from home. You need to do what is reasonably practicable to identify the risks, such as providing a safe environment for disclosure, assuring confidentiality and not requiring workers to provide unnecessary personal details. But some risks might be outside your control, such as where a worker chooses not to disclose a risk of family or domestic violence or does not tell you that they cannot work safely at home. Workers and others at the workplace also have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and not adversely affect the health and safety of themselves or others. This includes following any reasonable instruction given to comply with a health and safety duty.

You need to identify hazards, assess the risks and control the risks.

You must consult workers on physical and psychological hazards and risks in the workplace and on how to manage them before you make decisions in relation to your control measures. They will be best placed to know what the issues are and have ideas about how to manage them.

Review how you are managing the risks to check your controls are working.

How do I communicate with my workers about family and domestic violence?

Encourage workers to discuss with you any concerns they may have about their health and safety, as they may have important information that ought to be considered before work arrangements change (e.g. if they are working from home). Continued communication is crucial when your workers are working from home.

Workers should be assured that any information will be treated confidentially and securely, to the extent possible and as required by law.

If through these conversations a worker discloses to you they are experiencing violence, or you suspect they may not be safe at work, you can contact 1800 RESPECT, the national counselling service for family and domestic violence for advice. The Our Watch website also has a workplace guide for responding to disclosures of violence.

If a worker or anyone at your workplace is in immediate danger, call 000.

What if my workers witness family and domestic violence?

 If your workers witness or see signs of family and domestic violence while undertaking work, you should contact 1800 RESPECT for advice.

Managing the risk of family and domestic violence in the workplace

Sometimes family and domestic violence will be a WHS issue. Family and domestic violence presents a work-related hazard if the perpetrator makes threats or carries out violence on a family member while they are at work, including if a worker's workplace is their home.

Workplaces can play an important role in preventing and responding to family violence by providing a safe and supportive working environment for all workers. You must:

- Communicate family and domestic violence as a workplace issue and develop workplace policies and procedures to address it. The Australian Human Rights Commission provides guidance on how you can do this. If you already have policies and procedures in place, they should be reviewed to ensure they are applicable in the current COVID-19 situation, particularly where workers are not in their usual workplace (such as working from home).
- Consult workers about work arrangements and managing risks to health and safety. Consider holding one-on-one discussions to ensure their needs, experiences and individual circumstances are considered and information is treated as sensitive and confidential.
- Assure workers of their right to confidentiality and support if they choose to disclose family and domestic violence.
- Communicate support which is available to workers, including Health and Safety Representatives and employee assistance programs.
- Provide all workers with education and training to raise their awareness of family and domestic violence, its potential effects in the workplace and how to manage risks.
- Communicate the availability of entitlements such as paid/unpaid family and domestic violence leave, flexible work arrangements and other entitlements which support workers experiencing family and domestic violence.
- Provide information about counselling, legal, health, financial and other family and domestic violence support services.
- Ensure workers supporting those who are experiencing family and domestic violence are aware of the support options available to them, including employee assistance programs.
- Provide a safe, secure and accessible reporting mechanism, including properly trained contact people within the workplace.

Ensure workers are safe at work (when the workplace is not a person's home)

- If possible, ensure the building or workplace is secure and entry is controlled, e.g. through swipe card or pin code access.
- Visitors should be clearly identified to avoid accidentally allowing a person known to use violence to enter the workplace.
- Where possible, separate workers from the public.
- Consider flexible working arrangements, such as adjustments to working hours or work locations.
- Ensure communication and duress alarm systems are in place, where needed.

- Consider contact information screening, e.g. email, phone numbers, devices, internet profile.
- Develop and put in place procedures for an emergency response to instances of family and domestic violence in the workplace, including when to involve police.
- Ensure those in the workplace have a safe, secure place to retreat to in the event of an incident.
- Change work email addresses or phone numbers if instances of family and domestic violence have occurred through electronic or telephone contact.

If a worker or people at your workplace are in immediate danger, call 000.

If an incident occurs at the workplace, you should:

- ensure that everyone is safe
- provide first aid or urgent medical attention where necessary
- provide support where required, including psychological support to the victim and other workers
- depending in the circumstances, you may need to report what happened to Police on 131 444.

You may also need to notify your state or territory WHS regulator if the incident is a 'notifiable incident' (see the Incident Notification fact sheet for more information).

Working from home

Workplaces can be a place of refuge for workers experiencing family and domestic violence and a crucial source of social and economic support.

The model WHS laws still apply if workers work somewhere other than their usual workplace, which includes working from home. Workers experiencing family and domestic violence may be placed at greater risk because of working from home arrangements.

When instigating working from home arrangements, you must consult your workers on all relevant risks and offer support to manage these risks. Encourage workers to discuss with you any specific or individual concerns they may have with respect to their health and safety, or the impact any proposed control measures may have on them. This is particularly important for workers experiencing family and domestic violence because they will know the most about their personal circumstances and may have important information that ought to be considered before work arrangements change.

If the worker has disclosed family and domestic violence, consider developing or adjusting their safety plan for working from home in consultation with their treating medical practitioner or health professional (if available). For more information on safety planning, contact 1800 Respect   .

What you can do to minimise risks at a worker's home will be different to what you can do at the usual workplace. You should:

- Maintain regular communication with workers. Avoid directly asking about the worker experiencing family and domestic violence about the violence as this may unintentionally place the worker at risk of serious harm. It is common for perpetrators of family and domestic violence to monitor their partner's communication including emails, text messages and phone calls. Offer general support and consider establishing a safety word or phrase to enquire about the worker's welfare and whether they require immediate help.
- Appoint a contact person in the business that workers can talk to about any concerns.
- Provide continued access to an employee assistance program or other support programs.

If working from home isn't a safe option for the worker, consider alternative arrangements that you can make to support them, for example working from an alternative location or allowing them to work from the office.

Family and domestic violence leave

Under national workplace laws, workers dealing with the impact of family and domestic violence can:

- take unpaid family and domestic violence leave
- request flexible working arrangements
- take paid or unpaid sick or carer's leave, in certain circumstances.

Some workplaces may also offer paid leave for workers experiencing family and domestic violence.

You can find information about supporting workers experiencing family and domestic violence in the Fair Work Ombudsman Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence   .

What about confidentiality?

It is important that workplaces develop supportive environments in which workers feel safe to discuss family and domestic violence issues.

To create an environment where workers feel confident to talk about their experience of family and domestic violence, you should be able to demonstrate that such information will be kept private and confidential. Confidentiality is important because workers may not be willing to talk about their experience without knowing it is confidential.

Any information about a worker's experience of family and domestic violence is sensitive and confidential. Workplaces should take all reasonable steps to ensure any information disclosed by workers regarding family and domestic violence is kept confidential and secure. Consider how you will sensitively treat personal information to protect a person's right to privacy (e.g. in the context of existing hazard and incident reporting systems). Disclosure should be on a need to know basis and only to maintain safety. Where possible, disclosure

should only occur with the express consent of the worker. If information is mishandled, it could have adverse consequences for the worker, including serious injury or harm. Discuss with your workers how this information will be handled.

Family and domestic violence in the workplace is a complex issue and you may wish to seek further advice from your employer organisation or a work health and safety and employment law professional.

Other resources

- Fair Work Ombudsman - Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence
- Australian Human Rights Commission – Domestic Violence Policy and Procedures
- 1800 RESPECT
- DV Work Aware
- Our Watch
- White Ribbon Australia
- Men's Referral Service
- Kids Helpline
- Queensland Government: Individual Risk Assessment and Safety Management Plan & Workplace Risk Management Guide for Domestic and Family Violence
- Privacy – Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

Gloves

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

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You can also go to our Public health directions and COVIDSafe plans page for links to enforceable government directions.

Businesses must only operate to the extent permissible in each state and territory. The information provided below outlines measures which cover all aspects of services offered by the industry – depending on what is permissible in your jurisdiction, some sections may not be currently relevant to your business.

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Practising physical distancing and maintaining good hygiene is the best defence against the spread of COVID-19 and will usually be a better control measure than wearing gloves.

While gloves (such as disposable or multi-use) should still be used for some practices (such as food handling, cleaning, gardening and trades), washing hands with soap and water is one of the best defences to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

You and your workers must wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as the active ingredient to minimise the spread of germs.

If gloves are not used appropriately, they can pose a risk of spreading germs, putting you, your workers and others at risk. When a person wears gloves, they may come into contact with germs which can then be transferred to other objects or their face. Gloves are not a substitute for frequent hand washing.

Gloves should be replaced regularly. Multi-use gloves should be washed and stored according to the manufacturer's instructions or workplace policy. Disposable gloves should not be re-used and multi-use gloves should not be shared between workers.

It is important that you keep up to date with recommendations and directions about the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory   , and ensure that these are followed at your workplace. This may include instruction about the wearing of gloves in specific circumstances.

Who should wear gloves to protect against COVID-19?

You should consider whether using gloves or washing of hands is the best measure for preventing the spread of germs in your workplace. This involves thinking about what workers will touch, how long the task will take, who workers may come into contact with and the practicality of using gloves for a task. It may be more practical to require workers to wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser than to wear gloves.

Importantly, not all gloves are appropriate for all tasks. A risk assessment with appropriate consultation must be conducted to help inform what gloves are appropriate for your workplace. See also our information on risk assessments and consultation.

It is important that you keep up to date with recommendations and directions about the wearing of PPE that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory   , and ensure that these are followed at your workplace. This may include instruction about the wearing of gloves in specific circumstances.

If you and your workers will be required to wear disposable gloves, be aware that wearing gloves may result in new WHS risks. For example, wearing disposable gloves could cause skin irritation, contact dermatitis or other sensitivities in some workers.

For some industries, gloves are used to protect against other (non-COVID-19) hazards. You should consider whether you need to review or modify this practice as a result of COVID-19 to ensure adequate hygiene is maintained. In all workplaces, workers must ensure they are complying with good hygiene practices, including hand washing.

If you are going to supply or use gloves in your workplace, make sure the gloves are suitable for the work of your business or undertaking. For example, gloves made of PVC, rubber, nitrile or neoprene are recommended for protection against exposure to 'biological hazards'.

Medical gloves form part of the PPE for those who work in health care and patients to protect them from the spread of infection. Medical gloves protect the wearer and the patient. Not all gloves are medical grade. Disposable, non-sterile gloves that are not medical grade are also available.

Medical gloves include:

- examination gloves (sterile and non-sterile)
- surgical gloves, and
- chemotherapy gloves.

Medical gloves can be made of latex, vinyl, synthetic polymer or nitrile. Use of medical grade gloves should be restricted to health care settings.

Information on wearing gloves in health care settings can be found at the Australian Government Department of Health   website.

Do I need to provide gloves?

Depending on your workplace (type of work, the workers and others who come into the workplace), gloves can be provided as PPE. However, gloves won't be necessary in many workplaces.

A risk assessment and appropriate consultation must be conducted to help inform what gloves, if any, are appropriate for your workplace.

It is also important that you keep up to date with recommendations and directions about the wearing of PPE that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory   , and ensure that these are followed at your workplace. This may include instruction about the wearing of gloves in specific circumstances.

If you are going to supply or use gloves, you should make sure the gloves are suitable for the work; not all gloves are appropriate for all work or workplaces. For example, medical gloves   are commonly made of natural rubber latex or other synthetic materials (e.g. nitrile) and are effective to protect against exposure to 'biological hazards'.

Be aware that wearing gloves may result in new WHS risks. For example, wearing disposable gloves could cause skin irritation, contact dermatitis or other sensitivities in some workers.

When providing gloves, workers must be trained in how to put on, use, remove and dispose of gloves. You must provide the appropriate facilities to use gloves properly including a hand washing area, with adequate soap, water and paper towels and a closed bin for disposal. See below for information about on how to put on and take off gloves, and how to dispose of gloves correctly.

Even if you or your workers wear gloves in your workplace, you should ensure that they have good hygiene practices including washing hands frequently.

See also our information on hygiene.

How to put on and take off gloves

If you or your workers wear gloves, either disposable or multi-use, you can follow the steps below to prevent the spread of germs:

1. Before starting (and after finishing a task), wash your hands with soap and water or if not available, with alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

- Wash your hands before touching a pair of gloves.
- When putting the gloves on try to only touch the top edge of the glove at the wrist.

2. During the task: maintain good hygiene by not touching your face and coughing or sneezing into your elbow. Monitor what you touch and replace your gloves frequently.

- Replace your gloves every time you would wash or sanitise your hands.

3. After completing the task, think about what you've touched and consider whether there is a risk of spreading the germs from your gloves if you start a new task. Your work tasks may not vary much but could involve touching different objects or attending to different customers or people. Consider whether using a new pair of disposable gloves, hand washing or using hand sanitiser is the best measure for the next task.

4. Taking off gloves:

- Carefully remove the first glove by gripping at the wrist edge without touching the skin and pull downwards away from the wrist, turning the glove inside out.
- With the ungloved hand, slide your fingers into the glove and peel the glove downwards away from the wrist, turning the glove inside out.
- If you are wearing disposable gloves dispose of them in a closed bin (refer below for information on disposal).
- If you are wearing multi-use gloves clean and store them according to the manufacturer's instructions or your workplace policy.
- Wash your hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds), or if not available, with alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

There is an infographic on putting and removing gloves on the Australian Government Department of Health website.

How to dispose of gloves

Unless contaminated, disposable gloves can be disposed of with the general waste, preferably a closed bin. A closed bin is a bin with a fitted lid.

Where the gloves are contaminated, they should be disposed of in a closed bin, preferably one that does not need to be touched to place contaminated gloves inside. A bin with a foot pedal or other hands-free mechanism to open the lid would be appropriate.

The bin for contaminated gloves should contain two bin liners to ensure the waste is double bagged. Double bagging minimises any exposure to the person disposing of the waste.

Gloves would be considered contaminated if:

- they have been worn by a symptomatic worker or visitor to the workplace, or
- they have been worn by a close contact of a confirmed COVID case, or
- the wearer has touched a potentially contaminated surface.

Where a closed bin is not available, the contaminated gloves should be placed in a sealed bag before disposal into the bin. The sealed bag and a single bin liner are considered equivalent to double bagging.

It is important to follow good hand hygiene   after removing and disposing of your gloves. Hands should be cleaned thoroughly with soap and water (for a minimum of 20 seconds) or hand sanitiser.

If you have a case of COVID-19 in the workplace, your state or territory health authority should provide you with advice on what you need to do in your workplace. Follow their instructions.

For information about the disposal of gloves in health care settings, you will need to refer to the Australian Government Department of Health   and state and territory health authorities   .

Health monitoring

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In consultation with your workers, you must put in place policies and procedures relating to COVID-19, including what workers must do if they are diagnosed or suspect they may have COVID-19.

You must monitor your workers for key symptoms of COVID-19. The most common symptoms   of COVID-19 are fever and cough.

Other symptoms include headache, sore throat, fatigue, shortness of breath, aches and pains, loss of smell, altered sense of taste, runny nose, chills and vomiting.

What do I need to monitor?

You must require workers to report to you as soon as possible, including if they are working from home:

- if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
- if they have been, or have potentially been, exposed to a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is suspected to have COVID-19 (even if the person who is suspected to have COVID-19 has not yet been tested), or
- if they have undertaken, or are planning to undertake, any travel.

Suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in the workplace

You must require workers to leave the workplace if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19. Follow the information in our Suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 at work infographic and see also our information on COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a worker has, or is suspected to have, COVID-19 you must allow them to continue to access available entitlements, including leave according to relevant workplace laws (e.g. Fair Work Act 2009 Cth) and the worker's relevant industrial instrument such as an enterprise agreement, award, contract of employment or associated workplace policy.

For information about workplace entitlements and obligations:

- go to the Fair Work Ombudsman webpage Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws
- call the Fair Work Ombudsman on 13 13 94 - select the prompt for the Coronavirus hotline

You must not allow workers who have been isolated after having been tested positive for COVID-19 to return to the workplace (that is not their home) until they are cleared of the virus and have received any necessary clearances from the state or territory health authorities.

Workers who have completed a specified quarantine period and who did not develop symptoms during quarantine do not need a medical clearance to return to work.

Can a worker work from home while they are in isolation?

Yes, if your worker is fit for work and this is consistent with advice from their treating clinician. Asymptomatic workers can work from home during the isolation period, with appropriate measures in place for household members, subject to the direction or advice of their treating clinician.

If your worker is unfit for work you must allow them to continue to access available entitlements, including leave according to relevant workplace laws (e.g. Fair Work Act 2009 Cth) and the worker's relevant industrial instrument. For information about workplace entitlements and obligations:

- go to the Fair Work Ombudsman webpage Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws
- call the Fair Work Ombudsman on 13 13 94 - select the prompt for the Coronavirus hotline

Can I conduct temperature checks on workers or others?

You may want to monitor the health of your workers through administering temperature checks, as a preventative measure in managing a COVID-19 outbreak in your workplace. There may be times where this is required or reasonable. For example,

- where workers live together in accommodation such as FIFO or agricultural workers
- in workplaces where vulnerable people are present, such as hospitals and aged care facilities, or
- if directed or recommended by a state or territory (e.g. under public health orders).

Some states and territories may issue directions for temperature checks to be conducted in specific industries based on the local situation. It is important that you keep up to date with recommendations and directions that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory   , and ensure that these are followed at your workplace.

It is important to understand that temperature checks alone will not tell you whether a person has COVID-19. It will only identify symptoms. It is possible that a person may be asymptomatic or be on medication that reduces their temperature. It is also possible that the person may have a temperature for another reason unrelated to COVID-19.

It is therefore essential that you should implement known controls, such as good hygiene measures, physical distancing (keeping everyone at the workplace at least 1.5 metres physically apart), workplace cleaning and personal protective equipment (PPE) rather than only relying on temperature checks. You should also require workers to tell you if they are feeling unwell, including if they have a fever, and require them to go home when they do.

Before administering temperature checks:

- seek the advice of your public health authority on the appropriate method of temperature checking, equipment, PPE and control measures required to ensure safe testing
- consult with your workers, and their health and safety representatives, and take their views into account
- provide instruction to all workers on the process for temperature checks, including emphasising the importance of maintaining the other control measures
- provide information, training, instruction and supervision, as well appropriate PPE for workers conducting temperature checks, and
- get advice on leave/stand down arrangements for employees who register high temperatures.

How do I know when a worker is cleared to return to the workplace after having COVID-19 or being subject to quarantine requirements?

Workers who have been isolated after having been tested positive for COVID-19 can return to their workplace (when not working from home) when they have fully recovered and have met the criteria for clearance from isolation. The criteria may vary depending on circumstances of the workplace and states and territories may

manage clearance from isolation differently. Clearance may need to be given by the state or territory public health authority or the person's treating clinician.

Workers who have completed a specified quarantine period (either after returning from travel or because of close contact with a confirmed case), and who did not develop symptoms during quarantine, do not need a medical clearance to return to the workplace. You should not ask these workers to be tested for COVID-19 in order to return to work. However, workers should closely follow the instructions provided by the state or territory public health authority, which in some cases may include being tested for COVID-19.

Drug and alcohol testing

Drug and alcohol testing is most commonly carried out in the transport, construction and mining industries, as part of a suite of controls to manage drug and alcohol risks in the workplace.

Drug and alcohol testing poses an additional risk of COVID-19 transmission and infection, and additional safety considerations are required.

Employers must ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out to identify and control the risks arising from drug and alcohol testing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Can I continue drug and alcohol testing during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The decision to continue drug and alcohol testing poses an additional risk of transmission and COVID-19 infection, and additional health and safety measures are required. When considering how to manage the risk of COVID-19, you must review and amend drug and alcohol related policies and procedures. This includes making the necessary changes to the testing methods, systems of work and control measures in place in your workplace, to ensure testing can be carried out safely and does not result in the transmission of COVID-19.

The three most commonly used testing methods are:

- Breath testing – tests an individual's breath for alcohol intoxication, delivering immediate results using either a handheld, portable device or a wall mounted unit. There is a good correlation between the level of alcohol in a person's breath and their blood alcohol level.
- Urine testing – tests an individual's urine for the metabolites of drugs and alcohol. Substances may be detected after consumption depending on the substance's elimination half-life.
- Saliva testing – the least invasive method to detect drugs and alcohol in an individual's saliva.

When considering how to manage the risk of COVID-19, you must review and amend drug and alcohol related policies and procedures. Testing workers for alcohol and illicit substances may assist in maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for some businesses, and it is required by law in some industries. However, you must

ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out to identify and control the risks arising from drug and alcohol testing.

If the risks of COVID-19 cannot be appropriately managed, alternative systems or approaches are needed.

You must also consult with your workers about how to manage the risk of COVID-19 and provide them with detailed information on how testing will be undertaken safely. If workers are represented by Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) you must include them in the consultation process.

How do I safely carry out drug and alcohol testing?

Undertaking workplace drug and alcohol testing poses risks to workers due to the potential for COVID-19 to be transmitted through the testing process. Additional safety considerations are therefore required to ensure testing does not result in the transmission of COVID-19. You must consider the testing methods, systems of work and control measures in place in your workplace, to ensure testing can be carried out safely. All testing arrangements must be designed to ensure physical distancing as much as possible and minimise face to face contact for example, through positioning workers when undertaking testing.

If a worker is unwell or displaying symptoms of COVID-19 they should not be tested while they are unwell. If a worker is feeling unwell, including if they have a fever, you should require them to go home.

You might want to consider getting expert advice about how to conduct drug and alcohol testing including testing methods and cleaning. For example, getting advice from the manufacturer of your testing equipment. If you use a third party to conduct your testing, you should talk to them about whether they are providing testing during the pandemic and what measures they have in place to provide safe testing.

For breath and saliva testing

To ensure testing is performed safely, employers must:

- consult with workers to identify risks, concerns and possible solutions
- carry out testing in a well-ventilated, open-air or outdoor environment
- provide all staff with suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensure it is worn correctly
- ensure all staff thoroughly wash their hands before and after each test is performed
- ensure that testing is carried out or supervised by a person who is appropriately trained in the fundamentals of infection control for COVID-19 including PPE (online COVID-19 infection control training is available on the Australian Government Department of Health website), and
- ensure that any changes to testing regimes align with the relevant Australian Standards and Department of Health guidelines.

Breath testing

Should breath testing be carried out:

- use appropriately calibrated testing equipment that:
  - incorporates a mechanism to prevent saliva/respiratory secretions/respiratory exhaust from being passed from one person to the next or from entering areas where cross contamination could occur, and
  - can be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after each use as per the manufacturer's instructions

- consider using a passive/fast mode of detection as a screening tool that provides a quick pass or fail reading, and
- use single use straws for testing, with a new straw for each test, and appropriately dispose of used straws.

Wall mounted breathalysing units

Wall mounted breathalysing units should only be used if the breath and saliva testing control measures can be applied. It is particularly important that adequate cleaning and disinfection occurs between each use to prevent transmission of COVID-19. You should also ensure the respiratory exhaust can be directed away from people and surfaces, which is not possible with all units. If there are any doubts, wall mounted breathalysing units should not be used. If possible, alternative testing methods should be implemented until the risks arising from using wall mounted breathalysing units have been eliminated.

Do I need to consult with my workers about workplace drug and alcohol testing?

You must consult with workers on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19. This includes any decisions about workplace drug and alcohol testing. If workers are represented by Health and safety representatives you must include them in the consultation process.

This is a stressful time for all Australians and workers may be concerned about the risk of COVID-19 transmission and the impact on their health. When consulting with your workers, you must provide them with the opportunity to express their views and raise concerns. You must take the views of your workers into account and advise them of the outcome of consultation.

If you decide to continue with drug and alcohol testing, you should clearly inform workers of the control measures being implemented that will allow testing to continue safely. You must provide this information as early as possible prior to continuing testing and ensure that this information can be easily understood by your workers.

For more information on the importance of consulting with your workers, see also the Consultation page.

Hygiene

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

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The main way COVID-19 spreads from person to person is through contact with respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets may fall directly onto the person's eyes, nose or mouth if they are in close contact with the infected person. Airborne transmission of COVID-19 can also occur, with the greatest risk in indoor, crowded and inadequately ventilated spaces. A person may also be infected if they touch a surface contaminated with the COVID-19 virus and then touch their mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands. Research shows that the COVID-19 virus can survive on some surfaces for prolonged periods of time.

A key way you can protect workers and others from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is by requiring workers and others to practice good hygiene. Below are measures to ensure good hygiene in your workplace.

Remember, you must consult with workers and health and safety representatives on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19, including what control measures to put in place in your workplace.

You must direct your workers, customer and others in the workplace to practice good hygiene while at the workplace. Good hygiene requires everyone to wash their hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and dry them completely, preferably with clean, single-use paper towels. If paper towels are unavailable, other methods such as electric hand dryers can be used, however, hands will still need to be dried completely.

Everyone must wash and dry their hands:

- before and after eating
- after coughing or sneezing
- after going to the toilet, and
- when changing tasks and after touching potentially contaminated surfaces.

When it is not possible to wash hands, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as the active ingredient must be used as per the manufacturer's instructions.

Good hygiene also requires everyone at the workplace to, at all times:

- cover their coughs and sneezes with their elbow or a clean tissue (and no spitting)
- avoid touching their face, eyes, nose and mouth
- dispose of tissues and cigarette butts hygienically, e.g. in closed bins
- wash and dry their hands completely before and after smoking a cigarette
- clean and disinfect shared equipment and plant after use
- wash body, hair (including facial hair) and clothes thoroughly every day, and
- have no intentional physical contact, for example, shaking hands and patting backs.

To enhance good hygiene outcomes:

- develop infection control policies in consultation with your workers. These policies should outline measures in place to prevent the spread of infectious diseases at the workplace. Communicate these policies to workers
- encourage contactless payment where possible
- train workers on the importance of washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and drying them correctly or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser, before entering and exiting a common area
- place posters near handwashing facilities showing how to correctly wash and dry hands (for example, if hand dryers are used, place posters advising that hands should be dried completely before finishing) and clean hands with sanitiser

- inform workers of workplace hygiene standards that are expected when utilising common areas (cleaning up after yourself, placing rubbish in bins provided, avoiding putting items such as phones on meal surfaces, etc.).

You should put processes in place to regularly monitor and review the implementation of hygiene measures to ensure they are being followed and remain effective.

You should also direct drivers to display signage and posters inside vehicles to encourage passengers to practice good hygiene before, during and after using taxi and ride share services.

- The Australian Government Department of Health has a range of posters and other resources   aimed at educating the public about COVID-19.
- Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria also has a poster for passengers travelling in commercial passenger vehicles   .

What do I need to consider when providing hygiene facilities?

You must ensure there are adequate and accessible facilities to achieve good hygiene   and that they are in good working order, are clean and are otherwise safe.

You may need to provide additional washing facilities, change rooms and dining facilities. You must also consider whether there are an adequate number of hand washing and drying stations, in convenient locations, to sustain the increase in workers practicing good hygiene. You may need to provide alcohol-based hand sanitiser in appropriate locations, such as entry and exits, if there are limited hand washing facilities available.

Washroom facilities must be properly stocked and have adequate supplies of toilet paper, soap, water, and drying facilities (preferably single-use paper towels). They must also be kept clean and in good working order.

When determining what facilities you need consider the number of workers on site, the shift arrangements and when access to these facilities is required. If you have temporarily down-sized worker numbers in response to COVID-19 and these will now be increased, you must take this into account to determine the facilities you need before workers return to work.

I am creating a new eating or common area. What do I need to consider?

If creating a new eating or common area to enable physical distancing, you must ensure these areas are accessible from the workplace and adequately equipped (e.g drinking water, rubbish bins), and protected from the elements, contaminants and hazards.

You should also consider opening windows or adjusting air-conditioning for more ventilation in common areas, and directing your drivers to do the same in their vehicles where possible. You and your drivers should also consider limiting or reducing recirculated air-conditioning where possible.

For further information on providing adequate and accessible facilities, including providing facilities for a temporary, mobile or remote workplace see the Model Code of Practice: Managing the work environment and facilities.

Why are paper towels preferred over hand dryers?

Paper towels are preferable as they can reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 by drying the hands more thoroughly than hand dryers.

Hand dryers can still be used, however, there is an increased risk of transmission if hands are not dried properly.

I am providing paper towels in my workplace. What else should I do?

Providing paper towels to dry your hands after washing them is better than using hand dryers because they can dry your hands more thoroughly.

If you provide single used paper towels at your workplace, remember:

- the paper towels should be replenished as required, and
- used paper towels should be disposed of in a waste bin that is regularly emptied to keep the area clean, tidy and safe.

Wastes (including used paper towels) should be double bagged and set aside in a safe place for at least 72 hours before disposal into general waste facilities. For further information regarding cleaning, please refer to our cleaning guide.

What if I can't provide paper towels?

If paper towels cannot be provided, then hand dryers may be used to dry hands. You must train workers on how to dry their hands. Placing posters near hand dryers may assist with communicating the need for hands to be dried completely. If hands are not dried completely, good hygiene will not be achieved, and the hand washing will be ineffective.

Frequently touched areas of the hand dryers (i.e. buttons to activate the drying mechanism of the hand dryer) and the entire body of the dryer should be cleaned regularly. Nearby surfaces (such as the sink and taps) should also be cleaned regularly to remove any germs that may have been spread when drying hands.

What should I be communicating to passengers, to manage the risk passengers might pose to my workers?

You should consider how you can communicate expectations that passengers using your taxi or ride share service will practice good hygiene, to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to your workers and to other passengers. You may be able to do this through messaging on your website, app or phone line, and signage or posters in vehicles.

The messaging should cover things like:

- Passengers should practice good hygiene before, during and after travelling in a taxi or ride share service vehicle, including:
    - covering coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue
    - taking used tissues after exiting the vehicle for hygienic disposal
    - using alcohol-based hand sanitisers
    - not using a taxi or ride share service if sick.

- Passengers who are unwell or travelling to a self-quarantine or self-isolation location should not use taxi or ride share services and should instead use a personal mode of transport where possible.
- If unwell passengers or passengers travelling to their location of mandatory self-isolation do need to use a taxi or ride share service, then the passenger should avoid contact with others including the driver to the extent possible. This includes:
    - wearing a surgical mask, if available
    - cover cough and sneeze with a tissue or cough/sneeze into elbow or upper arm, take used tissues after exiting the vehicle for hygienic disposal, and
    - use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser to regularly clean hands.

- If a passenger is not willing to meet these expectations, then the driver may choose to refuse or terminate the trip.

Masks

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Businesses must only operate to the extent permissible in each state and territory. The information provided below outlines measures which cover all aspects of services offered by the industry – depending on what is permissible in your jurisdiction, some sections may not be currently relevant to your business.

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The Australian Government Department of Health does not generally recommend the wearing of face masks by healthy people in the community. However, there may be occasions when it is recommended that the general public wear face masks where there is community transmission and physical distancing is difficult to maintain.

The main benefit of wearing a mask is to protect others. If the person wearing the mask is unknowingly infected, wearing a mask will reduce the chances of them passing the virus on to others.

Some states and territories have issued directions about wearing face masks in public and other specific settings. This is based on the local situation. It is important that you keep up to date with recommendations and directions that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory   , and ensure that these are followed at your workplace.

Face masks, in combination with other personal protective equipment, can be an effective control measure for workers when it is not possible to maintain physical distancing from symptomatic people (for example, health care and aged care). The type of face mask used will depend on the setting. For example, respirator face masks (P2 or N95) are usually only required for health care workers when carrying out clinical procedures that generate aerosols.

Wearing a face mask may also be appropriate in some non-health care settings or workplaces. For example:

- in the cleaning industry if a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is in the area to be cleaned (e.g. a hotel room), or
- where directed or recommended by a state or territory (e.g. under public health orders or in areas where there is community transmission).

Where face masks are provided at the workplace, workers must be trained in how to fit, use and dispose of them appropriately.

More information

For more information on face masks and their use in minimising the transmission of COVID-19 please refer to the infographic types and uses of face masks.

The Australian Government Department of Health has published information on when masks should be worn in the community in Australia   and general COVID-19 information on face masks and who should use them .

The Therapeutic Goods Administration has also published advice on surgical masks and gowns during COVID-19   .

See further information on the use of masks in the health care industry.

See further information on the use of masks for aged care providers.

What are surgical masks?

Surgical masks are loose-fitting, generally disposable masks that form a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and the immediate environment. Surgical masks do not achieve a close seal to the wearer's face, however are useful in limiting the spread of large particles/droplets from an infected person (such as cough or sneeze spray).

Single use surgical masks are designed for medical settings and are appropriate for most health care scenarios. Further information for health care workers about the use of face masks is available on the

Department of Health website   .

What are cloth masks?

A cloth mask is a nose and mouth covering made from a washable fabric such as cotton or denim. Cloth masks may be recommended for wearing by the general public where there is community transmission and where it is difficult to maintain physical distancing. It is recommended that cloth masks be properly constructed to ensure they provide adequate protection and are handled and washed appropriately.

The Australian Government Department of Health   and the Victorian Government   have issued guidance on cloth masks.

What are high particulate respirator (P2 or N95) masks?

P2 and N95 masks are designed to help reduce respiratory exposure to airborne contaminants. They are used when there is a high probability of transmission from particles or droplets in the air. P2 and N95 masks must have a good facial fit to be effective.

Workers must be trained in how to fit, use and dispose of P2 and N95 masks.

For COVID-19, P2/N95 masks should only be used in health care settings in certain circumstances. Further information for health care workers about the use of face masks is available on the Department of Health website   .

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand for P2 masks. This extra demand is leading to fake respiratory protective equipment entering the Australian market.

Read SafeWork NSW's safety alert   on key things to check to ensure that masks meet the required standards and what to do if you come across a mask that is not fit for purpose.

Do I need to provide masks to workers?

For most small businesses, there will be no need to provide face masks. The Australian Government Department of Health does not generally recommend the wearing of face masks by healthy people in the community. In many cases providing face masks as a measure against COVID-19 is only required for health care and other certain settings.

However, it may be recommended that the general public wear face masks where there is community transmission and it is difficult to maintain physical distancing. It is important that you keep up to date with the recommendations and directions that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory   , and ensure that these are followed at your workplace.

The Australian Government Department of Health has published information on when masks should be worn in the community in Australia   and general COVID-19 information on face masks and who should use them .

If you decide you want your workers to wear face masks, you must provide them. You must also provide appropriate training and instruction on how to put on, wear, remove and dispose of the mask. Fit checking is very important to ensure that the mask is effective. Information about using a mask is provided by the manufacturer.

If a worker has been provided training and instruction about using a mask, they must comply with that training and those instructions.

Single-use surgical masks or properly constructed cloth masks may be used. To ensure their effectiveness, surgical masks must be replaced frequently. Cloth masks must be regularly and thoroughly washed and dried. The Victorian Government has issued guidance on cloth masks   .

Can I direct a worker to wear a face mask?

You can direct a worker to wear a face mask if you, in consultation with those workers, decide it necessary to minimise the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

The Australian Government Department of Health does not generally recommend the wearing of face masks by health people in the community. However, there may be occasions when it is recommended that the general public wear face masks where there is community transmission and physical distancing is difficult to maintain. The main benefit of wearing a mask is to protect other people. If the person wearing the mask is unknowingly infected, wearing a mask will also reduce the chance of them passing the virus on to others.

It is important that you keep up to date with the recommendations and directions that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory   , and ensure that these are followed at your workplace.

Be aware that the inappropriate or incorrect use of face masks may increase the risk of COVID-19 and may result in new WHS risks. Workers required to wear a mask must be trained in how to wear, remove and dispose of masks, including performing good hand hygiene   (washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds) before fitting the mask and before and after taking it off. Masks also need to be replaced frequently and if multi-use stored correctly, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

You will need to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided if masks are used at the workplace. This includes appropriate hand washing facilities and a closed bin to dispose of used masks.

Single-use surgical masks may be a good option for most workplaces. However, properly constructed cloth masks may be considered if they are replaced frequently and appropriate laundering arrangements are in place.

Masks on their own will not control the COVID-19 virus. As with all other PPE, masks must be used in conjunction with other control measures such as good hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds) and physical distancing   – keeping everyone at the workplace at least 1.5 metres physically apart.

Can I direct a worker not to wear a mask?

The Australian Government Department of Health does not generally recommend the wearing of face masks by healthy people in the community. However, there may be occasions when it is recommended that the general public wear face masks where there is community transmission and physical distancing is difficult to maintain. The main benefit of wearing a mask is to protect other people if you are unwell, wearing a mask will reduce the chance of you passing the virus on to others.

It is important that you keep up to date with the recommendations and directions that apply nationally , and in your state or territory , and ensure that these are followed at your workplace.

Some workers may want to wear a mask even if you decide that it is an unnecessary control measure for your workplace.

This is a stressful time for all Australians and some workers may be wearing the mask because they feel unsure or anxious about their health. You should consult with workers on this issue and find out why they want to wear a mask at work. You should also inform workers of the control measures that have been implemented in the workplace to minimise the worker's exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

Whether you can direct an employee not to wear a mask will depend on whether the direction is permitted by the model WHS laws or is otherwise lawful and reasonable. This will need to be determined on a case by case basis depending on the circumstances.

However, if your worker is working on their own at home and using their own masks, it is unlikely the direction would be reasonable. Similarly, if the worker is a frontline health worker, you must not direct them not to wear an appropriate face masks.

The important thing is that you have actively considered whether a mask is an appropriate control measure in minimising exposure to the COVID-19 virus and have done so in consultation with workers, in accordance with any government advice, and in combination with other reasonably practicable, known control measures such as good hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds) and physical distancing – keeping everyone at the workplace at least 1.5 metres physically apart.

How do I put on, remove and dispose of a face mask?

If a face mask is going to be used at the workplace, you must provide workers with instruction and training on how to use them safely.

Instructions for effective use of a face mask will be provided by the manufacturer. You should always follow the instructions for use and storage of face masks. Disposable face masks should only be used once and then disposed of appropriately (refer 'How to dispose of a face mask' below). They should also be replaced if they become soiled or damp.

The manufacturer will provide details on how to put on and take off your face mask. If you do not have these, you can follow the instructions below. If workers are also wearing gloves, they will need to put their mask on before your gloves.

The Australian Government Department of Health   and the Victorian Government   have issued guidance on cloth masks, including instructions on removal and cleaning.

How to put on a face mask

1. Clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water (for a minimum of 20 seconds) or hand sanitiser before touching the mask or removing it from its packaging. Dry your hands and make sure you do not touch any surfaces (like opening a door) before you handle the mask.

2. Remove the mask from its packaging and make sure the mask has no obvious tears, holes or faults. Avoid touching the front of the mask.

3. Identify the top of the mask (generally it has a stiff bendable edge that will mould to the shape of your nose) and the front of the mask (normally a mask is coloured on the front) with the white side towards your face.

4. If your mask has ear loops, hold the mask by the ear loops and place a loop around each ear. If your mask has ties bring the mask to nose level and place the ties over the crown of your head and tie with a bow (leave the bottom set of ties at this time).

5. If your mask has a band, hold the mask in your hands with the nose piece or top of the mask at your fingertips, the headbands will hang loosely below your hands, then bring the mask to your nose level and pull the top strap over your head to rest on the crown of your head, then pull the bottom strap all the way over your head to rest at the nape of your neck.

6. Pinch the stiff nose piece to the shape of your nose.

7. If your face mask has ties take the bottom ties (one in each hand) and tie at the nape of your neck with a bow.

8. Adjust the bottom of the mask over your mouth and under your chin.

How to remove a face mask

1. Clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water (for a minimum of 20 seconds) or hand sanitiser before touching the mask. Dry your hands and avoid touching the front of the mask.

2. If you are wearing gloves you should remove your gloves and wash your hands before removing your mask. See our information on Gloves for how information on how to remove your gloves.

3. Only touch the ear loops, ties or bands.

4. If your mask has ear loops hold both of the ear loops and gently lift and pull the mask away from you and away from your face.

5. If your mask has ties untie the bottom bow first (at the nape of your neck), then untie the top bow and pull the mask away from your face as the ties are loosened.

6. If your mask has bands lift the bottom strap over your head first, then pull the top strap over your head and pull the mask away from you and away from your face.

7. Appropriately dispose of the face mask (refer below).

8. Clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water (for a minimum of 20 seconds) or hand sanitiser.

How to dispose of a face mask

Unless contaminated, masks can be disposed of with the general waste, preferably a closed bin. A closed bin is a bin with a fitted lid.

Where the mask is contaminated it should be disposed of in a closed bin, preferably one that does not need to be touched to place a contaminated mask inside. A bin with a foot pedal or other hands-free mechanism to open the lid would be appropriate.

The bin for contaminated masks should contain two bin liners to ensure the waste is double bagged. Double bagging minimises any exposure to the person disposing of the waste.

A mask would be considered contaminated if it:

- has been worn by a symptomatic worker or visitor to the workplace, or
- has been worn by a close contact of a confirmed COVID case, or
- is visibly soiled or damp.

Where a closed bin is not available, the contaminated mask should be placed in a sealed bag (e.g. a zip lock bag) before disposal into the bin. The sealed bag and a single bin liner are considered equivalent to double bagging.

It is important to follow good hand hygiene after removing and disposing of your mask.

If you have a case of COVID-19 in the workplace, your state or territory health authority should provide you with advice on what you need to do in your workplace. Follow their instructions.

For information about the disposal of masks in health care settings, you will need to refer to the Australian Government Department of Health   and state and territory health authorities   .

Can face masks that are past their shelf life date be used?

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) provides advice on surgical masks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

They recommend not using face masks that are past their shelf life. However, if there is low supply and high demand, masks can be used by if they are past their shelf life if:

- the ear loops, ties or bands are intact
- there are no signs of visible damage, and
- they can be fit tested.

Mental health

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

For more WHS information and resources for small business, go to the COVID-19 Small business hub.

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WHS laws apply to managing risks to psychological (mental) health too. This is a stressful time for all Australians, and you must do what you can to reduce the psychological risks to workers, including yourself, and others at your workplace.

Your duty is to eliminate or minimise the risk to psychological health and safety from work as much as you reasonably can. In simple terms, this means working out what causes your workers stress at work and finding ways to eliminate or prevent it.

Causes of stress at work

- Fear of exposure to coronavirus

- More work, changing work or poor work environments
- Customer violence and aggression
- Less support, especially when everyone is having to adapt to a new way of working
- Being isolated from managers, colleagues and support networks
- Poor workplace relationships, made worse by the stressful time for all Australians
- Poor communication and consultation about changes and workers' concerns.

For more detail see the COVID-19 Mental health information section for employers.

To determine what measures to put in place, you should carry out a risk assessment and consider all the risks to psychological health in your workplace. You must also consult your workers and their representatives. Workers often know what the issues are and have ideas about how to manage them.

Once you have consulted workers, determined appropriate measures and put them in place, continue to review how you are managing the risks to check your measures are working.

The Infographic: Four steps to preventing psychological injury at work shows how the risk management process can be applied to psychosocial risks.

More comprehensive information is available on the Mental health tab for employers. Detailed guidance is available in Safe Work Australia's Guide: Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties. See also our information on risk assessments.

This is an unprecedented time for all employers and workers. You may wish to seek professional advice on your WHS duties and how to meet them in your particular circumstances. The WHS regulator in your state or territory may also be able to provide further advice.

Support for small business owners

The Australian Government has established the My Business Health   website to help small business owners and sole traders, it includes mental health support.

The website Ahead for business   also provides help for small business owners and those that support them.

I feel very anxious and stressed what can I do?

This is a stressful time for many Australians, particularly small business owners. Consulting with your workers, or other small business owners, on risks to psychological health and safety and ways to manage them, may help you to address the things in the workplace that are causing you stress. Actively manage your stress by implementing self-care strategies, accessing support services and maintaining work-life balance.

The Australian Government has established the My Business Health   website to help small business owners and sole traders, it includes mental health support.

The website Ahead for business   also provides help for small business owners and those that support them.

My workers are worried about catching coronavirus. What should I do?

You should talk to your workers and understand more about their concerns. Once you understand their concerns, ensure you are doing all you reasonably can to eliminate and manage those concerns. See Safe Work Australia's Guide: Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties and also our information on managing the physical risks of COVID-19.

For some workers, being more informed about COVID-19 may help ease their concerns. Provide them with relevant information on COVID-19 and remind them of all the measures you are taking in the workplace to reduce possible exposure.

You should also remind them of all the services that are available to them for support, e.g. your employee assistance program and the Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service   . It might also be helpful for them to talk to their treating medical practitioners, such as their GP.

What can I do about customer aggression and the stress it's causing my workers?

See our information on Work-related violence.

My staff are working from home. How do I look after their mental health?

The duties under the model WHS laws apply to all workplaces, including where a worker is working from home. When you consider the risks to your workers' psychological health and the control measures you will implement to eliminate or minimise those hazards. You need to do this for all your workplaces, including home workplaces. The same things may lead to stress working from home as at the usual workplace, but the controls you put in place may need adjusting (e.g. you might replace a regular staff morning tea, with a weekly email update or videoconference to keep people connected). Where workers are working from home you should consider the tasks you have asked workers to perform from home and whether doing these in relative isolation could cause stress, and what you can do to minimise that stress.

Before you implement any control measures for working from home, you must consult your staff about how they are going, anything that is stressing them and what you can do to minimise that stress. For those working from home, it might be particularly helpful to consult individually, although that may not always be possible.

What is essential though, is that there is regular and meaningful communication with your staff, including by telephone and videoconference where you can. Make sure you frequently check in on how they are going and if anything has changed. You should also make sure they know who to talk to if they need additional support or

are feeling concerned.

See also our information on Working from home.

What should I do about bullying, harassment and strained relationships in the workplace?

Talk to your workers, identify whether there is anything in their work that is causing strain, for example competing business demands. If possible, address the cause of the strain before it damages working relationships.

If bullying, has occurred, follow your bullying policy or see the Guide to preventing and responding to workplace bullying.

You can manage the risk of workplace bullying by taking a proactive approach to identify early, any unreasonable behaviour and situations likely to increase the risk of workplace bullying occurring.

Organisations should implement control measures to manage these risks, and monitor and review the effectiveness of these measures. This could include activities such as:

- Regularly consulting with workers and health and safety representatives to find out if bullying is occurring or if there are factors likely to increase the risk of workplace bullying.
- Setting the standard of workplace behaviour, for example through a code of conduct or workplace bullying policy.
- Designing safe systems of work by clearly defining jobs and providing workers with the resources, information and training they need to carry out their work safely.
- Implementing workplace bullying reporting and response procedures.
- Developing productive and respectful workplace relationships through good management practices and effective communication.
- Providing information and training on workplace bullying policies and procedures, available support and assistance, and how to prevent and respond to workplace bullying.
- Prioritising measures that foster and protect the psychological health of employees.

Your WHS regulator can provide support and advice on how to manage the risks in your business.

In some circumstances, an order to prevent or stop a worker being bullied can be made under the *Fair Work Act 2009* by contacting the Fair Work Commission   .

The Australian Human Rights Commission   investigates and resolves complaints (under federal laws) of bullying based on a person's sex, disability, race or age. It can also investigate and resolve complaints of workplace bullying based on a person's criminal record, trade union activity, political opinion, religion or social origin.

There are a number of services available to people who are feeling depressed, stressed or anxious as a result of bullying behaviour. They include BeyondBlue and Lifeline .

Further information and support

A Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service , including information, online community forum and phone counselling service is being provided by Beyond Blue with funding from the Department of Health.

More information about work-related psychological health and safety and how to meet your duties can be found in the Safe Work Australia's Guide: Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties.

Visit the following sites for information on caring for mental health:

- SafeWork NSW – COVID-19 pandemic: mental health at work
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland – Work-related stress and Workplace psychological health considerations during COVID-19
- WorkSafe ACT – Work-Related Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19 and Healthier Work ACT – Responding to COVID-19
- SA Health – COVID-19 mental health support
- Northern Territory Government – Coronavirus (COVID-19) Self-care
- Comcare – Coronavirus: mental health and wellbeing guidance and resources
- VicHealth – How to look after your mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak

- Western Australian Mental Health Commission – Looking after your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Government of Western Australia, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety - COVID-19 coronavirus guidance for employers: Looking after employee mental health and COVID-19 coronavirus guide for employees: Looking after your mental health
- Tasmanian Government – Mental health support
- Head to Health – COVID-19 support
- Australian Psychological Society – Tips for coping with coronavirus anxiety
- Headspace – How to cope with stress related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Physical distancing

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

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Watch our video for information on physical distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your small business.
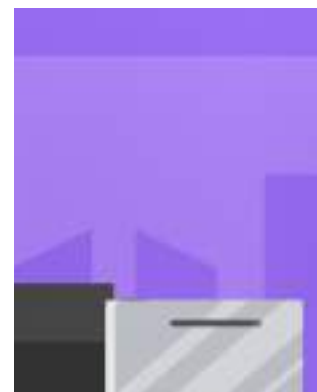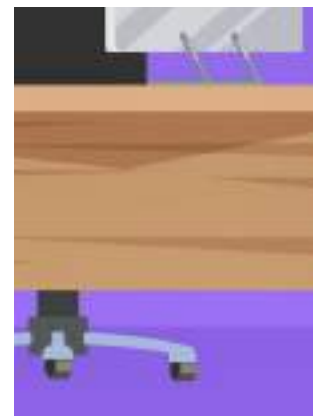
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What is physical distancing and how does it prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Physical distancing (also referred to as 'social distancing') refers to the requirement that people distance themselves from others.

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through contact with droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets may fall directly into the person's eyes, nose or mouth if they are in close contact with the infected person. A person may also be infected if they touch a surface contaminated with the droplets and then touch their mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands.

Current health advice states that in order to reduce the risk of contact and droplet spread from a person, directly or indirectly, and from contaminated surfaces, people should maintain physical distance of at least 1.5 metres, practice good hand hygiene and engage in routine cleaning and disinfection of surfaces.

Physical distancing can also include requirements for there to be 4 square metres of space per person in a room or enclosed space, as well as limits on gathering sizes. These requirements differ between industries and between states and territories. For example, some states and territories have updated public health directions to adjust physical distancing rules in line with local circumstances, such as revising the one person per 4 square metres rule to one person per 2 square metres in some circumstances.

For more information about physical distancing requirements applicable to your business, go to your relevant state and territory government website. You can also go to our Public health directions and COVIDSafe plans page for links to enforceable government directions.

Do I need to implement physical distancing measures in my workplace?

Yes. It is your duty under work health and safety laws to manage the risk of a person in your workplace spreading and contracting COVID-19, including the risk that persons with COVID-19 enter the workplace. Physical distancing is one of the key ways to lower the risk of COVID-19 being spread or contracted at your workplace.

The risk of COVID-19 should be treated in the same way as any other workplace hazard – by applying a risk management approach.

In consultation with your workers, including volunteers, and their representatives (e.g. health and safety representatives (HSRs)), you will need to assess the likelihood and degree of harm people may experience if exposed to COVID-19 and then implement the most effective control measures that are reasonably practicable to manage the risk. The control measures you implement should include outcomes that support physical distancing and operate alongside measures encouraging good hygiene amongst workers and others as well as regular and thorough cleaning of the workplace.

To meet your WHS duty you should be continually monitoring and reviewing the risks to the health and safety of workers and others, as well as the effectiveness of control measures put in place to eliminate or minimise these risks. You must also assess any new or changed risks arising from COVID-19, for example customer aggression, high work demand or working in isolation.

Further guidance on the risk management process is available in the Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks.

You may also need to comply with physical distancing measures issued under public health directions in your state or territory. Each state and territory has directions that reflect local circumstances. For more information about physical distancing requirements, go to your relevant state or territory government website   . You can also go to our public health directions and COVIDSafe plans page for links to government health directions.

How do the public health directions in my state or territory interact with my WHS duty?

You must comply with your state or territory's public health directions that apply to your business.

Your WHS duty is to do all that you reasonably can to manage the risks of a person contracting and/or spreading COVID-19 in your workplace. Depending on the circumstances, you may need to implement control measures in order to meet your WHS duty that go beyond the minimum requirements stated in public health directions or advised by public health authorities. For example, public health directions may state you can have up to 10 customers in your shop at any one time. However, in undertaking your risk assessment you may determine that due to the layout of the workplace and your work processes, having 10 customers in the store would not effectively support physical distancing outcomes. Instead, limiting your store to 8 customers at a time would ensure everyone can maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres from each other.

How do I determine which physical distancing measures to implement to minimise the risk of COVID 19 spreading in my workplace?

To determine which physical distancing measures will be most effective in your workplace, you will need to undertake a risk assessment.

A risk assessment is part of the risk management process which involves identifying where the risk arises in your workplace, assessing the risks (including the likelihood of them happening), controlling the risks and reviewing these controls regularly. These steps remain the same whether you are conducting a risk assessment in relation to work health and safety generally, or specifically in relation to COVID-19.

In order to determine the most effective physical distancing measures you will need to:

- identify all activities or situations where people in your workplace may be in close proximity to each other,
- assess the level of risk that people in these activities or situations may contract and/or spread COVID-19 in your workplace, and
- determine what control measures are reasonably practicable to implement based on the assessed level of risk.

Remember, you must consult with workers, including volunteers, and their representatives (e.g. health and safety representatives) on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19, including what control measures to put in place in your workplace. See also our information on consultation.

See also our information on key considerations for undertaking a risk assessment – COVID-19.

What physical distancing measures do I need to implement in my workplace?

Below are suggested measures to ensure physical distancing is achieved in your industry. Certain activities may not be permissible or there may be specific requirements in your state or territory at this time and therefore some of the proposed measures may not be relevant to your workplace. For more information about physical distancing requirements, go to your relevant state or territory government website   . You can also go to our public health directions and COVIDSafe plans page for links to government health directions.

Remember, you must do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the risk of people contracting and/or spreading COVID-19. See also our guidance on determining what is reasonably practicable for more information.

Also remember, you must consult with workers and their representatives (e.g. health and safety representatives (HSRs)) on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19, including what control measures to put in place in your workplace.

Drivers: while transporting passengers

- Drivers are responsible for making sure physical distancing is observed to the extent possible in their vehicles. Where possible, driver should ask passengers to:
    - sit in the back seat of the vehicle
    - handle their own luggage, and
    - use contactless payment – where cash payment is required, drivers should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds if possible, or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser, afterwards.

- Avoid handshakes or any other close physical contact with passengers.
- Set air conditioning to external airflow rather than to recirculation, or have windows open where appropriate.

See also our information on workers travelling together for work purposes.

At taxi stands and designated passenger pick-up points

- Place signage and floor markings at taxi stands and designated passenger pick-up points, to direct passengers to maintain physical distancing while queuing or standing in waiting areas.
- While waiting at taxi stands or designated passenger pick-up points, drivers should avoid physical contact and maintain more than 1.5 metres distance from other drivers when not in their vehicles.

Vehicle depots: Worker interactions and work tasks

- Where possible, provide each person with 4 square metres of space in enclosed areas in accordance with general health advice.
    - To achieve this, calculate the area of the enclosed space (length multiplied by width in metres) and divide by 4. This will provide you with the maximum number of people you should have in the space at any one time.
    - Where the nature of work means you are not able to provide 4 square metres of space per person, you need to implement other measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- To help you achieve 4 square metres of space per person (or where not reasonable, to achieve the maximum space per person) limit the number of workers in your workplace by:
    - facilitating working from home for office/administrative workers, where you can
    - reducing the number of tasks to be completed each day, where possible
    - postponing non-essential work, and
    - splitting workers' shifts to reduce the number of workers onsite at any given time. Schedule time between shifts so that there is no overlap of staff arriving at and leaving the workplace or have different entrances and exits to avoid interaction.

- Direct workers to keep 1.5 metres of distance between them in accordance with general health advice. To achieve the best outcomes for physical distancing:
    - implement measures in combination with measures for 4 square metres spacing, as set out above
    - put signs around the workplace and create wall or floor markings to identify 1.5 metres distance. Your staff could wear a badge as a visual reminder to themselves and each other of physical distancing requirements
    - limit physical interactions between workers, workers and clients, and workers and other persons at the site – e.g. by using contactless deliveries and limiting non-essential visitors, and
    - require workers to use other methods such as mobile phone or radio to communicate rather than face to face interaction.

- Where it is practical and safe to do so, review tasks and processes that usually require close interaction and identify ways to modify these to increase physical distancing between workers. Where not possible, reduce the amount of time workers spend in close contact. See also our information on what to do if your workers cannot maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres.

Layout of the depot

- You may need to redesign the layout of the depot where possible and your workflows to enable workers to keep at least 1.5 metres apart to continue performing their duties. This can be achieved by, where possible:
    - restricting workers and others to certain pathways or areas, and
    - spreading out furniture or plant to increase distancing.

- Consider floor and/or wall markings and signage to identify 1.5 metres distancing requirements.

If changing the physical layout of the depot, your layout must allow for workers to enter, exit and move about the workplace both under normal working conditions and in an emergency without risks to their health and safety so far as is reasonable practicable.

Staff gatherings and training

- Postpone or cancel non-essential gatherings, meetings or training.
- If gatherings, meetings or training are essential:
    - use non face-to-face options to conduct – e.g. electronic communication such as tele and video conferencing
    - if a non face-to-face option is not possible, ensure face-to-face time is limited, that is make sure the gathering, meeting or training goes for no longer than it needs to
    - hold the gathering, meeting or training it in spaces that enable workers to keep at least 1.5 metres apart and with 4 square metres of space per person – e.g. outdoors or in large conference rooms

- limit the number of attendees in a gathering, meeting or training. This may require, for example, multiple training sessions to be held, and
- ensure adequate ventilation if held indoors.

See also our information on training.

Depot facilities

- Reduce the number of workers utilising common areas at a given time – e.g by staggering meal breaks and start times.
- Spread out furniture in common areas. If changing the physical layout of the workplace, you must ensure the layout allows for workers to enter, exit and move about the workplace both under normal working conditions and in an emergency without risks to their health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable.

- Place signage about physical distancing around the workplace. Our website has links to a range of posters and resources to help remind workers and others of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread. These posters can be placed around the workplace and in client-facing work environments (e.g. workplace entrances). Consideration needs to be given to how to communicate with workers and others for who English is not their first language.
- Consider providing separate amenities, such as kitchens, bathrooms, for workers and others in the workplace – for example separate bathroom facilities for workers and visitors/clients.

Lifts

- Even if workers and others only spend a short amount of time in a lift each day, there is still a risk of exposure to COVID-19 that you must eliminate or minimise so far as reasonably practicable.
  - See our information on the meaning of reasonably practicable.

- There is no requirement to provide 4 square metres of space per person in lifts, however you must still ensure, as far as you reasonably can, that people maintain physical distancing in lifts and lift waiting areas.
- Remember, you must consult with workers and their representatives (e.g. health and safety representatives (HSRs)) on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19. This includes consulting workers and their representatives on what control measures to put in place to minimise their risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, including when using lifts.
- You must also consult with the building owner/manager and other employers in the building about the control measures to be implemented to address the risk of COVID-19. You may not be able to implement all of the control measures yourself but must work with others to ensure those measures are put in place.

What can I do to manage the risk of COVID-19 transmission in lifts?

- Safe use of lifts is best achieved through a combination of measures, determined in consultation with workers, including those that control the number of people needing to use a lift at any one time. This includes:
  - reducing the number of workers arriving and leaving buildings and using lifts in peak periods, where possible (e.g. stagger start and finish times for workers by 10-15 minutes per team or group)
  - maintaining working from home arrangements for some staff (where this works for both you and your workers). This could include splitting the workforce into teams with alternating days in the workplace (e.g rotate teams so they are one week in the office and the other week at home), and
  - changing lift programming to facilitate more efficient flow of users – e.g. decrease the time that doors stay open on each floor (where safe to do so) or where there are multiple lifts, assign specific lifts to certain floors based on demand (e.g. lift A to service floors 1-5, lift B to service floors 6-8 etc).

- Where workers and others use lifts it is still important that they physically distance themselves to the extent possible when waiting for a lift and when in the lift. You must do what you reasonably can to ensure crowding in and around lifts does not occur.
- In the lift lobby or waiting area:
  - ensure workers and others maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres, to the extent possible
  - implement measures at waiting areas for lifts, such as floor markings or queuing systems. Also create specific pathways and movement flows for those exiting the lifts where possible (you may need to consult with your building manager or other employers in the building to ensure this occurs). You could consider engaging someone to monitor compliance with physical distancing measures where appropriate
  - place signage around lift waiting areas reminding users to practice physical distancing and good hygiene while waiting for and using lifts, including to wait for another lift if the lift is full
  - display an advisory passenger limit for each lift – these limits could be temporarily adjusted up by one or two during peak periods where additional demand is unavoidable (subject to it not leading to overcrowding in lifts) to facilitate extra movement of workers and to prevent overcrowding in waiting areas. This may result in fewer persons travelling in a lift at any one time to ensure workers and others maximise physical distance from each other, to the extent possible

- Within lifts:
  - users of lifts must maintain physical distancing, to the extent possible. Lifts must not be overcrowded and users should avoid touching other users.
  - workers must practice good hygiene in lifts. If they do need to cough or sneeze during a journey they must do so into their arm or a clean tissue.
  - place signage in the lift reminding workers and others to practice good hygiene by washing their hands, or where this is not possible, using appropriate hand sanitiser, after exiting the lift, particularly if they touched lift buttons, rails or doors – see also our information on hygiene
  - implement regular cleaning of high touchpoints such as lift buttons and railings – see also our information on cleaning.

- Staff must not to come into work, including using lifts, if they are unwell.

New risks

- In some cases, depending on the design of a building, stairs may be an option to reduce demand on lifts. If workers and others are to use stairwells or emergency exits as an alternative to using lifts, you must identify and address any new risks that may arise. For example:
    - the increased risk of slips, trips and falls particularly if the stairs are narrow and dimly lit
    - the risk that arises when opening and closing heavy fire doors, and
    - the risk that a person may become trapped in the stairwell.

- You must also consider workers' compensation arrangements and whether your contract of tenancy allows for workers to use stairs, other than in an emergency.
- You must also consider how other existing WHS measures will be impacted if you allow workers and others to use stairwells or emergency exits. For example
    - does increased usage of emergency exits and stairwells impact your emergency plans and procedures? See also our information on emergency plans
    - will stairwell usage increase the risk of fire doors being left open?

Deliveries, contractors and visitors attending the depot

- Non-essential visits to the depot should be cancelled or postponed.
- Minimise the number of workers attending to deliveries and contractors as much as possible.
- Delivery drivers and other contractors who need to attend the workplace, to provide maintenance or repair services or perform other essential activities, should be given clear instructions of your requirements while they are on site.
- Ensure handwashing facilities, or if not possible, alcohol-based hand sanitiser, is readily available for workers after physically handling deliveries.
- Direct visiting delivery drivers and contractors to remain in vehicles and use contactless methods such as mobile phones to communicate with your workers wherever possible.
- Direct visiting delivery drivers and contractors to use alcohol-based hand sanitiser before handling products being delivered.
- Use, and ask delivery drivers and contractors to use, electronic paper work where possible, to minimise physical interaction. Where possible, set up alternatives to requiring signatures. For instance, see whether a confirmation email or a photo of the loaded or unloaded goods can be accepted as proof of delivery or collection (as applicable). If a pen or other utensil is required for signature you can ask that the pen or utensil is cleaned or sanitised before use. For pens, you may wish to use your own.

On-going review and monitoring

- If physical distancing measures introduce new health and safety risks (e.g. because they impact communication or mean that less people are doing a task), you need to manage those risks too.
- Put processes in place to regularly monitor and review the implementation of physical distancing measures to ensure they are being followed and remain effective

My workers cannot maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres when performing work. Does this mean they cannot perform work?

It will not always be possible for workers and others to keep 1.5 metres apart at all times at the workplace. For example, workers may have to work closely with each other or others because of the nature of the task and some tasks require workers to be in close proximity to be carried out safely, such as lifting and moving heavy objects.:

Working in close contact increases the risk of workers being exposed to COVID-19. You must consider whether the work task must be completed or could be rescheduled to a later date. If the task must be completed and your workers will be in close contact, you must undertake a risk assessment to determine what control measures are reasonably practicable in the circumstances to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks from COVID-19. For example, if close contact with others is unavoidable, you must implement other control measures such as:

- minimising the number of people within an area at any time. Limit access to the workplace or parts of the workplace to essential workers only
- staggering start, finish and break times where appropriate
- moving work tasks to different areas of the workplace or off-site if possible
- if possible, separating workers into dedicated teams and have them work the same shift or work in a particular area and consider whether these dedicated teams can have access to their own meal areas or break facilities, and
- ensuring each worker has their own equipment or tools.

Do I need to provide personal protective equipment to workers who are in close contact with each other?

You must ensure workers comply with physical distancing requirements where possible. In circumstances where the nature of the task requires workers to be in close contact, you must put control measures in place that minimise the time workers spend with each other or with other people in the workplace. You must also ensure workers are practicing good hygiene.

If you have a situation where, despite other control measures, workers will be in close contact with each other or with other people for longer than the recommended time (i.e more than 15 minutes face to face cumulative over the course of a week or more than 2 hours in a shared closed space), consider the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Workers must be trained in the proper use of PPE. Be aware of WHS risks that may arise as a result of workers using and wearing PPE. See also our information on PPE.

My workers need to travel in a vehicle (other than in their passenger vehicle) together for work purposes. How do they practice physical distancing?

You must reduce the number of workers travelling together in a vehicle for work purposes. You should ensure that only two people are in a 5 seat vehicle – the driver and a worker behind the front passenger seat. Only one worker should be in a single cab vehicle.

These measures may mean:

- more of your vehicles are on the road at one time
- more workers are driving and for longer periods than usual (if driving by themselves).

Because of this, you should review your procedures and policies for vehicle maintenance and driver safety to ensure they are effective and address all possible WHS risks that arise when workers drive for work purposes.

If workers are required to travel together for work purposes and the trip is longer than 15 minutes, air conditioning must be set to external airflow rather than to recirculation or windows should be opened for the duration of the trip.

You must also clean vehicles more frequently, no matter the length of the trip, but at least following each use by workers.

See also our information on cleaning.

Do workers need to practice physical distancing when on a lunch break or when travelling to and from work?

Yes. Workers must always comply with any state or territory public health directions or orders. This includes maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 metres between people.

In some states and territories there are strict limitations on gatherings in public places. This means that in some circumstances, workers cannot eat lunch together in a park or travel together in a vehicle to and from work.

You should refer to your state or territory health authority for further information on specific restrictions in place under public health directions or orders in your state or territory.

PPE

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

For more WHS information and resources for small business, go to the COVID-19 Small business hub.

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You can also go to our Public health directions and COVIDSafe plans page for links to enforceable government directions.

Businesses must only operate to the extent permissible in each state and territory. The information provided below outlines measures which cover all aspects of services offered by the industry – depending on what is permissible in your jurisdiction, some sections may not be currently relevant to your business.

Safe Work Australia does not regulate or enforce WHS laws or COVID-19 restrictions on business operations. If you want to know how WHS laws apply to you or need help with what to do at your workplace, contact the WHS regulator in your jurisdiction.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) refers to anything used or worn to minimise risk to worker health and safety. It can be used to supplement the other control measures you put in place at the workplace to protect against COVID-19 such as good hygiene measures, physical distancing, environmental cleaning and providing workers with information and training. You cannot only use PPE to protect workers against the risk of COVID-19.

Common PPE that can be used to protect against COVID-19 include:

- masks
- gloves
- eye protection, and

■ screens.

The type of PPE you should provide will depend on your workplace, the outcome of consultation and your risk assessment.

The use of some types of masks, gowns and disposable suits is restricted to health care settings. It is not recommended that these types of PPE are used outside of health care to protect against COVID-19. More information about using these PPE in health care can be found on the Australian Government Department of Health   website.

Some states and territories have issued directions about wearing face masks in public and other specific settings. This is based on the local situation. It is important that you keep up to date with recommendations and directions about the wearing of PPE that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory, and ensure that these are followed at your workplace.

Eye protection

Eye protection, in the form of safety glasses, goggles or a face shield, can be used as PPE for protecting against the risks of COVID-19.

Eye protection can assist to act as a physical barrier from droplet spray and prevent unintentional rubbing of eyes between hand washing. Eye protection may be necessary for workers who are in close proximity to droplet spray, for example health workers, police, corrections and security work. However, for many workplaces, eye protection will not be a required control measure.

Good hygiene practices should be followed if eye protection is used.

More information about using eye protection in health care settings can be found on the Australian Government Department of Health   website.

Do I need to provide PPE?

You must provide workers with PPE, and information and training on how and why they are required to use it. Depending on your workplace (type of work, the workers and others who come into the workplace), PPE can include gloves, eye protection and face masks. For many workplaces, PPE will not be required.

PPE used at a workplace must be:

■ selected to minimise risk to work health and safety
■ suitable for the nature of the work and any hazard associated with the work
■ a suitable size and fit and reasonably comfortable for the person wearing it.

Some states and territories have issued directions about wearing face masks in public and other specific settings. This is based on the local situation. It is important that you keep up to date with recommendations and directions about the wearing of PPE that apply nationally   , and in your state or territory, and ensure that these are followed at your workplace.

PPE alone will not protect workers. You must implement a range of control measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, including good hygiene measures, physical distancing (keeping everyone at the workplace at least 1.5 metres physically apart), cleaning and disinfecting and providing workers with information and training.

For further information about PPE including additional employer obligations, go to the personal protective equipment webpage.

Do I need to talk to my workers about PPE?

Yes. You must consult with your workers about the possible control measures you will put in place in response to the risk of COVID-19, including PPE. Following consultation, if you choose to provide workers with PPE, you must provide them with appropriate relevant information, instruction and training on its use. This includes how to wear use the PPE safely and correctly, how to store items safely, how to dispose of single-use items and how to clean re-usable items.

You should refer to the manufacturer's instructions provided with the PPE for correct use, storage, maintenance and when to replace PPE.

Information on how to dispose of PPE can be found below. Information on cleaning reusable PPE can be found in our cleaning guide.

For more information on consulting with your workers, see our consultation information.

The model Code of Practice: Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination also has more information about your duty to consult.

How do I dispose of PPE?

Unless contaminated, disposable PPE can be disposed of with the general waste, preferably a closed bin. A closed bin is a bin with a fitted lid.

Where the PPE is contaminated it should be disposed of in a closed bin, preferably one that does not need to be touched to place contaminated PPE inside. A bin with a foot pedal or other hands-free mechanism to open the lid would be appropriate.

The bin for contaminated PPE should contain two bin liners to ensure the waste is double bagged. Double bagging minimises any exposure to the person disposing of the waste.

PPE would be considered contaminated if:

- it has been worn by a symptomatic worker or visitor to the workplace
- it has been worn by a close contact of a confirmed COVID case
- the PPE has been in contact with a potentially contaminated surface, or
- it is visibly soiled or damp (e.g. face masks).

Where a closed bin is not available, the contaminated PPE should be placed in a sealed bag before disposal into the bin. The sealed bag and a single bin liner are considered equivalent to double bagging.

It is important to follow good hand hygiene after removing and disposing of your PPE. Hands should be cleaned thoroughly with soap and water (for a minimum of 20 seconds) or hand sanitiser.

If you have a case of COVID-19 in the workplace, your state or territory health authority should provide you with advice on what you need to do in your workplace. Follow their instructions.

For information about the disposal of PPE in health care settings, you will need to refer to the Australian Government Department of Health and state and territory health authorities .

Do I need to install screens in the workplace?

Perspex screens (also known as sneeze guards) can be considered at workplaces where workers are in close proximity to each other for long periods. For example, a perspex screen could be considered where two workers work side by side or back to back for a shift.

The current Australian Government advice is that it is not necessary to install a screen between workers and the public (customers) as the interaction time between them is shorter. However, many businesses have chosen to protect workers by installing these screens including retail stores, pharmacies and doctor's surgeries.

Perspex screens come in many different sizes and shapes and can be custom made for the workplace. Generally, they have a space cut out to allow for exchange between the worker and a member of the public or a patient with the screen covering the upper half of the body and head.

If you choose to install a perspex screen you need to ensure that the screen is fit for purpose and protects workers from droplet spray. Completing a risk assessment will assist you in deciding what type of screen is best for your workplace. The screen must allow the worker to safely work and protect their face from exposure to droplet spray. Be aware that installing a perspex screen may result in other WHS risks that you will need to consider.

You must consult with workers about installing perspex screens and must provide appropriate training and instruction to workers who will use them, if you decide to install them.

Perspex screens should be cleaned in the same manner as other frequently handled objects or surfaces.

Our cleaning guide provides more information on cleaning and disinfecting, including for specific surfaces.

Resources and support

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Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

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Businesses must only operate to the extent permissible in each state and territory. The information provided below outlines measures which cover all aspects of services offered by the industry – depending on what is permissible in your jurisdiction, some sections may not be currently relevant to your business.

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Australia.gov.au   has the latest information from the Australian Government.

Business.gov.au   provides general COVID-19 information and support for businesses.

Support for sole traders   provides information on assistance sole traders affected by the coronavirus may be eligible for.

My Business Health   provides help to small business owners and sole traders, including mental health support.

Ahead for business   provides help for small business owners and those that support them.

Australian Taxation Office   support for businesses and employers, including information on JobKeeper payment, boosting cash flow, backing business investment.

Wage subsidy for apprentices and trainees   has information and registration for the Australian Government's small business wage subsidy to retain apprentices and trainees.

Loan repayment deferrals   has information about deferral of loan repayments for small businesses affected by COVID-19.

Coronavirus SME Guarantee Scheme   has information on the Government's guarantee scheme.

Download the Australian Government Coronavirus app (Apple App Store   , Google Play   ).

Fair Work Ombudsman

- Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws
- Directing employees in the JobKeeper scheme to perform work
- Agreements about changing an employee's work days and times under the JobKeeper scheme

Other useful resources

- Australian Government Treasury – Support for businesses
- Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman
- Department of Home Affairs - Information for visa holders
- World Health Organisation – COVID-19 - Occupational health
- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment: Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice
- Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA)
- Australian Council of Trade Unions - Coronavirus updates
- Australia Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Ai Group - COVID-19 resources
- Smartraveller
- Stay Smart Online
- Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)

Mental health support services

- Head to Health
- Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service
- Family and mental health support — Department of Social Services
- Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman

- HeadsUp – Healthy Workplaces Support
- Lifeline

WHS regulator and workers' compensation authority contacts

- WHS regulators
- Workers' compensation authorities

General state and territory COVID-19 information

- New South Wales
- Victoria
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Western Australia
- Tasmania
- Northern Territory
- Australian Capital Territory

Industry resources

- Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria Fact Sheet – Vehicle cleaning tips for drivers
- Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria poster for passengers travelling in commercial passenger vehicles

- Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria – Coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQs for CPV passengers and drivers

- NSW Point to Point Transport Commissioner video – How to clean your point to point vehicle
- NSW Point to Point Transport Commissioner fact sheet – Coronavirus (COVID-19) fact sheet for the point to point transport industry
- Australia Government Department of Health fact sheet – Information for public transport (taxis, ride-hail services, trains, buses, trams etc)

Risk assessment

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

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Watch our video for information on assessing and managing risks from COVID-19 in your small business.

0:00 / 1:01

| Watch on YouTube | Download Transcript |

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Risk management is a proactive process that helps you respond to change and facilitate continuous improvement in your business. It should be planned, systematic and cover all reasonably foreseeable hazards and associated risks.

A risk assessment involves considering what could happen if someone is exposed to a hazard (for example, COVID-19) and the likelihood of it happening. A risk assessment can help you to determine:

- how severe a risk is
- whether any existing control measures are effective
- what action you should take to control the risk, and
- how urgently the action needs to be taken.

The exposure of your workers and/or customers/clients to COVID-19 is a foreseeable risk that must be assessed and managed in the context of your operating environment.

A risk assessment will assist to:

- identify which workers are at risk of exposure
- determine what sources and processes are causing the risk
- identify if and what kind of control measures should be implemented, and
- check the effectiveness of existing control measures.

A risk assessment can be undertaken with varying degrees of detail depending on the type of hazard and the information, data and resources that you have available. It can be as simple as a discussion with your workers or involve specific risk analysis tools and techniques developed for specific risks or recommended by safety professionals. For some complex situations, expert or specialist advice may be useful when conducting a risk assessment.

When should I do a risk assessment?

Managing work health and safety risks is an ongoing process that needs attention over time, but particularly when any changes affect your work activities.

All currently operating businesses must assess the risks associated with exposure to COVID-19 and implement control measures to manage those risks. They must also assess any other new or changed risks arising from COVID-19, for example, customer aggression, high work demand or working in isolation.

You must also undertake a risk assessment with response to risks to any vulnerable workers working in your business. Risk needs to be assessed and mitigated with consideration of the characteristics of the worker, the workplace and the work. This includes ensuring vulnerable people are redeployed to roles that don't involve physical contact with customers, where possible. Where risk cannot be appropriately mitigated, employers and workers should consider alternate arrangements to accommodate a workplace absence. For more, go the Vulnerable workers information.

Other examples of when businesses must undertake a risk assessment with respect to COVID-19, include where a business:

- changes work practices, procedures or the work environment
- recommences operations following a shut down
- increases operations following a period of reduced operations
- introduces workers back into the workplace following the cessation of working from home or stand-down arrangements
- is responding to workplace incidents (e.g. where a worker has tested positive to COVID-19)
- is responding to concerns raised by workers, health and safety representatives, or others at the workplace

Risk assessments should be reviewed periodically as the operating environment changes (for example, in response to changes in COVID-19 cases or changes to public health orders) or when new information on workplace risks becomes available. This should include the periodic review of control measures implemented to ensure their ongoing appropriateness and effectiveness based on the latest information.

How do I do a risk assessment?

The model Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks provides practical guidance about how to manage WHS risks through a risk assessment process. See also our information on key considerations for businesses to take into account when assessing the risks associated with COVID-19, as well as an example risk register.

A safe and healthy workplace does not happen by chance or guesswork. You have to think about what could go wrong at your workplace and what the consequences could be. Then you must do whatever you can (in other words, whatever is 'reasonably practicable') to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks arising from your business or undertaking.

This process is known as risk management and involves the four steps (see Figure 1 below):

- Identify hazards—find out what could cause harm.
- Assess risks, if necessary—understand the nature of the harm that could be caused by the hazard, how serious the harm could be and the likelihood of it happening. This step may not be necessary if you are dealing with a known risk with known controls.
- Control risks – implement the most effective control measure that is reasonably practicable in the circumstances and ensure it remains effective over time.
- Review hazards and control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

This process will be implemented in different ways depending on the size and nature of your business. Larger businesses and those in sectors where workers are exposed to more or higher risks are likely to need more complex, sophisticated risk management processes.

Consultation with workers and their health and safety representatives is required at each step of the risk management process. By drawing on the experience, knowledge and ideas of your workers, you are more likely to identify all hazards and choose effective control measures.

▲Figure 1. The risk management process

Where do I go to find information about risks and control measures?

General risks - Safe Work Australia's website has information on known risks for some industries and activities. Your industry association, jurisdictional WHS regulator and health department are also good sources of information.

Business specific risks - You and your workers know your business better than anyone. Working in consultation with your workers you can identify risks specific to your business and ways these can be addressed. If you need help with this you can call your WHS regulator for advice. For example, the Italian deli owner who knows they have a queue for their specialty bread every Saturday morning could allow customers to call ahead and have a loaf put aside for them to avoid the early morning queue.

The unexpected - Some risks you might not be able to predict but you can pick them up by monitoring the work environment and checking in with your workers. For example, the local café offering home delivery during COVID-19 might suddenly find the demand is much higher than before but keeping up with this demand gives the chef a sore back. The café in consultation with their staff might put in anti-fatigue mats or re-task staff who used to wait tables to assist the chef.

How do I know what is 'reasonably practicable'?

Deciding what is reasonably practicable to protect workers or other persons from harm requires taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters, including (but not limited to):

- Likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring – the greater the likelihood of a risk occurring, the greater the significance of this factor when weighing up all matters and determining what is reasonably practicable
- Degree of harm that might result from the hazard or risk – the greater the degree of harm that might result from the hazard, the more significant this factor will be when weighing up all matters to determine what is reasonably practicable. Where the degree of harm that might result from the risk or hazard is high, a control measure may be reasonably practicable even if the likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring is low.
- Knowledge about the hazard or risk, and ways of minimising or eliminating the risk – this must take into account what the duty holder actually knows and what a reasonable person in the duty holder's position would reasonably be expected to know
- Availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk – requires consideration of what is available and suitable for the elimination or minimisation of risk, and
- Costs associated with the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk - after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, consideration can be given to whether the cost of implementing a control measure is grossly disproportionate to the risk.

The highest level of protection that is reasonably practicable in the circumstances should be provided to eliminate or minimise the hazard or risk.

See also our Guide: How to determine what is reasonably practicable to meet a health and safety duty and the model Code of Practice: Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination.

What do the 'costs' associated with eliminating or minimising a risk include?

The costs of implementing a particular control measure may include (but are not limited to) matters such as:

- costs of purchase, installation, maintenance and operation of the control measure
- any impact on productivity as a result of the introduction of the control measure, such as reductions in output and or increases in work hours.

When considering costs you should also take account of any savings that may result from reductions in incidents, injuries, illnesses and staff turnover, as well as improvements in staff productivity.

How do I determine whether the costs of eliminating or minimising a particular risk are 'reasonably practicable'?

To determine whether expenditure to eliminate or minimise a risk is 'reasonably practicable' in the circumstances, you must consider:

- the likelihood and degree of harm of the hazard or risk,
- the reduction in the likelihood and/or degree of harm that will result if the control measure is adopted, and
- the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk.

The more likely the hazard or risk, or the greater the harm that may result from it, the less weight should be given to the costs of eliminating the hazard or risk.

Where there are several options for eliminating or minimising a risk and they would achieve the same level or reduction in the likelihood or degree of harm, a duty holder may choose to apply one or more of the less costly options. However, choosing a low-cost option that provides less protection, simply because it is cheaper, is unlikely to be considered 'reasonably practicable'.

Importantly, the question of what is reasonably practicable in a particular circumstance is determined objectively, not by reference to your capacity to pay or other individual circumstances.

If you cannot afford to implement a control measure that, based on the risk assessment and weighing up of the factors listed above, is necessary to eliminate or minimise the risk, you should not engage in the activity that gives rise to that risk.

How do I know if the costs of eliminating or minimising a risk are 'grossly disproportionate'?

To determine whether the costs of eliminating or minimising a risk are 'grossly disproportionate' you must balance the likelihood of the risk occurring and degree of harm that might result, with the cost of the control measure.

It may not be necessary to implement costly control measures to eliminate or minimise a risk that has a low likelihood of occurring and would cause minor harm. However, it may be reasonable to apply less expensive controls to further lower the likelihood of the risk.

What do I do if I find the costs associated with eliminating or minimising a risk are 'grossly disproportionate'?

Where the cost of implementing control measures is grossly disproportionate to the risk, implementation may not be reasonably practicable and is therefore not required. The duty holder must then use a less expensive way to minimise the likelihood or degree of harm.

Resources

- Checklist – Key considerations when undertaking a COVID-19 risk assessment
- Template and Example COVID-19 risk register

- Workplace checklist - What can I do to keep my workers safe at the workplace and limit the spread of COVID-19?

Training

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

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The model WHS laws include requirements for workers to complete specified training and assessment before they can undertake certain work or roles, including:

- First aid training
- Health and Safety Representative (HSR) training
- Construction Induction training (i.e. White Card)
- High Risk Work training and assessment
- Asbestos Assessment or Removal training, and
- WHS entry Permit Holder training.

The COVID-19 pandemic is significantly impacting the ability of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to deliver face-to-face training. Although WHS laws do not specify how training must be delivered, in practice, most WHS regulators require training be delivered 'face-to-face'.

To address training impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, WHS regulators have agreed national guidance on WHS training and assessment, including delivery methods.

Changes in training delivery methods have been agreed for First Aid training, HSR training and Construction Induction (White Card) training.

No changes have been made to High Risk Work training and assessment, Asbestos Assessment or Removal training and WHS Entry Permit Holder training. Training and assessment must still be completed face-to-face, acknowledging this may not be possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How can training be delivered?

Changes in training delivery methods have been agreed for First Aid training, HSR training and Construction Induction (White Card) training.

First aid training

No compliance action will be taken by WHS regulators in relation to the first aid training requirements in regulation 42 of the model WHS Regulations where first aid training is not available because of COVID-19.

The Australian Industry Skills Council has also released guidance on the delivery of first aid training   .

Health and Safety Representative (HSR) training

HSR training may be delivered via Connected real-time delivery.

Construction Induction (White Card) training

White Card training may be delivered via Connected real-time delivery. Tasmania will continue to allow online delivery of White Card training. In Western Australia (WA), Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are required to deliver White Card training consistent with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015 (Standards). During the COVID-19 pandemic, provided RTOs deliver White Card training to candidates located in WA in accordance with the Standards, there is no need to apply to WorkSafe WA in relation to connected real-time delivery.

RTOs may be required to apply for and obtain WHS regulator approval to deliver training via the connected real-time delivery method. Guidance for RTO proposals for connected real-time delivery can be found in fact sheet General Construction Induction (White card) Training – Guidance for RTO proposals for connected real-time delivery.

What is "connected real-time delivery"?

- Live video streaming/conferencing using platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Teams
- Involves real-time interaction between learner and trainer
- Provides for active participation of learners and trainers
- Verification of learner Evidence of Identity (EOI) can be done one-on-one (or face to face) via video conference
- Direct observation or verbal assessment can be undertaken for all assessment components.

Are there limitations on delivery of connected real-time training?

Training must involve real-time interactions between the learner and trainer and must include one-on-one (or face-to-face) training and assessment interaction. The training must not:

- be delivered entirely via an online learning management system through portals
- include a pre-training requirement
- include self-paced learning
- include pre-recorded trainer videos or teaching course content including educational videos showing workplaces (e.g. construction sites).

What about delivery methods for the remaining training and assessment?

There will be no change to the delivery method for the following:

- High Risk Work training and assessment,
- Asbestos assessment or removal training, and
- WHS entry permit holder training.

Training and assessment for these courses must be completed face-to-face, which may not be possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Will all WHS regulators follow the agreed positions on training delivery methods?

The Commonwealth, state and territory WHS regulators are responsible for enforcing compliance with WHS training and assessment in their own jurisdiction.

Although national positions on the delivery of WHS training have been reached, some minor administrative variations may still exist between WHS regulators. You should contact your WHS regulator if you have any questions regarding the delivery of WHS training and assessment. If your business operates in more than one jurisdiction, you may need to contact more than one WHS regulator.

Find contact details for the WHS regulators.

Is it possible agreed training delivery methods may be revisited or change?

Yes. WHS regulators will continue to consult and adapt to changing circumstances based on Government directives and Health advice.

Vulnerable workers

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

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Some people are at greater risk of more serious illness with COVID-19:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 65 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 70 years and older, and
- People with compromised immune systems

These categories may increase or vary depending on the latest evidence. See the Department of Health website for further information   .

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee advice is that there is limited evidence at this time regarding the risk in pregnant women and so, at present, pregnant women are not included on the vulnerable workers list.

What to do

You should follow the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee for vulnerable people in the workplace   .

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee advises that:

- Where vulnerable workers undertake essential work, a risk assessment must be undertaken. Risk needs to be assessed and mitigated with consideration of the characteristics of the worker, the workplace and the work. This includes ensuring vulnerable people are redeployed to non-customer-based roles where possible. Where risk cannot be appropriately mitigated, employers and workers should consider alternate arrangements to accommodate a workplace absence.

One of my workers is a vulnerable person, how do I conduct a risk assessment?

When conducting a risk assessment for a worker that is a vulnerable person for the risk of exposure to COVID-19 you must consider:

- the characteristics of the worker,
- features of the workplace and
- the nature of the work.

Remember to keep all information about a worker's medical conditions confidential.

For further assistance on how to conduct a risk assessment, refer to the model Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks, which provides practical guidance about how to manage WHS risks through a risk assessment process. See also our guidance relating to COVID-19:

- Guidance on COVID-19 Risk Assessments,
- Guidance on key considerations for businesses to take into account when assessing the risks associated with COVID-19, and
- the example risk register.

How do I know what is 'reasonably practicable' to manage the risk of a vulnerable person contracting COVID-19?

Deciding what is reasonably practicable to protect workers or other persons from harm requires taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters, including the degree of harm that is likely to occur if the risk of contracting COVID-19 eventuates.

If a vulnerable person contracts COVID-19, it can result in serious illness or death, which means the degree of harm that might result from the risk or hazard is very high. You must consider all available control measures to limit exposure to vulnerable people, even if the likelihood of them contracting COVID-19 may be low. This includes whether they can work from home in their usual or other role.

See the model Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks for guidance on how to undertake a risk assessment and our guidance on COVID-19 Risk Assessments.

Can I just require that my vulnerable workers take leave during the COVID-19 pandemic?

No. You must first try to identify and manage risks to your worker's health and safety at the workplace, including considering whether the nature of their job or the workplace increases their risk of exposure to the virus. You may need to explore options for the worker to work from home or arrange for them to move temporarily into a different role. For further assistance, see the model Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks and our guidance on COVID-19 Risk Assessments.

If the risks to your worker's health and safety at the workplace cannot be effectively managed, then you must consult with them about alternate arrangements such as taking leave.

Your worker can continue to access all available entitlements, including leave, under the relevant enterprise agreement, award, contracts of employment and any workplace policies. If you are unsure of your obligations regarding worker entitlements, you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman   .

Work-related violence

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

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Small business must ensure workers and others are not exposed to risks to their health and safety, including from work-related violence and aggression.

Work-related violence and aggression may include:

- physical assault such as biting, scratching, hitting, kicking, pushing, grabbing, throwing objects
- intentionally coughing or spitting on someone
- sexual assault or any other form of indecent physical contact, and
- harassment or aggressive behaviour that creates a fear of violence, such as stalking, verbal threats and abuse, yelling and swearing and can be in person, by phone, email or online.

Violence and aggression might come from your customers or clients. But it can also come from other workers or businesses your work with. It could also come from family and domestic violence if this affects a worker while working (including working from home). For more about this, go to the Family and domestic violence information.

You must take a systematic approach to managing risk with the aim of eliminating the risk, or if this is not possible, minimising the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

Workers and others at the workplace also have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and not adversely affect the health and safety of themselves or others. This includes following any reasonable instruction given to comply with a health and safety duty.

You need to consider when, where and how your workers might be exposed to violence and manage those risks.

Ask your workers about when they're exposed to violence and aggression at work and get their ideas on how to prevent it. Go to the Consultation information to read more about why it is important.

Check that your controls are working and whether there is anything more you can do to prevent violence and harassment from happening in your small business.

Once you have consulted workers, determined appropriate measures and put them in place, continue to review how you are managing the risks to check your measures are working.

Coughing and spitting

In the COVID-19 environment, deliberate acts of coughing and spitting on workers have occurred as a form of violence, particularly against police officers, health care workers and emergency response workers. There have also been incidents of customers spitting on retail workers due to product restrictions. Some jurisdictions have introduced specific fines and jail terms for people who intentionally spit or cough on workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further information about responding to coughing and spitting incidents can be obtained from the police in your jurisdiction (for example, in NSW coughing or spitting on a public official in a way that is likely to cause fear about the spread of COVID-19 is an offence   ).

Identifying hazards

Working out the risks of aggressive or violent behaviour involves talking to your workers and observing how work is carried out to see what can go wrong.

- Where do customers feel stressed or anxious? Where is conflict likely?

- What products or services are in high demand or short supply? Where might a customer feel frustrated with your business or staff?
- Where do workers feel most vulnerable or isolated?

Work-related violence can arise from hazards that increase stress and conflict. During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses may be welcoming the public back under new conditions which may increase tension and stress.

- For example, there may be restrictions on products and services and physical distancing measures.

Risks to look out for

From customers, clients and the public

- Things that annoy or frustrate customers and clients such as:
  - delays, queues, limited availability of products or services,
  - changes in normal processes, products, services and business hours
  - workers lacking training and experience to respond to customer needs

- handling valuable or restricted items, for example cash or medicines
- providing care to people who are distressed, confused, afraid, ill or affected by drugs and alcohol
- workers are working in isolation, offsite or in the community, and increased isolation from support.

Between workers

- worried or stressed workers, due to issues like: COVID-19 health concerns, risks at work, job security or personal issues causing stress
- roles or workloads are poorly distributed among work teams
- work schedules change
- workloads have increased or roles have changed, for example if extra focus is given to regular cleaning and disinfection of the workplace
- there is less face-to-face supervision, or workers are more isolated from support networks
- workers are not adequately trained or familiar with products, services or workplace procedures
- the workplace culture is hostile or does not prevent violence and aggression.

Racial discrimination may also increase in the form of individual acts of aggression, or collective forms such as targeting workplaces with workers of a particular nationality or ethnicity.

There may also be stigma around, and the potential for violence or aggression towards, people who have had COVID-19, or those who seem to be acting inconsistently with public health requirements.

Assessing risks

You should consider the following to work out the likelihood that someone could be harmed through work-related violence, and the degree of harm:

- who could be exposed to hazards
- when they are likely to be exposed to hazards
- frequency and duration of exposure to hazards
- the ways hazards interact to make new or greater risks
- effectiveness of current control measures
- the harm exposure could cause.

Potential harm could:

- be physical or psychological
- include minor or serious injury and illness, or death
- be the result of a single incident or build up over a longer period.

Managing the risks of work-related violence

Work-related violence and aggression can impact psychological and physical health. For more, go to the Mental health and COVID-19 information.

New measures may be needed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts this has had on your workplace or business operations.

External violence and aggression

Consider the following:

Physical work environment and security

- ensure access to the premises is appropriately controlled and increase security measures
- arrange furniture and partitions to allow good visibility of service areas and avoid restrictive movement
- separate workers from the public, for example install protective barriers or screens
- prevent public access to the premises when people work alone or at night
- limit the amount of cash, valuables and medicines held on the premises
- ensure there are no dangerous objects that could be thrown or used to injure someone
- provide workers and others with a safe place to retreat to avoid violence
- put up signs to reflect that the workplace will not accept any forms of violence and aggression.

Work systems

- inform customers about limits, delays or changes to products and services with signs and/or on your website

- place purchase limits on the sale of in-demand goods or take them off the shelves and require customers to ask for them specifically
- clarify physical distancing in stores and queuing procedures for customers
- adapt opening hours if necessary, and clearly communicate this to the public
- avoid workers needing to work in isolation and provide sufficient staff during periods of high customer attendance
- monitor workers when they are working in the community or away from the workplace, for example a supervisor checks in regularly throughout the shift
- rotate staff to limit contact time with customers
- evaluate your work practices, in consultation with your workers and their representatives, to see if they contribute to violence and aggression
- train workers in how to deal with difficult customers, conflict resolution and when to escalate problem calls to senior staff, including procedures to report incidents
- ensure that workers are made aware of their right to cease unsafe work.

Internal violence and aggression

There are many things you can do to reduce the risk of violence, aggression and harassment between workers, supervisors and managers, including:

- provide a positive, respectful work culture where violence, aggression and harassment is not tolerated
- provide a consistent approach to prevent inappropriate behaviour from escalating
- regularly review workloads and time pressures with your workers and their representatives
- ask workers to provide screen shots and keep records if aggressive behaviour occurs online
- improve role clarity by ensuring your workers have well-defined roles and the expectations of them are clear
- provide adequate resources and training to your workers so they are able to perform their role confidently and competently.

Responding to incidents of violence, aggression and harassment

Responses to work-related violence, aggression and harassment will vary depending on the nature and severity of the incident.

At the time of an incident

Workers should be trained in what to do during a violent or aggressive incident, such as:

- using calm verbal and non-verbal communication
- using verbal de-escalation and distraction techniques
- seeking support from other workers
- asking the aggressor to leave the premises or disconnecting the aggressor from the phone call

- activating alarms or alerting security personnel or police
- retreating to a safe location.

Immediately after an incident

Immediately after a violent incident, you should:

- ensure that everyone is safe
- provide first aid or urgent medical attention where necessary
- provide individual support where required, including psychological support to the victim and other workers
- report what happened, who was affected and who was involved.

You may need to notify your state or territory WHS regulator if the incident is a 'notifiable incident' (see the Incident Notification fact sheet for more information).

Further information and resources

SWA materials

- Go to the Family and domestic violence information
- Go to the Mental health information
- Guide for Handling and Transporting Cash
- Guide for preventing and responding to workplace bullying
- Model Code of Practice: Managing the work environment and facilities
- Model Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks

Other resources

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland: Prevention and management of violence and aggression in health services handbook   .

Other laws may also apply depending on the nature and circumstances of the violent or agressive behaviour, for example criminal laws, anti-discrimination laws, and the industrial laws in some jurisdictions.

Further information can be obtained from:

- the police in your jurisdiction
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Fair Work Commission
- Fair Work Ombudsman

What are the some of the work-related violence hazards and controls in my industry?

- Working with cash
- Working at night, alone or in isolated areas
- Working in high crime areas
- People may be intoxicated or affected by drugs.

Risk control measures

- Fixed or removable barriers such as screens between drivers and passengers
- Security cameras to record activities within the vehicle to discourage violent behaviour
- Silent alarms (such as an external light), duress alarm, mobile or radio communication allowing drivers to safely request help
- Vehicle tracking devices such as GPS systems to allow drivers in distress to be located
- Improved lighting inside the taxi allowing the driver to be aware of passenger behaviour
- Promoting the use of credit card payments to limit the amount of cash in the vehicle
- Providing safety training to teach drivers and dispatchers about protective measures.

Workers' compensation

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As a national policy body, Safe Work Australia does not have a role in determining a worker's coverage or eligibility for benefits in workers' compensation schemes, or for managing workers' compensation claims and return to work programs for injured workers. All workers' compensation arrangements are the responsibility of the Commonwealth, and each state and territory (jurisdictions).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, workers' compensation authorities across the jurisdictions are providing additional information for workers, employers, medical and health practitioners and others.

For general guidance relating to your jurisdiction or advice on your particular circumstances, please refer to the information provided by your workers' compensation authority. Seek specific advice from that authority if further information is needed. See workers' compensation authorities for details.

Are my workers covered by workers' compensation if they contract COVID-19?

They may be.

Workers' compensation arrangements differ across jurisdictions, however generally to be eligible for compensation a worker will need to:

- be covered by your workers' compensation scheme, either as an employee or a deemed worker,
- have contracted the COVID-19 virus out of or in the course of their employment.

Compared to a work-related injury, it may be more difficult to establish a connection between a worker's contraction of the COVID-19 virus and their employment.

In some industries (e.g. health care), and in some circumstances (e.g. in the course of their employment a worker travelled to a high-risk area) this connection may be easier to establish.

Your workers' compensation authority will determine whether the worker is covered by their scheme and if the contraction of COVID-19 was adequately connected to their employment. They will consider each claim on its merits, with regard to the individual circumstances and evidence.

Are my workers covered by workers' compensation if they lose their job due to our workplace closing?

Workers' compensation does not compensate a worker for the loss of a job due to COVID-19 related workplace closures.

Workers' compensation arrangements differ across jurisdictions, however generally to be eligible for compensation a worker will need to:

- be covered by your workers' compensation scheme, either as an employee or a deemed worker,
- have an injury or illness of a kind covered by the scheme, that arose out of or in the course of their employment.

If your worker has an existing workers' compensation claim and your workplace closes, you and your worker should refer to information provided by, and seek advice from, your workers' compensation authority about your particular circumstances. See workers' compensation authorities for details.

Other financial support may be available to your workers who have lost their job. Refer to the Australian Government's Economic Response to the Coronavirus and also go to Staying informed about COVID-19 for links to other sources of information such as Services Australia and the Australian Tax Office.

Are my workers covered by workers' compensation if they are injured while working from home?

If your worker sustains an injury while working from home, they may be eligible for workers' compensation.

Workers' compensation arrangements differ across jurisdictions, however generally to be eligible for compensation a worker would need to:

- be covered by the scheme, either as an employee or a deemed worker,
- have an injury or illness of a kind covered by the scheme, that arose out of or in the course of their employment.

Your workers' compensation authority will determine whether the worker is covered by their scheme and their injury or illness was adequately connected to their employment. They will consider each claim on its merits, with regard to the individual circumstances and evidence.

Will existing workers' compensation claims and return to work arrangements change due to COVID-19?

COVID-19 restrictions may impact various aspects of a worker's recovery and return to work.

Your workers' compensation authority can provide information for employers and their workers who are currently receiving workers' compensation regarding payments, treatment and return to work.

You and your worker should refer to information provided by, and seek advice from, your workers' compensation authority on your particular circumstances. See workers' compensation authorities for details.

What other support is available for me and my workers?

Individuals and businesses may be eligible for financial support. Refer to the Australian Government's Economic Response to the Coronavirus   and also go to Staying informed about COVID-19 for links to other sources of information such as Department of Health, Services Australia, the Australian Tax Office, and Business.gov.au.

Workers' compensation authorities

- Australian Capital Territory: WorkSafe ACT
- New South Wales: State Insurance Regulatory Authority (NSW)
- Northern Territory: NT WorkSafe
- Norfolk Island: Norfolk Island Workers Compensation Agency
- Queensland: WorkCover Queensland

- South Australia: ReturnToWork SA

- Tasmania: WorkCover Tasmania

- Victoria: WorkSafe Victoria

- Western Australia: WorkCover WA

For Australian Government employees and for the employees of organisations which self-insure under the scheme, contact Comcare (Commonwealth) .

Workers' rights

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Workers are entitled to:

- elect a health and safety representative (HSR) if they wish to be represented by one
- request the formation of a health and safety committee
- cease unsafe work in certain circumstances
- have health and safety issues at the workplace resolved in accordance with an agreed issue resolution procedure, and
- not be discriminated against for raising health and safety issues.

Health and safety representatives (HSR)

Your workers can ask you to facilitate the election of one or more HSRs for the workplace.

An HSR is elected by a work group (e.g. all workers in the office part of a manufacturing complex, or all people on the night shift) to represent the health and safety interests of the work group. An HSR must be a member of the work group they represent. There can be as many HSRs and deputy HSRs as needed after consultation, negotiation and agreement between you and the workers.

You must keep a current list of all HSRs and deputy HSRs for the workplace and display a copy. A list must also be provided to the WHS regulator.

Workers' right to stop work

In some circumstances, workers, or their HSRs have the right to refuse to carry out or stop unsafe work. They have this right if there is a reasonable concern that the worker will be exposed to a serious risk to their health and safety from an immediate or imminent hazard. This could include exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

In most circumstances, the HSR will need to consult with you before they direct workers to stop work.

If a worker stops work because it is unsafe, they need to tell you as soon as possible. The worker must then be available to carry out suitable alternative work, including doing other tasks that they are trained or able to do, or performing their work from another location, such as working from home.

Discrimination

You cannot discriminate against or disadvantage workers for raising work health and safety concerns in the workplace.

You also cannot discriminate against or disadvantage HSRs in the workplace for performing their HSR role.

You should encourage your workers to raise any concerns they have about work health and safety in your workplace, including in relation to the COVID-19 virus.

Working from home

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation for everyone. As a small business it is understandable you may have concerns about how to continue to meet your WHS duties at this time. There are a number of practical steps you can take to manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at your workplace and meet your legal obligations.

Here are some ideas to help you get started thinking about what you can reasonably do to keep people safe at your workplace for your industry.

For more WHS information and resources for small business, go to the COVID-19 Small business hub.

Some business operations are restricted under state or territory government public health directions. If you want to know what restrictions on business operations apply to your workplace, go to your state or territory government website .

You can also go to our Public health directions and COVIDSafe plans page for links to enforceable government directions.

Businesses must only operate to the extent permissible in each state and territory. The information provided below outlines measures which cover all aspects of services offered by the industry – depending on what is permissible in your jurisdiction, some sections may not be currently relevant to your business.

Safe Work Australia does not regulate or enforce WHS laws or COVID-19 restrictions on business operations. If you want to know how WHS laws apply to you or need help with what to do at your workplace, contact the WHS regulator in your jurisdiction.

Depending on the nature of the work involved in your industry, you may only have a limited number of workers, if any, who are able to work from home. However, this advice has been included for your industry as there may be some workers who could undertake their work from home.

Are workers entitled to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic?

On 8 May 2020, the Hon Scott Morrison MP announced a national three step plan to relax coronavirus restrictions, with states and territories to decide when each step will be implemented locally. You should check any relevant advice from your state or territory regarding working from home in response to COVID-19.

Whether working from home is reasonably practicable will depend on the specifics of the workplace, the facilities available for workers to work remotely and the ability for workers to do their work safely from home. As a small business employer, it may be more challenging for you to accommodate working from home arrangements for your workers. However, there are practical steps you can take to ensure you meet your WHS duties and the government's directions in response to COVID-19, consistent with the general WHS advice for small business. In deciding whether working from home is appropriate for your workers, in consultation with workers and their representatives (e.g. a Health and Safety Representative - HSR), you should consider:

- the individual worker's role
- whether the worker is in a vulnerable person category for contracting the virus (see our information on vulnerable workers)
- suitability of work activities
- workflows and expectations
- workstation set up
- surrounding environment such as ventilation, lighting and noise
- home environment, such as partners, children, vulnerable persons and pets
- communication requirement such as frequency and type
- mental health and wellbeing of the worker
- safe working procedures and training requirements, and
- potential risk of infection on journeys to and from the workplace.

Under the model WHS laws, each employer has a duty of care for the health and safety of their workers and others at the workplace. This duty extends to identifying and managing the risks of exposure to the COVID-19 virus and putting appropriate controls in place in every workplace where the employer engages workers to carry out work or directs or influences workers in carrying out work.

If work can be completed at home, and the risks that arise from working remotely can be effectively managed, encouraging or directing workers to work from home may be the best way to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Any existing workplace policies and/or practices on working from home would apply to arrangements implemented as part of the COVID-19 response. You may need to vary your policies and/or practices to reflect the broader requirements of the COVID-19 situation such as the ability to work from home while also caring for children. As with all work health and safety matters, you must consult with your workers and their representatives on working from home arrangements.

Whether working at the office or at home, a worker has the right to stop or refuse unsafe work when there is a reasonable concern of exposure to a serious risk to health and safety from an immediate or imminent hazard. In some circumstances, this could include exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Any concerns about health or safety should first be raised with you or the worker's representative. A worker may also contact a union for advice. If a

worker decides to stop work as it is unsafe, they must notify you as soon as possible and be available to carry out alternative work arrangements. See also our information on workers' rights and the Fair Work Ombudsman Coronavirus and Australian Workplace Laws webpage.

What must I do when workers are working from home?

The model WHS laws still apply if workers work somewhere other than their usual workplace, for example, from home. You have duties to ensure the health and safety of your workers, even if they are working from home.

What you can do to minimise risks at a worker's home may be different to what you can do at the usual workplace. However, in consultation with workers and their representatives, you should:

- provide guidance on what is a safe home office environment, including what a good workstation set up looks like, why workers should not be sedentary all day and how to avoid this
- allow workers to borrow any necessary work station equipment from the office to take to the home as agreed
- require workers to familiarise themselves and comply with good ergonomic practices, consistent with any workplace policies and/or practices, for example requiring workers to complete a workstation self-assessment checklist and provide their responses to you
- maintain regular communication with workers
- provide access to information and support for mental health and wellbeing services. Beyondblue has a freely available website or you may have an existing employee assistance program (EAP) you can promote, and
- appoint a contact person in the business who workers can talk to about any concerns related to working from home.

You must also think about, and consult your workers, on how your existing policies and/or practices apply when working from home, including:

- notification of incidents, injuries, hazards and changes in circumstances
- consultation and review of work health and safety processes, and
- attendance, timesheets, leave and other entitlements and arrangements.

If necessary, employers may consult workers for an inspection of the worker's home work environment to ensure it meets health and safety requirements. This can be achieved through virtual means such as photos or video to avoid the need for a physical inspection. In many cases, given the types of risks associated with the activities to be undertaken, an inspection will not be required. Depending on the complexity of the potential risks involved, you may need to engage the services of a health and safety professional to assess the risks to a worker working from home.

What are the WHS risks of working from home?

Working from home may change, increase or create work health or safety risks. You must consult with workers before you implement control measures to address these risks. It is also important to review and monitor whatever arrangements are put in place to ensure that these arrangements do not create any additional risks.

Some key considerations that may affect the WHS risks of workers working from home or remotely include:

- pre-existing injuries the worker may have
- communication frequency and type between the employer and worker
- management of the work program, workload, activities and working hours
- surrounding work environment
- workstation set up, such as desk, chair, monitors, keyboard, mouse and computer
- work practices and physical activity
- mental health and wellbeing of the worker, and
- other responsibilities the worker may have such as facilitating online learning for children or a caring role.

You must do what you reasonably can to manage the risks to a worker who works from home.

However, workers also have health and safety obligations to minimise risks when working from home including:

- following procedures about how work is performed
- using equipment provided by the workplace as per the instructions given and ensuring it is not damaged or misused
- maintaining a safe work environment, such as designated work area, moving furniture to ensure comfortable access, providing adequate lighting and ventilation, repairing any uneven surfaces or removing trip hazards
- managing their own in-house safety, such as maintaining electrical equipment and installing and maintaining smoke alarms
- notifying the employer about risks or potential risks and hazards, and
- reporting any changes that may affect their health and safety when working from home.

Mental health risks and working from home

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stressful and uncertain time for all Australians. Working from home, particularly for the first time, can create additional risks to mental health.

The WHS duties apply to both physical and psychological (mental) health. This means that employers must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the mental health of their workers and protect their workers from psychological risks.

Working from home can have psychological risks that are different to the risks in an office or your regular workplace. A psychosocial hazard is anything in the design or management of work that causes stress. Some psychosocial hazards that may impact a worker's mental health while working from home include:

- being isolated from managers, colleagues and support networks
- less support, for example workers may feel they don't have the normal support they receive from their supervisor or manager
- changes to work demand, for example the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and a move to working at home may create higher workloads for some workers and reduced workloads for others
- low job control
- not having clear boundaries between home-life and work-life
- fatigue
- poor environmental conditions, for example an ergonomically unsound work station or high noise levels, and
- poor organisational change management, for example workers may feel they haven't been consulted about the changes to their work.

Working from home may also impact a worker's mental health in other ways, such as from changed family demands. For example, home schooling school-aged children who are learning from home, relationship strain or family and domestic violence.

Looking after the mental health of workers at home

You must eliminate or minimise the risk to psychological health and safety arising from work as far as is reasonably practicable, including when your workers are working from home.

You must consult with workers and their representatives on psychosocial hazards they may face and how to manage them. Workers often know what the issues are and have ideas about how to manage them. You must also review how you're managing the risks to check your policies and/or processes are effective.

Good communication with your workers is especially important when they are working from home. It is important that you have regular and clear communication with your workers to set realistic and clear instructions on workloads, roles and tasks, to monitor work levels and to check that work can be successfully completed from home without creating any additional safety risks. Adjust any work tasks and ways of working as appropriate.

Steps you must take to manage risks to your workers' mental health where reasonably practicable include:

- providing information about mental health and other support services available to your workers (Beyondblue has set up a freely available mental health support website   or you may have an existing employee assistance programs you can refer workers to).

- maintaining regular communication with your workers and encouraging workers to stay in contact with each other
- staying informed with information from official sources and sharing relevant information with your workers and their representatives as it becomes available
- offering your workers flexibility, such as with their work hours, where possible
- making sure workers are effectively disengaging from their work and logging off at the end of the day
- responding appropriately to signs a worker may be struggling, e.g. changed behaviour
- informing workers about their entitlements if they become unfit for work or have caring responsibilities
- eliminating or minimising physical risks, and
- providing workers with a point of contact to discuss their concerns and to find workplace information in a central place including any HSRs.

For further information the Infographic: Four steps to preventing psychological injury at work shows how the risk management process can be applied to psychosocial risks.

Detailed guidance is available in Safe Work Australia Guide: Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties.

Who is responsible for ensuring that my workers have a safe workstation set up to work from home?

Under the model WHS laws, you have a duty of care for the health and safety of your workers and others at the workplace. This includes where your worker is working from home. You must consult with workers and take all reasonable steps to ensure their workstations are correctly setup to reduce potential musculoskeletal injuries.

Workers also have a duty to take care for their own health and safety, which includes while working from home, and must follow any reasonable policies or directions their employer gives them.

You and you workers share responsibility for ensuring a safe workstation set up.

To ensure your workers' workstation set up is safe, you should:

- provide guidance on what is a safe home office environment, including setting up an ergonomic workstation, why workers should not be sedentary all day, and how to avoid this
- require workers to familiarise themselves and comply with good ergonomic practices, for example by requiring workers to complete a workstation self-assessment checklist and provide their responses to you
- provide a health and safety checklist for working from home for workers to use, for example checking for trip hazards in the work space
- consider organising a workstation assessment by a competent person where practicable, allow workers to borrow equipment, such as chairs, monitors, keyboards and mouses, from the office or reimburse them reasonable costs for purchasing any required equipment, and
- have ongoing discussion with your workers regarding their workstation set up.

Workers must follow reasonable policies or directions set by you. This may include completing workstation checklists and following any other reasonable safety policies and directions you give them. As with any other work environment, workers must inform you of any work-related incidents or injuries that occur while working at home and are encouraged to report health and safety concerns to you.

What do I need to do about home workstation set ups?

You must eliminate or minimise risks to the health and safety of your workers, so far as is reasonably practicable. While you have less control over a worker's home, you must still consult with workers and their representatives and take steps to reduce work health and safety risks of workstations as much as possible (with available and suitable solutions).

To minimise the risk of a worker sustaining a musculoskeletal injury while working from home, you could:

- organise a virtual workstation assessment by asking the worker to send a photo or video of their workstation set up to you
- have ongoing discussion with your workers about their workstation set up
- provide a health and safety check list when working from home for your workers to use
- provide a workstation self-assessment checklist and health and safety check list for your workers to follow
- provide your workers with information on setting up an ergonomic workstation, and
- allow workers to borrow equipment, such as chairs, monitors, keyboards and mouses, from the office or reimburse them reasonable costs for purchasing any required equipment, and
- monitor to ensure the workstation set up is not creating additional risks and the need for any additional equipment.

In undertaking safety checks you should ensure workers have access to first aid based on an assessment of their duties and home work environment.

Further resources:

- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland   —   Guide to computer based workstations
- WorkSafe WA   —   Guide to Setting up your workstation
- Comcare   —   Working from home checklist
- WorkSafe Victoria   —   Minimising the spread of (COVID-19): Working from home

Am I required to provide my workers with equipment to enable them to work safely from home?

You must identify and manage any risks to workers working from home. Undertaking a risk assessment will assist you to determine what is reasonably required to keep workers safe. It may not be reasonably practicable to conduct a physical inspection of your worker's home, but there are other ways you can assess the risks,

including by requiring workers to complete a workstation and health and safety checklist that you may discuss with them.

You may determine that it is practicable to allow workers to borrow equipment from the office or reimburse reasonable costs. You and your workers must discuss what equipment may be required for the worker to safely carry out their work as early as possible during the workstation set up and continue to monitor their ongoing equipment needs throughout the time they are working from home.

If you are not satisfied that a safe workstation can be created, it may not be reasonably practicable for the worker to work from home. In these circumstances, alternative arrangements may need to be made. This could include setting up a safe office space for the worker in the office and flexible work hours to minimise contact between workers.

What are my obligations to my workers to ensure that they have suitable breaks and work reasonable hours while working from home?

You must ensure workers continue to access their workplace entitlements, including breaks, standard hours and any agreed to flexible work arrangements. You should consider whether any existing workplace policies and/or practices need to be revisited in light of the COVID pandemic and increased working from home arrangements.

Information on workers' entitlements, including breaks, standard hours and flexible work arrangements, is available on the Fair Work Ombudsman website .

I have workers working from home who are also caring for, and educating, their school aged children who are unable to attend school. What are my obligations towards these workers?

Good communication between you and your workers is especially important when workers are working from home. You should ensure your workers are aware of any working from home and carer policies and/or practices that apply to your workplace. Workers may also wish to discuss their entitlements to carers leave and other relevant forms of leave. Further information on leave entitlements is available on the Fair Work Ombudsman website .

Workers may wish to share tips on balancing work and caring responsibilities with others. Tool box discussions and team meetings can be a great place to share this information in a friendly environment. This might include tips on how workers have managed to balance their caring arrangements with their partner, where available.

How can I support my workers who are finding working from home stressful and it is negatively impacting their mental health?

You must eliminate or minimise the risk to psychological (mental) health and safety arising from work as far as is reasonably practicable, including when your workers are working from home.

Good communication with your workers is especially important when they are working from home. You must consult with workers and their representatives on psychosocial hazards they may face and how to manage them. Workers often know what the issues are and have ideas about how to manage them. You must also review how you're managing the risks to check your policies and/or processes are effective.

There are a range of resources available to workers to support workers' mental health. These include:

- SafeWork NSW - COVID-19 and Mental health at work
- Beyond Blue - How to look after your mental health when working from home   . You can also contact the Beyond Blue Coronavirus mental wellbeing support service on 1800 512 348 or the Beyondblue website

- Black Dog Institute - Managing your mental health at home
- Family and mental health support — Department of Social Services.
- Heads Up – Healthy workplaces support
- Lifeline
- Australian Psychological Society – Tips for coping with coronavirus anxiety
- Smiling Mind – Supporting yourself and others through Coronavirus
- Safe Work Australia - Psychological Health

There are also a number of practical steps that can help. These include:

- ensuring workers have the contact details for the relevant Employee Assistance Program if you have one in place
- maintaining regular communication
- supporting flexible work arrangements, where available, and
- ensuring workers effectively disengage from work and log off at the end of the day.

You can also call the National Coronavirus Helpline for information and advice about COVID-19 on 1800 020 080.

One of my workers has contracted COVID-19 while working from home. What should I do?

If you have a worker who has contracted COVID-19 you will need to follow the health advice provided by your public health authority.

You should discuss leave arrangements with your worker and determine if the worker has had contact with any other workers while they were infectious.

Workers who have been isolated after having tested positive for COVID-19 can return to work when they have fully recovered and have met the criteria for clearance from isolation. The criteria may vary depending on circumstances of the workplace and states and territories may manage clearance from isolation differently. Clearance may be by the public health authority or the persons treating clinician.

It is possible that a worker with COVID-19 could potentially work from home, if for example, they have no or minor symptoms. This would be subject to the advice from the relevant treating clinician and discussions with the worker. For example, a doctor may recommend reasonable adjustments, including reduced working hours or changes to a worker's workload.

Contact your state or territory helpline   for further advice.

When should workers return to the workplace?

Before workers return to their usual workplace you must ensure your proposed arrangements are consistent with the latest advice from public health authorities. You will also need to undertake a risk assessment and consult with workers and their representatives before workers return to the usual workplace.

This risk assessment will need to include consideration of current Commonwealth, state and territory government on physical distancing and whether your workplace can support all your workers returning at the same time while meeting those requirements. You may consider options for staging a return to the workplace, to ensure that physical distancing requirements are met in accordance with Government advice.

As part of your risk assessment you must consider vulnerable workers and ensure that they are not put at risk by a direction to return to the workplace. Pending your risk assessment, it may be that vulnerable workers should remain in a working from home arrangement for a longer duration that those workers who are not vulnerable.

You are also required under the WHS laws to consult with your workers and any their representatives about any direction to return workers to the workplace.

Finally, you should keep up to date with the latest health and Commonwealth, state and territory government advice on COVID-19.

For more information, go to the Transitioning back to usual workplaces page.

Can I direct my workers back to the usual workplace?

Whether or not you can reasonably direct workers back to the workplace will depend on a number of factors, including public health requirements and the individual circumstances of the worker working from home.

Workers must follow any reasonable policies or directions you put in place in response to COVID-19. You must consult with workers and their representatives prior to decisions being made to return to the workplace. You must also ensure return to work arrangements adhere to relevant Commonwealth, state or territory government advice (e.g. physical distancing requirements).

Where circumstances change, for example it is no longer safe for a worker to continue working from home due to a change in the worker's home situation or the ability of the worker to continue working from home effectively, the worker may after appropriate consultation be directed to return to the workplace.

Before requiring workers to recommence work at their usual workplace you must, in consultation with workers and their representatives, have a plan to ensure the safe return to work for all workers.

Where can employers get more information on working from home?

Comcare

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Working remotely
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Working from home checklist

New South Wales

- SafeWork NSW - COVID-19
- Remote and isolated work   (includes those who work from home)
- Design and layout of work environment
- Get healthy at work   has a suite of working from home resources:
  - Being healthy while working from home
  - 10 tips to work well from home
  - Alcohol consumption while working from home – Workers
  - Healthy eating while working from home
  - Quitting smoking while working from home

Queensland

- Health and safety for telecommuters
- Telecommuting checklist
- Office ergonomics
- Setting up work stations

Victoria

- Working from home
- Info sheet for working alone

Australian Capital Territory

- Home based work

Northern Territory

- Isolated work

Western Australia

- Office safety overview
- FAQ on working from home and use of mobile and laptop devices
- How to set up your workstation
- Toolkit and information resources

Family Violence Resources (not COVID-19 specific)

- 1800 Respect
- Men's Referral Service
- Kids Helpline