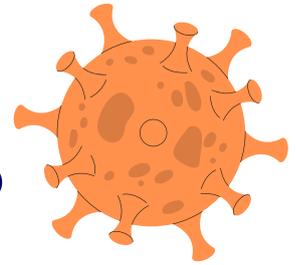# COVIDSAFE PLAN

Get your workplace COVID ready

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Getting your workplace COVID ready

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COVIDSAFE PLAN

Get your workplace ready for COVID

DEVELOPING A COVID PLAN

Union Delegates and Elected Safety and Health Representatives have a key role to play in making your workplace COVID safe

COVID is a significant health and safety risk. Under Western Australian Occupational Safety and Health Legislation your employer must identify risks relating to COVID and have a plan on what will be done to protect and support workers

Safety representatives must be consulted on this plan. Union representatives should be part of the conversation too.

If your workplace already has a COVID Plan, consider how this plan needs to be reviewed given the new highly infectious Omicron variant.

1. IDENTIFY THE RISKS AND COLLECT INFORMATION

Get prepared to speak to your employer by assessing risks and identifying what measures are already in place. Things to consider:

- What are the physical and psychological risks of COVID at your workplace? (including violence and aggression in customer/client facing roles)
- Are processes clear and easily understood if someone is exposed?
- Are some staff more vulnerable than others?
- How well is your workplace managing physical distancing, cleanliness and hygiene?
- What PPE is available and is it sufficient?
- What alternative working arrangements are available?
- What mental health support is available?
- What staff consultation and training is needed?

Use the **Identifying Risks** questionaire to assess your workplace.

2. REQUEST A MEETING WITH YOUR EMPLOYER

Elected safety representatives and elected union reps need to be involved in developing or improving a workplace COVID Plan. The first step to getting a plan in place is to request a meeting with your employer. In that meeting you will discuss the hazards you have identified and how the employer is going to address and control for them.

Make sure you reach out to your union for advice and use the **Request for consultation** template letter if you are not sure what to say.

3. ELIMINATE THE RISK

When you meet with your employer, they should start by trying to eliminate risks, not just control or manage them.

For example, in a workplace that practices 'hot-desking' or has workers share tools or equipment, your employer could eliminate the risk of COVID transmission on shared surfaces by assigning everyone their own desk or not sharing tools or equipment. If this is not possible, then you could discuss controlling the risk by sanitising surfaces and cleaning.

Some measures to consider with your employer are:
- Workplace physical (social) distancing – including adjusting seating arrangements, increased working from home arrangements (if applicable) and changed service arrangements
- Changing practices around shared workspaces
- Improved cleaning, ventilation, and air flow
- Signage and reminders about handwashing, and coughing, for workers and visitors
- Clear communication and processes regarding what to do if workers and visitors have symptoms
- Processes to address increased aggression or non-compliance with government COVID restrictions

Check-out the **Managing Risks** factsheet for more information.

When you and your employer have negotiated a COVID Plan, ask for it in writing. You and all your colleagues will need to check measures are implemented and are working to keep you safe.

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Identifying Risks
COVIDSafe Questionaire

IDENTIFYING RISK

The following questions will help you understand how well your workplace is preventing you and your workmates from contracting COVID at work.

Completing this sheet will help you prepare to speak to your employer about getting a COVID plan for your workplace.

SUPPORTING WORKERS

Coronavirus is a highly infectious virus that can spread from people with mild or no symptoms. Preventing infection requires anyone who becomes sick, including workmates or close contacts, to isolate and get tested.

1. Is paid pandemic leave available to all workers, including casuals, labour hire and contractors, who need to be tested or isolate because of exposure to COVID?

2. At your workplace is there a plan on what to do if someone is suspected, or confirmed as having COVID?

HOW SAFE IS YOUR WORK?

3. Are there additional protections, including remote work or additional paid leave during the pandemic, in place to support vulnerable workers? This includes:
- older workers
- workers with weakened immune systems
- workers with medical conditions (such as high blood pressure heart and lung conditions, kidney disease and diabetes)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions

HOW SAFE IS YOUR WORK?

4. Does your workplace have a culture that encourages workers to take sick leave when they are sick?

5. Does your work have a plan to control for worker interaction with other people in the workplace eg. Patients, clients, customers or students?

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

The COVID Omicron variant is highly infectious and can spread from person to person. People should keep at least 1.5 metres from each other. The following questions are aimed at identifying how effectively your work is practicing the best possible physical distancing.

6. Where it is practical and safe, are workers working from home?

7. Is your work conducted indoors or outdoors? If Outdoors (go to Q.8)
• If indoors, is there less than 1 person for every 4 square meters (for example an indoor work area that is 8m x 4m is 24sqm. There should be no more than 6 people working in that space)
• If indoors, do you have your own workstation or do you share one?
• If shared, are they cleaned and disinfected in between use?

8. Does your work or workstation require you to work regularly within 1.5m of colleagues or other people (customers)?
• If yes, are there Perspex barriers (or similar) separating you from others?

9. Are workers required to use common areas, such as lobbies, lifts, building entry point, toilets, and lunch rooms where people touch furniture and fixtures?
• If yes to the above, are good physical distancing measures applied?
Examples of good physical distancing measures include staggered start/finish/lunch breaks, limits on numbers using lifts and regular cleaning and disinfecting.

WORKPLACE CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE

10. Is all shared furniture, tools and equipment cleaned and disinfected in between users?

11. Does everyone have easy access to hand washing facilities with soap and water and other products such as alcohol-based hand sanitizer (including time to wash)?

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12. Are common areas and fixtures that are commonly touched, cleaned and disinfected more regularly than before March 2020

13. Safety gear (PPE) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is an important measure to control risks to workers from COVID. It is important to understand what is appropriate for your work and to be trained on how to use it.

MENTAL HEALTH

Employers have a duty to protect workers health and safety and this includes your mental (psychological) health.

Changes to work arising from the pandemic may include:
• working remotely
• changes to job roles
• increased or decreased workloads
• increased customer and client aggression

14. Has your employer discussed with you risks to psychological health during the COVID pandemic?

15. Have they made changes to reduce these risks?

16. Is there a clear process for workers to report these risks, as well as any injuries arising from them?

CONSULTATION AND TRAINING

By law workers are required to be consulted about the risks to health and safety and the plans and controls put in place to manage them. Workers have the right to elect other workers to Safety Representatives to work with your employer to represent the interests of workers.

17. Has the employer consulted with union representatives, Safety Representatives, union delegates and workers about COVID risks and the plan to manage and support workers?

18. Has your employer provided training and education to identify and deal with COVID risks?

19. Do you have a worker elected and union trained HSRs or delegates?

20. Does your workplace have a culture that encourages workers to raise concerns about health and safety?

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COVIDSafe
Request for consultation

Dear _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

I am writing to seek consultation on the development of a COVID Plan for our workplace.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 Section 19 states employers must "provide and maintain workplaces, plant, and systems of work such that, so far as is practicable, the employees are not exposed to hazards".

In my role as this workplace's Safety Rep / Union Delegate I am seeking further information on how the employer will address the following risks:

1. Inadequate social distancing

2. Avoidable potential transmission on shared surfaces

3. Potential transmission in places staff interact with the public, including front-desks, counters, or workshops.

4. Unlclear processes for attendence of the workplace when unwell or potentially exposed to COVID

5. Appropriate protective equipment (masks, gloves) not provided

6. Other

Details:
_ _
_ _
_ _
_ _
_ _

I am formally requesting a meeting to discuss arrangements to protect the health and safety of all workers within 10 working days.

Regards,

Your Name: _
Job Title & Department: _
Representative Position: Safety Rep OR Delegate
Date & Time_ _

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Managing Risks
COVIDSafe Strategies at Work

COVID IS A HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK.

Employers must protect the health and safety of workers and others. Every workplace needs a plan for what will be done to protect and support workers. Health and safety representatives must be consulted on this plan.

WORKERS ARE EXPERTS

As with any other risk, employers must now consider the most reliable ways to prevent harm from COVID. You and your coworkers have valuable information that can help your employer make a COVID safety plan.

Industry specific risk-management strategies for your industry can be found at: https://covid19.swa.gov.au/

ELIMINATING RISKS

Managing risks from COVID involves applying the 'hierarchy of controls'. The hierarchy of controls tells employers to try to eliminate risks entirely before they try to manage them with personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE should only be used where elimination or isolation are not possible.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Working remotely – this may be working from home or working at a different location where there are fewer people and it is easier to implement the distance of 1.5 metres between people. These options are likely to require the lengthening of time to carry out tasks, e.g. reducing the number of people working on any one task at a time. This will require a clear consideration of increased workload.

Physical distancing will not be practicable for many workers, e.g. frontline workers caring or working with people or where task or safety requirements require more than one-person, e.g. equipment operation, confined space entry, working at heights etc. In most of these circumstances, control measures will rely on infection control measures through changing the way people work and the use of personal protective gear.

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Working at a distance – if remote working or working from home is not practicable, your employer must take measures to implement physical distancing (to 1.5 metres)

Here are some examples to assist when deciding what are the best measures for your work:

- Workstations moved or rearranged to keep people from being closer than 1.5 metres.
- Small work teams and limits or restrictions on mixing between teams
- Perform tasks at separate times when less people are around. This should be done by agreement with workers as changes to hours or locations could create other hazards.
- Control handovers between shifts to minimise contact
- Divide and separate critical personnel and teams – via location, shift structures or onsite protocols
- Change the flow or direction of people to decrease contact, e.g. ensure entrances and exits are separate, change how people move around the site
- Limit to one the number of people in vehicles or small spaces – without introducing other safety hazards
- Use technology to decrease contact between workers
- Change the timing and location of breaks to make sure 1.5 metres of separation is achievable. This should be done by agreement with workers.

WORKPLACE CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE

Physical distancing by itself will not be enough – a combination of controls is necessary.

Improve ventilation:
As COVID is spread by breathing in contaminated air, clean air inside a building is essential. There are several ways to improve air quality:

- Increase the amount of outside air by opening windows,
- For air conditioning systems, increase the air exchange rate which is the measure of the number of times the air inside a building gets replaced with air from outside in an hour

I it is not possible to do either of these things or if a ventilation audit raises concern - use of a high-efficiency particulate air filter.

Cleaning and disinfection:
- Improve and increase cleaning especially of shared areas, facilities like washrooms and meal areas, tools and equipment, all hard surfaces. This should include in between shifts or where new workers are entering an area
- Additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities, providing soap, water and Health Department approved hand sanitiser in as many spots as possible
- All workers must be given the time and access to the facilities and equipment needed to protect themselves and others.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Depending on your work, personal protective equipment might include: eye protection, respiratory protection, clothing, gloves etc. Protective equipment must not be shared between people and as much as possible not reused.

While workers are responsible for providing masks when travelling to/from work. Workplaces must also have a supply of masks in the event of personal mask contamination or provide for higher quality masks when workers are in high risk situations.

Health officials provide advice about workers who need PPE, the type of PPE required and for what tasks.

TRAINING AND CONSULTATION

Employers have obligations to train, supervise and provide workers with information to enable working in a healthy and safe manner. If your workplace is implementing new measures to prevent the spread of COVID your employer needs to offer consultation, training, and support.

Workers and their safety representatives must be consulted about all measures being taken and elected safety reps have the right to request a review of risk controls when situations change.

COVIDSafe
Report a hazard at work

What can workers do when there is a risk at work?

When there is an immediate risk at work it is important for safety reps and workers to know how to raise it and get a response.

Report the hazard

Under Section 20 (2) (d) of the WA OSH Act (1984), an Employee has a duty to report hazards to their employer immediately.

You can do this by giving a letter to your employer or email them to notify of a risk at work. If you have an online OSH reporting system, you should use that as well. Here is a template to get you started:

Use the risk matrix below to determine the risk rating & timeframe for fixing the issue.

Risk Rating = Likelihood x Severity

Severity			Improbable 1	Remote 2	Occasional 3	Probable 4	Frequent 5
Catastrophic	5		5	10	15	20	25
Significant	4		4	8	12	16	20
Moderate	3		3	6	9	12	15
Low	2		2	4	6	8	10
Negligible	1		1	2	3	4	5

Likelihood

Catastrophic	STOP
Unacceptable	URGENT ACTION
Undesirable	ACTION
Acceptable	MONITOR
Desirable	NO ACTION

RISK RATING & REPONSE TIMES

Catastrophic
Immediately

Significant
24 – 48 hours

Moderate
3 – 5 working days

Low
Up to 7 working days

Can a group of workers submit a hazard notice?

We encourage multiple employees submitting hazard notices, for the same issue, at the same time. This sends a clear message to the employer that their workers are united in their pursuit of a safe workplace.

What if they ignore me?

Under Section 23K, your employer must get back to the employee who reports a hazard, within a reasonable time, and tell them how they fixed the hazard or what they intend to do to reduce the level of risk associated with that hazard. Send them a notice or a reminder that this needs to happen.

If they ignore this then you can escalate the issue to the OSH Rep, they will need to try and resolve the issue by consulting with the employer. If the employer continues to take no action, the OSH Rep has the power to issue a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN).

You can also contact WorkSafe WA for advice and support 1300 307 877 and notify WorkSafe WA of the hazard directly and anonymously: commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/notify-us

What of the matter is urgent?

If the matter is urgent you have the right to cease work. Under Section 26 of the Act, if you believe that you reasonably cannot continue to perform the work that you have been employed to do as you or others are being exposed to imminent and serious injury or harm to your health, then you can inform your employer that you no longer feel safe to continue with that task. Then contact your union.

You cannot walk off the job.

Instead make yourself available for alternative work arrangements. This could involve undertaking other duties at the same workplace or establishing a working from home arrangement. If the employer cannot provide safe alternative working arrangements then you can be sent home. If this occurs you should not have to use any leave entitlements and the employer should pay you as per normal.

Are safety reps responsible for workplace safety?

No. Being a safety or OSH rep is a voluntary position and the legislation stipulates that safety reps are protected from civil liability arising from the performance of their functions.

Strength in numbers

The more members in your workplace the more power you must make changes to workplace conditions as a group. Your union can assist with the resolution of health and safety issues and the elections of reps. Join now to act on OSH issues in your workplace: https://www.actu.org.au/get-involved/join

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COVIDSafe reporting
Hazard notification

Dear Dept/Line Manager

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984, S.20 (2) (d), Duties of Employees I am reporting a workplace hazard to you.

The Hazard is:
_ _
_ _and is located at the following workplace.

Workplace: _

I have used the risk matrix below and believe that the level of risk associated with this hazard is _.

Under S.23k of the OSH Act you have a duty to investigate this hazard and inform me how you intend to resolve this hazard. According to the risk matrix below this should occur within _ _ _ _ working days.

Risk Rating = Likelihood x Severity

Severity			Improbable 1	Remote 2	Occasional 3	Probable 4	Frequent 5
Catastrophic	5		5	10	15	20	25
Significant	4		4	8	12	16	20
Moderate	3		3	6	9	12	15
Low	2		2	4	6	8	10
Negligible	1		1	2	3	4	5

Likelihood

Catastrophic	STOP
Unacceptable	URGENT ACTION
Undesirable	ACTION
Acceptable	MONITOR
Desirable	NO ACTION

RISK RATING & REPONSE TIMES

Catastrophic
Immediately

Significant
24 – 48 hours

Moderate
3 – 5 working days

Low
Up to 7 working days

I have contacted my union to keep them informed of safety issues impacting on staff.

Your Name _
Job Title & Department _
Representative Position Safety Rep / Delegate
Date & Time _

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COVIDSAFE PLAN
Electing a Safety Representative

WHY YOU NEED A SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE

Both union and safety representatives can be part of making a COVID Risk Assessment and Plan.

A formally elected safety rep has additional support including receiving training for their role, being allocated time and resources, participating in consultation with the employer amd performing routine and incident inspections These powers will be increasingly important as WA moves to community transmission.

 If your workplace does not yet have a safety represnettive (or needs more!) you can start the process to elect one today:

https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/election-safety-and-health-representatives

Once an election is called, workers are more likely to step up . Even if you aren't sure who at your workplace will nominate as a Safety Rep, we encourage you to kick start the process.

COVID SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Many workers may be exposed to COVID in our workplace and community this year.

We cannot completely prevent this, but we can all take steps to reduce the spread.

- Workers must comply with any reasonable management direction on health and safety matters (If you think something is not reasonable – seek out support from your union office).
- Workers should follow health advice and when symptomatic or when exposed to COVID at an exposure location.

Your employer must notify you if you have potentially been exposed to COVID in the workplace and you must also notify your employer if you have potentially exposed other workers to Covid

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