



COVID-19 Recovery

A step by step guide to a safe reopening
for business

Introduction

Purpose

This information is targeted at managers, business owners and safety professionals who are charged with managing the safe reopening of their businesses. It is designed to:

- Provide a comprehensive framework for businesses to approach new ways of working in a COVID-19 environment.
- Provide practical guidance on dealing with COVID-19 risks at the workplace.

Refer to icare's 'Reopening for Business Factsheet for NSW Employers' for a summary of some of the key information in this document.

Who we are

At icare, we deliver best in class insurance and care services to the businesses, people and communities of NSW. Whether a person is severely injured in the workplace or on our roads, icare supports their long-term care needs to improve quality of life, including helping people return to work.

We provide workers compensation insurance to more than 326,000 public and private sector employers in NSW and their 3.6 million employees.

icare's team of injury prevention specialists are keen to partner with NSW businesses to support them in building a strong safety culture. For additional support on reopening your business, or for other health and safety matters, please contact us at: prevent@icare.nsw.gov.au

Disclaimer

The information presented is intended to assist employers with managing possible issues and risk control measures when reopening businesses. It is not intended to represent all issues and risk controls.

The impacts of COVID-19 and government legislation continue to be updated. Each business is different and work environments will need to adapt to these updates. Site-specific risk assessments should be carried out to address changes that may impact the safety of workers and others.

The information presented does not replace medical advice or government legislation and guidelines. Employers will need to stay up to date with such developments.

Topics

1. Planning
2. Risk management
3. Preparing individual workers
4. Supporting the broader workforce
5. Preparing the building and workplace
6. Risk control example: retail industry



1. Planning

Step 1: Planning

- Establish a COVID-19 workgroup within the business to oversee this transition.
- Prepare the workforce to deal with risks associated with COVID-19.
- Engage with other stakeholders such as suppliers, contractors, agencies, landlords and other agents.
- Ideally aim for gradual return to work.
- Plan for possible new configuration of the workplace environment.
- Start to address the six essential areas:
 - Preparing the building.
 - Preparing the workplace.
 - Controlling access to the workplace.
 - Creating a physical distancing plan.
 - Reducing touch points and increasing cleaning.
 - Ongoing communication.

Step 2: Review policies and procedures

Some policies and procedures will need to be reviewed and updated to address the new environment.

Take into consideration:

- Commonwealth and state legislation.
- New standards, codes of practice, industry protocols and other advisory notes or alerts.
- Employment awards, workers' entitlements and reporting requirements to government agencies.
- Developing COVID-19 specific procedures and resources.
- Develop a policy to respond to complaints or concerns that a worker may have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Establishing COVID-19 testing requirements that are appropriate for your business and industry.
- Testing and monitoring procedures with consideration to privacy requirements.
- Self reporting of cold or flu-like symptoms and staying home.
- Encouraging use of the COVIDSafe app.
- Consultation with workers on new procedures.

Step 3: Develop a response plan

Develop a plan if someone becomes ill with suspected COVID-19 at the workplace:

- Identify a room or area where, if needed individuals, can be initially isolated to minimise contact with others.
- Contact NSW Health or medical personnel.
- Follow NSW Health guidelines.
- Identify possible contacts with the individual.
- Follow NSW Health guidelines for isolation requirements for contacts.
- Identify areas of the workplace to be evacuated and cleaned.

Step 4: Ensure business continuity

Develop a contingency plan for possible COVID-19 outbreaks or include this into your current emergency plan:

- Plan to address possible outbreaks in the workplace or in the community.
- Plan to address how the business can continue if workers, contractors and suppliers have no or limited access to the workplace.
- Communicate the plan to workers and other stakeholders - emphasise what they must do and must not do.
- Include mental health and social consequences in the plan and offer support.
- Consult, cooperate and coordinate with other stakeholders including public and community health officials.

2. Risk management

Step 1: Review the risk register – part 1

Review the current risk register in order to ensure it's up to date and that agreed controls are in place. This can be addressed by the following:

- Inspecting safety controls such as guarding.
- Testing of safety controls such as safety switches or alarms.
- Consulting with workers.
- Maintenance and service checks

Step 1: Review the risk register – part 2

Conduct additional risk assessments and determine risk controls such as:

- Distance between workers / workstations.
- Physical screens.
- Rostering arrangements.
- Staggering work and break times.
- Hygiene, including availability of hand washing facilities and/or sanitisers.
- Cleaning process.
- Ensure the confidentiality of any employee health information.

Step 2: Applying physical distancing standards

Ensure physical distancing standards are applied:

- Limit gatherings; limit seating in kitchens and break rooms.
- Use videoconferencing for work meetings.
- Increase space between workers and customers.
- Adjust schedules; consider staggered shifts where possible; work on alternate days from the workplace and from home; stagger break times.
- Adjust work hours to use public transport during off peak times.
- Establish maximum numbers of individuals in a particular work space including at workstations, reception, meeting rooms, break rooms, lifts and vehicles.
- Monitor and follow government rules.



Step 3: Prepare for physical changes

Prepare for physical changes to offices and worksites:

- Creating barriers between workstations.
- Reconfiguring space.
- Limit equipment use, e.g. using a shared printer only when necessary.
- Limit sharing of equipment, e.g. using your own personal tools.
- Shared surfaces to be cleaned frequently.



3. Preparing individual workers

Step 1: Ensuring fitness for work

After being away from the workplace for a while workers' level of work readiness and fitness will likely to be reduced.

Options to manage work fitness and conditioning:

- Implement or encourage workers to undertake general exercise programs to maintain their fitness leading up to reopening.
- Establish realistic rostering arrangements.
- Obtain medical or functional clearance for workers if needed.
- Increase supervision and feedback.
- Establish adequate breaks.
- Task rotation for heavy/high risk activities.

Step 2: Review training and competency levels

Businesses will need to establish what training and/or competency assessments to be conducted to ensure the safe return of workers. Consider the following factors and how to implement them:

- Training workers in the new or updated procedures, focusing on any new processes that workers will need to follow.
- Reassessing workers' competency level for moderate to high risk tasks.
- Verifying if licences are still current; for example, high risk work licences.
- Increasing level of supervision and monitoring for the initial return-to-work period.
- Providing information on new procedures through multiple mediums such as electronic, posters, floor markings, alerts, and webinars.

Step 3: Consider re-inductions

After time has been spent away from the workplace, a full or partial re-induction may be required.

When considering what parts of the induction or other trainings program need to be delivered, consider the following aspects:

- Workers' specific needs and characteristics.
- What changes have been made to the workplace.
- What policies or procedures have changed.
- The level of risk associated with a task.
- The complexity of the task.
- The competency level of the employee.
- Whether contractors need to be re-inducted, or recertified in any way.

Step 3: Other induction considerations

Additional elements to be included in the inductions may include:

- Updated policies and procedures linked to COVID-19.
- Physical distancing rules.
- Personal hygiene standards.
- Additional cleaning regimes.
- Changes to sick leave arrangements if applicable.

Step 4: Supporting mental health

- It is important that your workers are supported in returning to the workplace and they are reassured that COVID-19 related health and safety risks are being addressed.
- Remember that workers facing changed work arrangements may display heightened emotional states.
- Job role clarity for workers, leadership and clear effective communication are critical elements to support good mental health. Plan your communication strategy well and check that it is effective.
- Consider what support services you can provide internally (e.g. mental health first aiders, peer support, training for managers on listening skills) or externally available (EAP, Beyond Blue, Black Dog institute). Make these known to your workers.

Step 5: Supporting unwell workers

- Establish clear reporting guidelines for workers who are feeling unwell.
- Establish a strategy for responding to a possible positive test to COVID-19.
- Determine COVID-19 testing requirements before returning to work.
- Clarify options to work from home until medical clearance is received.

4. Supporting the broader workforce

Step 1: Preparing the workforce

It is likely to be a challenging proposition for workers returning to work in the current environment, so it will be important to:

- Effectively communicate the return to work strategy and risk controls to workers. This will help to prepare the workers both physically and psychologically for the new way of working.
- Promptly address workers' worries and concerns regarding the return to work.

Step 2: Communication with workers

Update workers by providing communication, information and clear instructions to facilitate reopening the business.

Ensure that workers are informed as well as being able to contribute to the decisions, including:

- Establish COVID-19 working group for your workplace. This workgroup can have representation from workers, supervisors as well as high level management who have the authority to make decisions.
- Provide ongoing updates to address any changes as well as deal with new concerns.
- Signage/reminders to reinforce the message.
- Consult on changes to be made to the workplace and the procedures.
- Risk management workshops to brainstorm how to manage the risks.



Step 3: Effective communication

Effective communication with workers will be key to the success of transition back to work:

- Communicate frequently to reassure workers of changes being implemented.
- Encourage workers to participate.
- Conduct training for new skills needed.
- Regularly acknowledge workers' contributions.
- Consider using a wide range of communication channels and materials.
- Targeted communication for specific at risk workers.
- Communicate new or updated policies, procedures and emergency plan.
- Additional responsibilities may need to be allocated to ensure effective implementation of the new or updated procedures.



5. Preparing the building and workplace

Step 1: Review cleaning, hygiene practices and PPE

Review the current cleaning and hygiene practices in the workplace against current NSW government and Safe Work Australia recommendations.

- Provide PPE such as gloves or masks where appropriate.
- Establish a cleaning schedule for the workplace which addresses the level, type and frequency.
- Ensure adequate stocks of cleaning supplies can be maintained.

Step 2: Preparing the building

Preparing the building involves:

- Site inspections.
- Provision of PPE to workers undertaking the inspections.
- Cleaning and disinfection of the site, cleaners to be provided with PPE, training and adequate supplies of cleaning chemicals.
- Inspection of equipment, ventilation system, filters, water systems, drains and mechanical installations.
- Installing additional cleaning stations and signage

Step 3: Preparing the workplace

Workplace preparation must include allowing for physical distancing. This may include:

- Separating workstations, disabling alternate workstations or making other appropriate arrangements
- Establishing protocols for monitoring number of individuals on site
- Implementing foot traffic controls such as moving one way, installing markings on the floor and marks for queuing
- Adding panels between workstations
- Utilising unused space such as training and meeting rooms to space out workers
- Preventing the sharing of workstations where possible
- Cleaning shared surfaces between uses.

Step 4: Preparing the workplace

Review frequently touched surfaces with the aim of reducing the need for contact. This may include:

- Leaving light switches on or installing motion sensors.
- Providing wall-mounted hand sanitiser dispensers at critical points.
- Removing non-essential doors or leave them open.
- Minimising the sharing of equipment such as chairs or stationery and encourage everyone to use their personal equipment.
- Providing separate storage for workers for their personal and work items and clothing.
- Using technology such as cameras, automation and voice activation where possible.

Ste 5: Testing, inspection and maintenance regime

Establish what inspections, tests or maintenance activities are due or overdue that need to be completed.

Inspections, tests or maintenance may include:

- Plant and equipment
- Safety personal protective equipment
- Test and tag electrical equipment
- Safety mechanisms such as guards
- Tools
- First aid and emergency equipment.

Step 6: Pre-checks

Preparing the workplace requires pre-checks on the following:

- Fire, first aid and safety equipment
- Amenities such as kitchens and shared break rooms
- Restrooms
- Cleaning equipment and chemicals
- Supplies for work as well as hygiene
- PPE stock.

Step 7: Meeting and contact etiquette

- Establish clear guidelines for face-to-face contact and other meetings or interactions with colleagues and customers.
- Continue to use technology where possible for meetings and communication.
- Limit face-to-face meeting times.

Step 8: New tasks requiring approval

Some activities may now need management approval. Establish and communicate any new approval requirements, such as:

- Conducting face-to-face meetings.
- Conducting face-to-face training.
- Travel arrangements including modes of travel and travelling with co-workers and customers.
- Regional and interstate travel.
- Changing rosters or hours of work.

6. Risk control examples - retail (Safe Work Australia)

Physical distancing

- Limit physical interactions
- Stay 1.5m apart as far as possible
- Create floor markings
- Control traffic, one way where possible
- Conduct online work / work from home for some workers
- Rotate tasks
- Limit workers or split shifts
- Reduce number of tasks to be completed each day
- Postpone non-essential work
- Encourage contactless interaction.

Health checks and quarantine

- Direct workers to report symptoms or if they have potentially been in contact with a person diagnosed or suspected to have COVID-19
- Stop workers working if they display symptoms
- Obtain evidence of medical clearance before returning to work.

Worker hygiene

- Workers must practice hand washing for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap
- Covering coughs and sneezes with an elbow or tissue
- Immediately disposing of tissues
- Using alcohol-based hand sanitisers
- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and shared equipment
- Washing body, hair and clothes thoroughly every day
- Staying more than 1.5 metres away from others
- Reporting and staying home if experiencing any symptoms
- Avoid touching face and handshakes.



Adequate and accessible facilities

- Washrooms must be properly stocked and regularly cleaned
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Enough room to allow for physical distancing
- Enough hand wash facilities to provide for the increase in workers practising good hygiene.

Deliveries and other contractors attending the workplace

- Non-essential visits to the workplace to be cancelled or postponed
- Deliveries and other contractors to be given clear instructions
- Minimise number of deliveries and contractors on site at one time
- Provide hand washing and/or alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Direct visiting truck drivers to remain in vehicles and use contactless methods such as mobile phones to communicate
- Use electronic paperwork for deliveries and contractors where possible
- Use your own stationery such as pens.

Resources

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Fact sheet - Reopening for business;
A practical guide for managers and safety professionals

Brochure - Reopening for business;
A practical guide for managers and safety professionals

Employer Toolkit - Workforce sustainability:
COVID-19 recovery

Safe Work Australia

(<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>)

Guidance to assist with systematically implement the risks controls in this presentation.

'What can I do to keep my workers safe at the workplace and limit the spread of COVID-19?'

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/workplace-checklist-COVID-19>

Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet

(National COVID-19 Coordination Commission)

'My business's COVIDSafe plan'

<https://pmc.gov.au/nccc/resources/planning-tool-help-businesses-reopen-and-be-covidsafe>



icare.nsw.gov.au