

Road freight: Minimising the risk of exposure to COVID-19

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

- > providing and maintaining a work environment that is without risk to health and safety; and
- > adequate facilities for workers in carrying out their work.

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

Road freight workers are at risk of exposure to COVID-19

The constant travel and daily interactions with different people and workplaces that is required of road freight workers increases their 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 delays to your schedules.

Managing the risks of exposure to COVID-19

Physical distancing

Physical distancing - keeping everyone at the workplace at least 1.5 metres physically apart – will be challenging for road freight workers, but it is a key measure to minimise the spread of COVID-19.

- > Limit physical interactions between workers, suppliers, customers and others.
 - > Stop or reduce the use of driving teams as much as possible.
 - > Prohibit drivers travelling with passengers.
 - > Use electronic paper work where possible.



- > If a signature is required, talk to the business about providing a confirmation email instead, or take a photo of the goods onsite as proof of delivery.
- > At your depot:
 - > Postpone non-essential work.
 - > Postpone non-essential gatherings or training.
 - > For essential gatherings, conduct in spaces that enable workers to keep the required physical distance of at least 1.5 metres, ideally outdoor spaces.
 - > Reduce the number of workers using common areas at a given time (e.g by staggering meal breaks and start times).
 - > Spread out furniture in common areas.
 - > Use methods such as mobile phone or radio to communicate.
- > Place [signage](#) about physical distancing around the workplace.

Nominate responsible persons to make sure your workers are following the rules for physical distancing.

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

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 client-facing work environments (e.g. workplace entrances, including at the depot).

Health checks and quarantine

Monitor 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.
- > Encourage workers to report if they observe another worker is displaying any symptoms.
- > Prohibit workers working if they are displaying symptoms.
- > Prohibit workers who have contracted COVID-19 from returning to the workplace until they provide evidence they are clear of the virus.

Hygiene

Amenities and facilities used by your workers when they are on the road

You may not be able to control the availability of amenities and facilities, or the cleaning practices at those amenities and facilities, that your workers rely on when on the road. You could:

- > Monitor availability of amenities and facilities, and cleaning practices at amenities and facilities, through a combination of worker feedback and proactive engagement with the operators of such places.
- > Tell workers to call ahead to ensure amenities and facilities they plan to stop at are available and that they are being regularly cleaned.
- > Plan routes to take into account what you and your workers know about availability of regularly cleaned amenities and facilities.
- > Provide workers with additional sanitising or cleaning agents they can use if you cannot be satisfied of that amenities and facilities are being cleaned (e.g. additional alcohol-based hand-sanitiser, or disinfectant wipes to wipe down tables and seats before resting).
- > Direct workers to use contactless payment for fuel or supplies.
- > Direct workers to use cleaning agents where provided (e.g. where disinfectant or paper towels are provided for use at the petrol bowser).

Workplaces your workers visit in their work (e.g. customer and delivery premises)

You may not be able to control the hygiene practices at customer and delivery premises. You could:

- > Talk to your regular customers and deliveries about what measures they have in place to manage the risks of exposure to COVID-19 for their workers and for your workers when your workers visit the site. Collaborate on further control measures where required.
- > Use electronic paper work where possible.
- > Direct workers to remain in vehicles and use contactless methods such as mobile phones to communicate with customers and deliveries at their premises wherever possible.
- > Ensure workers have sufficient alcohol-based hand sanitiser or disinfectant wipes available in case those things are not provided or easily locatable at the customer or delivery premises.
- > Ensure workers' personal items such as glasses and phones are cleaned and disinfected frequently (e.g. using isopropyl alcohol wipes).

Environmental cleaning at your depot

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

Usual cleaning schedules at your depot will need to be increased.

- > Frequently touched surfaces, including handrails and doors, should be cleaned and disinfected frequently using appropriate detergent or disinfectant solutions.
- > Workplace amenities including kitchens, lunch rooms, common areas, change rooms, toilets, showers, drink fountains and vending machines, should be cleaned industrially and the frequency of this cleaning should increase.

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 vehicles, plant or equipment immediately after use.

To minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 the person cleaning should wear gloves and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after wearing gloves. Gloves and hand sanitiser should be made available throughout the workplace.

Provide closed bins to enable the hygienic disposal of waste and rubbish such as used tissues, immediately after use. Drivers should use alcohol-based hand sanitiser after they dispose of their waste.

Workplaces should consider limiting or reducing recirculated air-conditioning in common areas.

See the Department of Health information sheet on [Environmental cleaning and disinfection-principles for COVID-19](#) for further information.

Worker hygiene

Workers should be required to practice [good hygiene](#). This includes:

- > covering coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue
- > disposing of tissues properly
- > washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, including before and after eating and after going to the toilet
- > using alcohol-based hand sanitisers with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as the active ingredient
- > cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
- > 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 COVID-19, workers should also:

- > avoid touching their face
- > avoid handshakes or any other close physical contact
- > refrain from spitting at all times, and
- > put cigarette butts in the bin.

Washroom facilities at your depot should have adequate supplies for [good hygiene](#), such as adequate supply of soap, water and toilet paper. Washroom facilities must be kept clean, properly stocked and in good working order.

Your workplace should also be well stocked with alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

To enhance worker hygiene standards, you should also:

- > adequately delineate between work and common areas. This could include reminding workers (with [posters](#) or through training) to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or sanitise their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitiser, before entering and exiting a common area.

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

Keep workers informed

You should provide all workers information about the risks of exposure to COVID-19. 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 workers on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19. Allow workers to express views before you make decisions.

You must also consult with other duty holders working on site.

Workers are most likely to know about the risks of their work. Involving them will help build worker commitment to this process and any changes.

The [model Code of Practice: Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination](#) can give you more information about your duties to consult.

Communicate clearly with workers about control measures. Provide clear direction and guidance about what is expected of workers.

Workers should know:

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

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.

Provide workers with a point of contact to discuss their concerns, and access to support services, including employee assistance programs.

Interstate workers

Some states and territories have largely closed their borders, requiring people arriving from interstate to self-quarantine for at least 14 days. However, there are some exemptions, including for road freight.

You should stay up to date on the latest travel restrictions and requirements from the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and provide that information to your workers.

What else can I do?

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.

Understand your business and its WHS hazards and risks. Make sure you are properly resourced to manage WHS risks during the COVID-19 outbreak.

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 and resources

SWA materials

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

Other useful resources

- > [National Heavy Vehicle Regulator Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) response](#)
- > [Australian Trucking Association – Coronavirus information](#)

Support resources

- > [Business.gov.au – Support for businesses](#)
- > [Fair Work Ombudsman – Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)
- > [Australian Government Treasury – Support for Businesses](#)
- > [Australian Taxation Office – COVID-19](#)
- > Australian Government Coronavirus app ([Apple App Store](#), [Google Play](#))
- > [World Health Organisation – Advice for workplaces](#)

Support services

- > [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’](#).