

Frequently Asked Questions

Occupational Health and Safety

SOCIAL DISTANCING IN A MOTOR VEHICLE FOR WORK



Social distancing is an important strategy to minimise the transmission of COVID-19. Ordinary travel in motor vehicles must be reviewed, as we adapt to the challenges which lie ahead. Reviewing our work procedures and travel arrangements can go a long way in keeping our workers and community safe and well and continue to demonstrate that the building and construction industry can forge ahead in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic.

The below is general advice only in response to enquiries we have received about COVID-19 and travel in the course of work. All situations are different and we encourage you to seek specific advice in relation to your circumstances by calling the Master Builders OHS Team on (03) 9411 4555.

How many people can we have in a work vehicle in light of the current social distancing restrictions and guidelines?

At this point, the Government have not provided any prescriptive regulations or guidelines in terms of work-related motor vehicle travel.

The Construction Industry Guidelines, supported by MBAV and other employer organisations as well as the unions, provide that adequate arrangements are to be made by workers to ensure their travel to and from work is conducted safely in accordance with Government advice and that adequate sanitisation facilities are in place for workers upon attending the work site and when returning to the work site during work. The Guidelines provide that, for transport to and from work, workers adhere to the physical distancing guidelines and ensure the driver is alone in the front of the vehicle and a single passenger is in the rear seat. For single cab vehicles (i.e. 2-seater), there should only be 1 passenger per vehicle. Work vehicles that are shared should be regularly cleaned to ensure adequate hygiene and protection.

Therefore, the number of persons travelling in a vehicle would depend on whether it is a light-vehicle, commercial vehicle and the seating configurations. While not specifically referenced, it can be interpreted that these guidelines also apply to travel in the course of work.

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

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How can I implement the social distancing requirements for travel during work?

Recommended standard

Social distancing and segregation:

- No sharing of vehicles between different work teams
- Limit to one operator per shift (less contact with shared surfaces)
- When travelling for more than 15 minutes, maximum of 1 driver and 1 passenger (to sit in the rear left seat)
- All air-conditioning to be set to fresh in-flow and not on recycle mode

Recommended standard

Clean and sanitise

- Clean when exiting and entering the vehicle
- Ensure cleaning of high contact areas – door handles, steering wheel, keys gear stick, seat belt buckles, dashboards and radio
- Consider engaging professional cleaners for end of shift deep clean
- Ensure vehicles are stocked with cleaning supplies

Recommended standard

Visual management

- Display standards in each vehicle
- Visual controls, such as seat identification, can remind workers where to sit and how many persons are permitted in each vehicle

What does good look like?

Exposure time

Exposure Time			
< 15 minutes	Max 2	Max 4	<50% Occupancy
> 15 minutes	Max 1	Max 2	Only 2 per row

What does good look like?

Spacing



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My apprentice does not have his driver's licence yet, can I pick them up and drop them off from home in my work ute?

We encourage members to seek alternate arrangements in this scenario such as utilising public transport, arranging for a member of the apprentice's family to drop them to and from work each day, arranging for a different type of vehicle to be utilised for the purpose of travelling to and from work.

In the event that a vehicle is shared as part of work and its configuration means that social distancing of 1.5m or greater cannot be achieved, consideration should be given to PPE (face masks and gloves), ensuring the vehicles (particularly its contact surfaces) are regularly cleaned and encouraging employees to keep good personal hygiene.

It is important to remember that, whilst difficult, adhering to the social distancing restrictions and Guidelines is intended to help you continue to run your business as safely and efficiently as possible.

My business transports construction equipment or supplies in a single-cabin, heavy vehicle. We travel long distances and rotate the driver as part of a fatigue management strategy, can this continue in the current climate?

Yes. This type of travel is likely to be considered part of the business undertaking and not travel to or from work.

All your existing legal obligations in respect to OHS, Heavy Vehicle Legislation and other laws need to be adhered to during this pandemic.

In addition to the abovementioned Guidelines, you should implement measures to limit the number of people in vehicles without compromising safety or fatigue management strategies that you have in place. Clean and sanitary vehicles are most important. You need to focus on keeping all internal surfaces clear. High standards of personal hygiene are crucial. If any of your employees share a vehicle, they should receive instructions and information about how personal hygiene can be achieved for periods of long travel (i.e. no eating inside vehicles, taking regular breaks to wash hands and increase the amount of fresh air available, clean and disinfect frequently used surfaces or use alcohol-based sanitiser before rotating drivers).

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