

Frequently Asked Questions

Occupational Health and Safety

WORKPLACE HYGIENE AND SOCIAL DISTANCING



In the face of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it is crucial for us to create and maintain a safe workplace that is compliant with the requirements set in place by the government. Everyone has a duty and role to play in providing a safe workplace.

The purpose of this guidance note is to outline various social distancing requirements and controls (as at 23/03/2020) to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and keep our sites and workers safe. As government authorities continue to introduce new measures to contain COVID-19 these guidelines will be updated and modified.

Definitions

Personal hygiene

Refers to habits and behaviours which individuals can adopt to maintain good personal hygiene standards and minimise the spread of disease-causing germs and parasites.

Workplace hygiene standards

Refers to the facilities provided to look after the welfare of employees in the workplace and site amenity provided on construction sites.

Site amenity

Includes but is not limited to, site offices, toilets, showers, change rooms, lunchrooms, decontamination areas, personal storage areas, drinking water fountains and furniture and kitchen appliances in lunchrooms.

Social distancing

Social distancing includes ways to stop or slow the spread of infectious diseases. It means less contact between you and other people.

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Good Personal Hygiene: Information and Awareness

Promoting good personal hygiene habits are essential in containing the spread of COVID-19. The following measures, while perhaps obvious, need to be reinforced:

- Wash your body, hair and clothes thoroughly every day
- Wash hands and wrists thoroughly with soap before preparing and/or eating food and after going to the toilet, and at regular intervals during the day
- Put cigarette butts in the bin
- Refrain from spitting at all times
- Turn away from other people and cover the nose and mouth with a tissue or the arm when coughing or sneezing. If this is not done, droplets of liquid containing germs from the nose and mouth will be spread in the air and other people can breathe them in, or the droplets can get onto food
- Avoid handshakes or any other close physical contact
- Avoid touching your face with your hands
- Do not come to work unwell with any cold, flu, coughing or sneezing-type symptoms. Further information is available from the [Department of Health here.](#)

Workplace Hygiene Standards

Workplace hygiene is critical. Measures include:

- Providing and maintaining common areas (including lunch sheds, facilities and showers) which are cleaned industrially and/ or increase the frequency of cleaning regimes
- Cleaning and maintaining toilets regularly
- Adequately delineating between the construction site and the site amenities
- Adopting a coordinated approach to reducing the number of workers utilising the site amenities at a given time (staggering meal breaks, start times, coordinating work and planning)
- Informing 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.).

Further information is available from WorkSafe Victoria's Compliance Code for Workplace Amenities and Work Environment, [available here](#) and Compliance Code for Facilities in Construction, [available here.](#)

Specific Individual Requirements (COVID-19)

A State of Emergency has been declared in Victoria which imposes legal obligations upon all citizens to meet directions set out in the Victorian Government's [media release, available here](#). Failure to meet these directions consists of contravening s 203 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic).

For more information,
contact the MBV team at
mbassist@mbav.com.au or on (03) 9411 4555

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As at 23/03/2020, some of these directions include:

- Self-quarantining upon return from overseas for a period of 14 days
- Not reporting to work if you are unfit or unwell
- If you have come in to contact with someone who is known to have contracted COVID-19 and you develop symptoms, arrange for medical testing, do not attend work and self-quarantine until confirmatory results are known and you recover from illness
- Adhering to social distancing principles – not making physical contact with another person
- Keeping a distance of two metres from those around you
- Allowing vulnerable employees to work from home or make other arrangements such as taking leave.

Utilisation of personnel hoists and lifts

Master Builders Victoria acknowledges that there have been some challenges in respect to utilisation of hoists and lifts as the covid-19 pandemic unfolds. Our members are doing a great job in adhering to social distancing principles on worksites, including in and around hoists, but now is not the time to let complacency creep in.

As the situation continues to evolve, so too will our guidance and instruction to members. Master Builders Victoria also acknowledge that every worksite, lift and hoist can present unique circumstances. The following points are important principles in respect to hoists and lifts in the current climate:

- Schedule times for the use of the hoist
- Avoid large congregations of workers waiting at hoist lift/ entry points – promote principles of social distancing, stagger start times and mealtimes
- Rotate hoist operators where possible
- Provide hand sanitiser in hoists
- Ensure social distancing principles are strived towards and met on site
- Limit the number of people who use hoists and lifts at a given time
- Stagger start times, meal breaks and finish times to facilitate efficient and safe use of hoists
- Plan works to facilitate efficient transfer of building materials
- Encourage workers to utilise stairs for reasonable travel between levels
- Where possible, rotate the hoist/ lift operator
- Ensure regular and rigorous cleaning regime is implemented in the hoist. Ensure cleaning practices occur in a safe manner.
- Put down markings on the ground in and around hoist/ lift entry exit points so workers can adhere to social distancing principles as best as possible
- Ensure the hoist operators are instructed to travel to one level per occasion, limiting additional workers coming in to contact with one another
- Provide hoist operator with face mask, gloves, hand sanitiser
- Provide instruction to workers to face away from one another, spread out in corners of hoists/ lift etc.

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Educate your workforce and site management and supervision teams to actively reinforce the above measures

Further information can be sought from the industry position statement on COVID-19 accessed here (Steve please insert link) and the DHHS best practice guide to covid-19 on construction sites available [here](#).

Other matters

- Workers of all ethnicities and cultures must be treated with respect. Racism, harassment or bullying must not be tolerated in any workplace
- Workers who are not adhering to good hygiene practices should be reminded of the appropriate standards
- Communication and consultation in the workplace is very important to achieve good OHS outcomes. Where they exist, involve health and safety representatives and health and safety committees in matters that concern workplace amenity, training and instruction and personal hygiene
- Site inductions, prestart and toolbox meetings provide good opportunities to raise workers' awareness and provide information regarding workplace and personal hygiene matters
- Where possible, conduct meetings, such as toolbox meetings, outside and apply social distancing practices
- Consider opening windows and adjusting air conditioning for more ventilation.
- Where possible, conduct meetings in larger meeting rooms or divide up work groups for separate presentations
- Avoid congregating together in small spaces
- Be vigilant - reinforce and monitor social distancing practices by coaching managers and supervisors to monitor these practices in workplaces
- Conduct regular safety inspections and audits with a focus on COVID-19 controls and principles
- Reduce the length, size and number of face-to-face of meetings
- Cancel or postpone non-essential events where larger numbers of workers congregate

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