COVID-19

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

for building & construction

Master Builders Association
New South Wales

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COVID-19

the law

Under the model Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws employers have a duty of care for the health and safety of their workers and others at the workplace. This includes:
- Providing and maintaining a work environment without risk to health and safety, and
- Providing and maintaining adequate facilities for workers in carrying out their work.

As an employer / PCBU you must identify risks at the workplace (in consultation with all interested parties), and where possible eliminate or minimise those risks to as low as is reasonably practicable.

the risk

All persons in the building and construction industry are at risk of exposure to COVID-19.

As a PCBU, you must do what is reasonably practicable to keep your workers a safe distance apart.

Control measures need to be implemented that mitigate risks associated with exposure to COVID-19, even if that means delays or disruptions to the project schedule.

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MANAGING THE RISK

Screening

All persons attending site should be made aware of social distancing and self-isolation requirements. This may be undertaken prior to attending site or at least during site specific (or workplace) inductions and ongoing consultative arrangements.

Social Distancing

Coronavirus is spread via airborne contaminated droplets or by contact with contaminated hands, surfaces or objects. Social distancing is a necessity to combat the risk of exposure. Employers are advised to nominate a competent person(s) on site to ensure the following rules are applied:

- Keep a minimum 1.5 metre distance from others.
- Scheduling of workers should be done in a manner that keeps workers segregated from each other as much as possible.
- Toolbox talks should be carried out via video conference or phone call. If this is not reasonably practicable, they should be staggered between work groups and carried out in an open, well ventilated environment adhering to social distancing requirements.
- Staggering of start times, finish times and lunch breaks is also recommended to avoid congregating of workers on the site.

Social Distancing cont.

- Any form of quality assurance verifications (client, architect, certifier etc) should be booked when there is minimal contact with others on site and avoided where possible. Where these verifications cannot be avoided, they should be booked in advance or carried out remotely via provisions of documented evidence or visual/photographic imagery.
- Minimise the amount of people within a confined area (e.g. hoist, lift etc.) at any one time. Consider the use of stairwells for capable persons.
- Display government signage about social distancing.
- Maximise ventilation and minimise recirculated air.

Workplace Hygiene

Cleaning surfaces with household disinfectant and washing of hands with alcohol-based sanitiser or soap and water will kill coronavirus. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth or nose. Normal cleaning regimens should be increased to facilitate staggering of work activities and cleaning of high touch areas. These areas include:

- Site facilities such as lunchrooms, drinking fountains, change rooms, toilets, showers, vending machines, taps and sinks etc.
- High touch points, such as guard/handrails, doors, plant, lifts and hoists and general equipment.

Facilities on construction sites should be readily accessible, with adequate supply of soap, water and toilet paper. They must be kept clean, properly stocked and in good working order.

Signage should also be displayed around the workplace to remind workers of COVID-19 mitigation requirements.

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Personal hygiene

Workers must practice good hygiene, including:
- covering coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue
- disposing of tissues properly
- washing hands often with soap and water, including before and after eating and after going to the toilet
- using alcohol-based hand sanitisers
- washing hair and clothes thoroughly every day
- stay more than 1.5 metres away from others
- staying home if sick
- avoid touching the face
- avoid handshakes or other close physical contact
- refrain from spitting

Consultation

PCBUs and duty holders should provide ongoing and current information to workers in relation to managing the risks associated with COVID-19. This will enable workers to raise any concerns.

It is important to remind workers that they have a duty to take reasonable care of 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.

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Home Isolation

If you have been overseas in the last 14 days, you should self-isolate from others for 14 days from the day you arrived from in Australia and monitor your symptoms.

If you have come into contact with a person confirmed having COVID-19, you need to self-isolate for 14 days after last contact with the infected person and monitor your symptoms.

If you are self-isolating you should stay separate from other people or be separated as much as possible. This applies particularly to those of high risk (such as the elderly or people with heart, lung or kidney conditions and diabetics).

People who have symptoms and might be infected with COVID-19 should wear surgical face masks when in the same room as another person & when seeking medical advice.
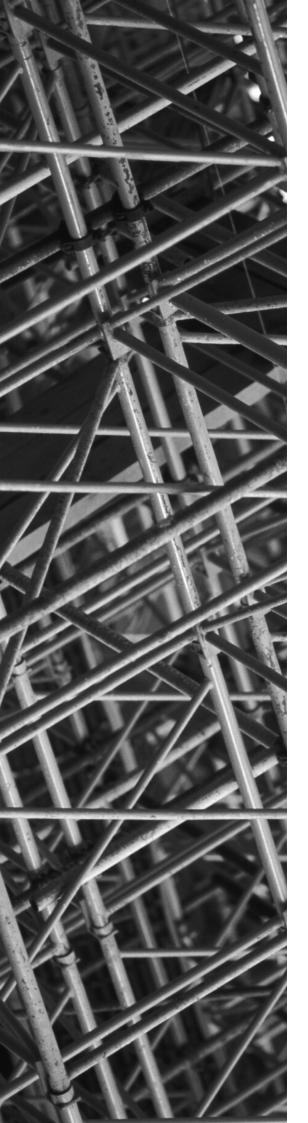
If someone in your household is self-isolating, the measures mentioned above should apply. Other members of the household are not required to be isolated unless they have been overseas in the last 14 days or have been in close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case.

If someone in the workplace is confirmed to have COVID-19, you need to follow the health advice from the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080 and start preparing to contact trace movements of worker(s) confirmed to have COVID19 within the workplace.

Travel

There are no limitations to travelling within NSW for the purposes of work, school, exercise or visiting family and friends. While businesses may not be able to completely eliminate the risk of workers contracting COVID-19 while carrying out work, they must do all that is reasonably practicable to minimize the risk. This includes trying to maintain a distance of a at least 1.5 metres from others (including anytime they are indoors, in lifts, and in vehicles). Where possible, open windows or adjust air-conditioning for more ventilation.

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Targeted Response

PCBU's & duty holders should consult with all interested parties to develop a site-specific emergency plan relevant to their workplace. The emergency plan should include a targeted response to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, in the event a person(s) becomes infected with the virus. The targeted response should address the following:

- Identify "confirmed case" or "close contact"
- Notify Department of Health on 1800 020 080
- Prepare to evacuate the work site or work area(s) pending advice from Department of Health & the ability to social distance during evacuation.
- Start preparing to contact trace movements of person(s) who may have come into close contact with confirmed positive case of COVID-19.
- Consider what essential services, plant & equipment & other hazards are needed to be made safe before evacuation of site commences.
- Calmly notify everyone on site or within relevant work area(s) that the work site/area needs to close pending further instructions by Department of Health & time for cleaners to conduct a deep clean of the site/area(s).
- Notify SafeWork NSW as a "Notifiable Incident" on 13 10 50
- Consult with Department of Health to confirm if works can resume on site.

Further information on COVID-19 planning can be found on the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission website below

https://pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/my-business-covidsafe-plan.pdf

Further Information

National Coronavirus Health Information line:
1800 020 080

NSW Health Website – COVID-19 (Coronavirus):
NSW Department of Health – Coronavirus FAQ's

Master Builders NSW COVID-19 Information webpage:
www.mbansw.asn.au/covid19