

Frequently Asked Questions

Face coverings are now mandatory

The Victorian Premier announced that people over the age of 12 years in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire will be required to wear a face covering from 11:59 Wednesday 22 July when leaving home for one of the four permissible reasons, including going to work. This means you will need to wear a face covering when you leave home to go to work.

Below we answer some commonly asked questions about the updated restrictions.

What is an appropriate face covering?

The taskforce responsible for development of the Industry Guidelines has advised as follows:

- The term 'face covering' includes cloth masks and single-use face masks (commonly called surgical masks). Both masks are suitable for use to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- In our industry, scarves and bandanas will not be permitted (for safety reasons).
- Cloth masks are any nose and mouth covering made of washable fabric. We recommend a cloth mask made of three layers of a mix of breathable fabrics to ensure adequate protection.

When do I have to wear a face mask on site?

From Thursday 23 July you must wear a face covering at all times when outside of your home. DHHS has confirmed that construction workers must also wear face coverings while working unless there is a valid reason for them not to do so. Below is their advice:

'Construction workers will have to wear a face covering unless they meet any of the criteria for exception such as a medical condition or if wearing a face covering creates a risk to the person related to their work, as determined through OH&S guidelines.'

There may be some valid reasons where the wearing of masks will create an additional safety risk or is not 'reasonably practicable'. A safety risk assessment should be undertaken to determine any activities where the wearing of a face mask may pose an additional risk under the OHS guidelines. In the event a worker is not wearing a mask because of the permissible reason, they are still expected to carry it with them at all other times to wear when they complete that activity.

The fine for not wearing a face covering is \$200.

I am outside of metro Melbourne and Mitchell shire. Do I have to wear a face covering?

People who live outside of those areas are now encouraged by DHHS to wear a face covering when leaving home and if they are not able to keep 1.5 metres from others.

If you need to travel into metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire then you must wear a face covering. Additionally, the COVID-19 Building and Construction Industry Guidelines identify that where you are working outside metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire you should still wear a face mask when you are unable to stay 1.5 metres from others and for the following situations:

- when travelling to work on public transport
- when travelling in a vehicle with another person
- when travelling in a hoist or lift in close proximity with others
- in a confined space with others
- when operating an item of plant with another person

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Am I required to cover my face while travelling to work?

The Government directive is that face coverings must be worn on public transport and when driving your vehicle with people from outside your household.

If you are alone in the vehicle or with someone from your household, you do not need to wear a face covering. However, you must carry your face covering and put it on before leaving your car or if you open the window to speak to anyone outside the vehicle.

Do I need to wear a face covering in the office?

Yes, in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire you must wear a face covering if you are at work, including offices. If you are in an enclosed office by yourself you can remove your face mask but you must put it back on before you leave the office or if someone else enters the office.

Is it the employer's responsibility to supply face masks for their employees?

The advice from the Taskforce responsible for development of the Industry Guidelines, which includes DHHS and WorkSafe representatives, is as follows:

Duty holders (that is, employers) have the usual obligation to keep the workplace safe 'as far as reasonably practicable' and to supply the necessary PPE to perform the tasks safely. The usual obligation to consult with the workforce/HSRs also applies.

It's important we all play our part

Just as you remember to take your keys when you leave the house, remember to take something to cover your face – to help keep you and our community safe.

More information

- MBV Update 22 July
- Building and Construction Industry Guidelines version 5.1
- DHHS guidelines