

COVID-19 Workplace Safety Guide

COVID-19 (coronavirus)

Purpose

This document outlines considerations to support a staged return to office activities as restrictions change through the phases of the pandemic.

As restrictions change, it is important to continue to eliminate or control the exposure of COVID-19 to employees.

Throughout the pandemic, circumstances may require tightening or lessening restrictions based on advice from the Government, NSW Health and DCJ requirements.

Visit the [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) Response Information for DCJ Staff](#) intranet page.

Key considerations

- Workplaces may need to plan a phased approach when returning employees to the office.
- In some circumstances, individual workplaces may be at different stages of controls based on the level of risk, location and [risk of an outbreak](#), essential services required and staff availability.
- Communication should be maintained with employees throughout any changes to the workplace, and activities should be risk assessed and controls implemented so far as reasonably practicable and in consultation with staff, where possible.
- Control measures and routine monitoring should be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate and effective.

Prior to returning offices/work activities to full capacity, at a minimum the following actions should be considered. Further guidance can be found in the following guides:

- A [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#) will be required for each workplace including operational and office based workplaces.
- [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan – Quick Reference Guide](#)
- [COVID-19 Workplace Blueprint](#)

1. Review work from home arrangements

Consideration should be given to continuing work from home arrangements where possible to reduce impacts to vulnerable staff, support employees who have carers or family duties, support those who wish to continue working from home and to reduce the need for interaction on public transport.

For those continuing to work from home consider:

- Assisting teams to establish and sustain work plans and sustainable remote work practices
- Encouraging employees to complete the [Work from home checklist](#).
- Reviewing the [Working from home page](#) on the DCJ COVID-19 website.

2. Consider vulnerable employees

Consider whether employees who are vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19 can continue to work from home or modify their work activities to reduce exposure in line with medical and government advice. Vulnerable employees include:

- people aged 65 years and over with one or more chronic medical conditions
- people over the age of 70
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and over with one or more chronic medical conditions
- people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems
- pregnant persons.

Information is available on the intranet – [FACS](#) and [Justice](#).

3. Ensure social distancing arrangements in the office

Arrangements will need to be made to ensure social distancing continues in the office environment, this includes, but is not limited to:

- Maintaining 1.5m distance between people.
- Putting up posters to remind employees of social distancing requirements. Link to [poster](#).
- Using workstations in a manner which maintains social distance.
- Continuing to restrict large gatherings in line with government restrictions, such as training or large meetings.
- Restricting the numbers of people in shared spaces.
- Erecting signs at entrances to lifts and meeting rooms to ensure maximum capacity is not exceeded. Refer to [Number of people in allowed in space poster](#).
- Instructing employees to have meetings by phone or online instead of in-person – if not possible, require they meet in a large space, maintain 1.5m distance and keep meetings short.
- Providing social distancing markers on the floor in areas where employees or clients line up or where employees perform tasks.
- Reviewing regular deliveries and request contactless delivery, where possible.
- Arranging contractors to undertake works outside of work hours or before employees arrive or after they leave the office to reduce contact.
- Erecting, where possible, barriers for employees in reception areas (e.g. security, concierge staff, etc.). For example, acrylic/perspex stands to reduce face to face contact.

4. Consider changes to rostering or working arrangements for staggered starts/finished

It may be necessary to alter arrangements to reduce employees in the office to maintain social distancing requirements and reduce potential exposure.

- Review arrangements to identify opportunities to limit the numbers of people in the workplace at any one time, for example, allocating employees to teams (e.g. splitting teams in thirds and having them off-site for a 7-14 day period) and rotating them between days in the office and days working from home.
- Consider staggering breaks to reduce congregations of employees in shared spaces such as kitchens.

Utilising the full flexibility of Flexible Working Hours Agreements to enable staggered starting and finishing times, particularly where a building requires lift access

5. Maintain hygiene practices

- Implement hand sanitiser stations at entry and exit points and around the workplace.
- Ensure bathrooms are well stocked with hand wash and paper towel.
- Ensure hand hygiene posters are displayed in common areas such as bathrooms and kitchens. Refer to [How to hand wash poster](#) and [Stop the Spread poster](#).
- Instruct employees to clean frequently touched surfaces several times a day with detergent or disinfectant solution or wipe; this includes keyboards, telephones, desktops, etc.
- Where possible restrict the use of hot-desking or sharing of equipment. Where not possible, employees must ensure desks; desk items and shared items are cleaned before and after use. Refer to [Sharing Workstations](#).

6. Arrange environmental cleaning

- Ensure areas frequented by employees or others are cleaned on a more frequent basis.
- Arrange for additional environmental cleaning – consult with Assets and Infrastructure, where required.

7. Review work activities

- Review the [Information for frontline staff page](#) and [FAQs](#) and implement appropriate controls to support employees who must undertake fieldwork or face to face contact with clients.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to the level of risk. Follow the [When to wear PPE guide](#).
- Follow the [emergency procurement process](#) to purchase PPE.
- When returning to the office, employees will need to review their ergonomic arrangements and follow any existing guidance/advice to set up their workstation. Support can be provided from the HRBP/District WHS team.

8. Monitor symptoms

- Put up signs in the workplace about the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Continue to direct employees to stay at home or return home, if they are unwell, and if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 ask them to get themselves tested.
- Remind employees of their [leave entitlements](#) if they are sick or required to self-quarantine.
- Follow the [Guidelines for potential and confirmed COVID-19 Cases - Managers \(Non-Custodial\)](#) should an employee test positive to the virus.

9. Adjust workplace emergency arrangements

In offices with reduced staff, the workplace may have limited wardens/first aiders to oversee an evacuation. Therefore, it is important occupants understand and still adhere to the alarm tones should an emergency arise.

Office occupants should be made aware, at a minimum, of the following:

- Upon hearing the "Alert" tone (beep, beep, beep), prepare to evacuate should the direction be given. Employees should not assume it is a "false alarm" even though there is no evidence of fire on your area/floor.
- If there is no warden available, all persons should, for their own safety, evacuate their area/floor when the "Evacuation" tone (whoop, whoop, whoop) is sounded and make their way to the designated evacuation point and await instruction from Emergency Services before re-entering the building.
- To assist employees who may have a disability or mobility issues (such as pregnant, injured) during times when wardens are not available, alternate Personal Emergency Evacuations Plans should be implemented. Managers should consult with employees who have a disability or mobility issues to identify suitable alternate arrangements; for example, relocation of employees to the lower or ground floor to ensure their capability of safely exiting the building during an evacuation, implementing a buddy system, etc.
- Where no First Aiders are available, building occupants should be reminded to contact Emergency Services by calling triple zero (000) in the event of a medical incident.

10. Support worker health and wellbeing

It is important to support employees to maintain their health and wellbeing during this time of change.

- Encourage employees to reach out for health and wellbeing support.
 - Help for former Family and Community Services employees can be arranged through Converge – call 1300 687 327 or email eap@convergeintl.com.au
 - Help for former Justice employees can be arranged through Benestar – call 1300 360 364 or email eapcentre@benestar.com
- Encourage employees to obtain their influenza vaccination.
- Encourage employees to visit the DCJ Coronavirus information for DCJ Staff – [Health and Wellbeing](#) page.

For more information

NSW Government

www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19

NSW Health

www.health.nsw.gov.au

National Coronavirus Health Information line

1800 020 080

NSW Public Health Unit

1300 066 055

Department of Communities and Justice

<https://coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au>

DCJ Corona Virus Information for staff

- [Workplace cleaning arrangements](#)
- [Leave entitlements](#)
- [Working from home](#)
- [Social distancing](#)
- [Emergency procurement](#)
- [Health and wellbeing](#)
- [COVID-Safe Workplace Signage](#)

Questions? Please email your questions to

coronavirus.questions@justice.nsw.gov.au

