



# Retail: Minimising the risk of exposure to COVID-19

The model Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws require all employers\* to take care of the health and safety of their workers and others (e.g. customers and delivery drivers) at the workplace. This includes:

- > providing and maintaining a work environment that is without risk to health and safety
- > making sure work activities don't expose anyone to health and safety risks. That includes customers
- > providing adequate and accessible facilities for the welfare of workers in carrying out their work, and
- > monitoring the health of workers and the conditions of the workplace for the purpose of preventing illness or injury.

As an employer, you must identify risks at the workplace, and where possible eliminate or minimise those risks.

## Retail workers are at risk of exposure to COVID-19

Retailers work in close proximity to other workers and customers. This increases the risk of exposure to COVID-19. You must do everything reasonably practicable to keep these workers a safe physical distance apart of at least 1.5 metres.

You must implement control measures to minimise the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that other measures to address well known work health and safety risks continue to be implemented. This is the case even if implementing control measures result in distribution to your business.

## Managing the risks of exposure to the COVID-19 virus

### Physical distancing

Physical distancing – keeping everyone at the workplace at least 1.5 metres physically apart – will be challenging in some retail spaces, but it is a key measure to minimise the spread of COVID-19.

- > Limit physical interactions between workers.



- > Calculate the area of your retail floor space and set an upper limit on the number of customers or others who may be inside your premises at any one time in order to keep the minimum 1.5 metres apart as far as possible (don't forget to count your workers).
- > Create floor markings that provide minimum guide distances between customers queuing for service and using physical barriers where possible.
- > Use separate doors for entry and exit, if practicable, to avoid contact between people
- > If you are set-up for online trade, take extra steps to promote this offering over face to face service.
- > Facilitate working from home arrangements for staff where possible (e.g. book keeper).
- > Rotate tasks to ensure no one worker has all the contact with customers.
- > Limit worker numbers, or split workers shifts to limit the number of workers in the workplace at any one time
- > Reduce the number of tasks to be completed each day.
- > Postpone non-essential work. Ensure staff or breakrooms allow for physical distancing, and if not, close them to workers and arrange another suitable space.
- > Request contactless payment if possible, over cash.
- > Place [signage](#) about physical distancing around your premises where you can.

If [physical distancing](#) measures introduce new health and safety risks (e.g. because they impact communication), you need to identify and manage those risks too.

You should put processes in place to regularly monitor and review the implementation of [physical distancing](#) measures to ensure they remain effective.

## Health checks and quarantine

You must monitor the health of your workers for key symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever.

- > Direct all workers (whether they are at the workplace or not) to report to you if:
  - > they are experiencing any symptoms
  - > 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
  - > they have undertaken, or are planning to undertake, any travel.
- > Stop workers working if they are displaying symptoms.
- > Stop workers who have contracted COVID-19 from returning to the workplace until they provide evidence they are clear of the virus.

## Hygiene

### *Environmental cleaning*

The amount of time the COVID-19 virus survives on inanimate objects and surfaces will vary. Environmental cleaning is one way to remove COVID-19 particles.

Usual cleaning schedules will need to be increased.





- > Frequently touched surfaces, including counters, handrails, doors, till, phones, keyboards and EFTPOS facilities, should be cleaned regularly using appropriate detergent solutions where possible. Once cleaned, they should ideally be disinfected regularly using appropriate disinfectant solutions. Trolleys and hand baskets are wiped clean with surface wipes after each use.
- > Worker's personal items used in the workplace such as glasses and phones are cleaned and ideally disinfected frequently (e.g. by using isopropyl alcohol wipes)
- > Workplace amenities such as kitchens, lunch rooms, communal areas, change rooms, toilets, drink fountains and vending machines, should be cleaned industrially and the frequency of this cleaning should increase.
- >
- > Customers are requested to only touch items they are interested in purchasing.

Also consider reducing the number of touch points for workers. For example, leaving access doors open, where appropriate

Workers should be provided with cleaning agents and trained to clean down and disinfect equipment (e.g. trolleys and hand baskets) immediately after use. Workers should each be provided with their own equipment if possible.

To minimise the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus the person cleaning and disinfecting should wear gloves and wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after wearing gloves. Gloves and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be made available.

The workplace should provide closed bins for workers to hygienically dispose of waste and rubbish such as used tissues, immediately after use. Hand washing facilities or alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be available for workers to use after they dispose of their waste.

If the increased availability of hand sanitiser introduces new health and safety risks (e.g. accidental ingestion by children), you need to identify and manage those risks too.

You must monitor workplace conditions, including facilities, to ensure the measures in place to eliminate or manage the risks arising from COVID-19 are efficient and effective.

See Safe Work Australia's [Cleaning to prevent the spread of COVID-19 fact sheet](#) or the Department of Health information sheet on [environmental cleaning and disinfection-principles for COVID-19](#) for further information.

### *Worker hygiene*

Workers must practice [good hygiene](#). Workers must wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand washing should be done before and after eating and after going to the toilet. Other hygiene measures should include:

- > covering coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue
- > immediately disposing of tissues properly
- > using alcohol-based hand sanitisers with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as the active ingredient
- > cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and shared equipment after use
- > washing body, hair (including facial hair) and clothes thoroughly every day
- > staying more than 1.5 metres away from others, and
- > reporting and staying home if experiencing any symptoms.



In addition, to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, workers should also:

- > avoid touching their face
- > avoid handshakes or any other close physical contact, and
- > put cigarette butts in the bin.

You should put processes in place to regularly monitor and review the implementation of hygiene measures to ensure they remain effective. Workers should also be informed about the risk of exposure and good hygiene through increased signage and information. The Australian Government Department of Health has a range of [posters and other resources](#) aimed at educating the public about COVID-19. These posters can be placed in customer-facing work environments.

## **Adequate and accessible facilities**

You must ensure there are adequate and accessible facilities to support the implementation of measures to achieve physical distancing and [good hygiene](#).

Washroom facilities must be properly stocked and have adequate supplies of soap, water and toilet paper. Washroom facilities must be kept clean and in good working order. Workplaces should also be well stocked with alcohol-based hand sanitiser, where available.

Consider whether there are an adequate number of hand washing stations to sustain the increase in workers practicing good hygiene.

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

You must ensure all facilities are in good working order and are clean and safe.

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](#).

## **Deliveries and other contractors attending the workplace**

Non-essential visits to the workplace should be cancelled or postponed.

Deliveries and other contractors who need to attend the workplace should be given clear instructions of your requirements while they are on site.

Minimise the number of workers attending to deliveries and contractors as much as possible. Make hand washing facilities or alcohol-based hand sanitiser available for workers after physically handling deliveries.

Direct visiting truck drivers to remain in vehicles and use contactless methods such as mobile phones to communicate with your workers wherever possible.

Use, and ask deliveries 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.

## General advice for workers, customers and others

- > Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, and nose with unwashed (or gloved) hands.
- > Clean your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water, or alcohol-based hand rub.
- > Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or a flexed elbow. Put tissues in the bin immediately after use.
- > Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.
- > [Physical distancing](#) - maintain a 1.5 metre distance to others (two arm's length).
- > Stay home if you are sick.
- > Seek medical advice if you have a fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath (call your doctor or [healthdirect](#) on [1800 022 222](#)).

## Keep workers informed

You must provide all workers information about the risks of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Where required, workers should be trained in infection control.

The Australian Government Department of Health has a range [of posters and other resources](#) aimed at educating the public about COVID-19.

## Consultation and communicating with workers

You must consult with your workers on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19. This means you must consult when:

- assessing the risk COVID-19 presents to the health and safety of workers
- deciding on the control measures to put in place 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 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 work health and safety 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 this process and any changes.





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 (HSRs) 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.

You need to communicate clearly with workers about control measures. This means providing clear direction and guidance about what is expected of workers.

Workers must know:

- > when to stay away from the workplace
- > what action to take if they become unwell
- > what symptoms to be concerned about.

You should remind workers they have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and to not adversely affect the health and safety of others.

You should remind workers with a point of contact to discuss their concerns, and access to support services, including employee assistance programs. A list of support services to help workers is provided below.

## How can I meet my officer duty during the COVID-19 outbreak ?

- > Keep your knowledge of the COVID-19 situation up-to-date. Follow advice from authoritative sources such as the Australian Government Department of Health and check daily for any updates to safety advice.
- > Ensure you understand your business and its WHS hazards and risks. Risk assessments are a useful tool to help identify WHS hazards and risks, as well as strategies to help manage them. Where you have risk assessments in place, they may need to be reviewed to ensure they are up to date. It may not be possible because of the work you do to facilitate all workers to work from home, but there are many steps you can take to minimise the risks in a retail environment.
- > Make sure your premises are properly resourced to manage WHS risks during the COVID-19 outbreak, and check that the resources are being used.
- > Review your policies, procedures and reporting process to ensure they remain current for any incidents, hazards and other WHS issues that arise during this time. Update these materials if necessary.
- > Ensure these are communicated clearly and processes are being followed.
- > Consult with workers and ensure there is a means for them to raise any concerns about the steps you are taking to manage the risks.

Further information is available on [who is an officer in the workplace](#) and their [health and safety duty](#).



## Further information and resources

### SWA materials

- > [Model Code of Practice: \*Managing the work environment and facilities\*](#)
- > [Model Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks](#)
- > [Officer Duties](#)
- > For general advice for employers on managing risks to exposure to the COVID-19 virus, go to [COVID-19 Information for workplaces](#)

### Support resources

- > Information on the recent restrictions announced by the Australian Government is available at [Australia.gov.au](http://Australia.gov.au).
- > [Fair Work Ombudsman – Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)
- > [Australian Government Treasury – Support for Businesses](#)
- > [Australian Tax Office – COVID-19](#)
- > Australian Government Coronavirus app ([Apple App Store](#), [Google Play](#))
- > [World Health Organisation – Advice for workplaces](#)
- > [Australian Retailers Association – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for business](#)

### Support services

- > [Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#)
- > [Heads Up – Healthy workplaces support](#)
- > [Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman](#)
- > [Lifeline](#)

\*Please note. To ensure this webpage is accessible and easy to understand, it talks about employer responsibilities. Under the model WHS laws, duties apply to a broader range of people than just employers. Any person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is covered by the model WHS laws.

For more information see the [Interpretive Guideline – model Work Health and Safety Act – the meaning of ‘person conducting a business or undertaking’](#).