



COVID-19 Recovery

A step by step guide to a safe reopening
for business

How to use this guide

This information is for managers, business owners and safety professionals who are responsible for 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.

1. Preparing the workforce

It is important you prepare the workplace for your staff's safe return. Everyone needs to understand how COVID-19 may have affected their role, changes to workplace and how work is carried out. This will help reduce uncertainty and support workers adjust to new ways of working

2. Communication

With amount of change experienced in such a short time both within the workplace and outside, effective communication will be paramount. You will need to use multiple communication methods to ensure that workers are informed, consulted and engaged in the new way of operating the business.

Its highly recommended that your business establish a COVID-19 workgroup to drive the consultation process and the development of the new procedures and risk assessments to be completed. Workers worries and concerns regarding return to work should be addressed.

3. Risk management

Review the current risk register to incorporate the new risk posed from COVID-19 and ensure other risks within the workplace remain adequately controlled. A separate risk assessment addressing COVID-19 should be carried out, (different areas of the business may need separate risk assessments). If the organisation has set up a Covid-19 workgroup, this may be conducted by the workgroup.

The risk assessment will help to identify any additional resources workers may need on returning to the workplace. Considerations include physical changes, social distancing, job role changes, staggered shifts.

4. Inductions and reinductions

As workers have spent a significant amount of time away from the workplace in addition to changes to some of the work practices, you should consider the re-induction of workers to address the new way of

doing business. This will also provide management with an opportunity to reassure workers that controls are being implemented to safeguard them from perceived risks.

5. New or revised policies and procedures

With the physical distancing requirements there are likely to be several work procedures that will require updating. The risk assessments are also likely to identify changes that will need to be made to work practices. You will need to identify these procedures and develop or update them in consultation with your workers.

6. Response plan and business continuity

You will need to develop emergency procedures in place if and when a worker is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. The procedure should address immediate isolation, contacting NSW Health, evacuation of the work area, cleaning and disinfection. The business will also need to plan for continuity of operations taking into consideration that the work site may need to be temporarily closed or operations significantly impacted.

7. Workforce management

The way work is scheduled and organised will need to be reviewed in line with government legislation and the organisational risk assessments. The rostering of workers, flexible work arrangements and engagement with other stakeholders will need to be reviewed in accordance with the new environment and procedures.

8. Training and competency

Some workers might require refresher training in some area of their duties. You should consult with workers to identify any training/competency gaps that may need to be addressed. You might also decide that for certain critical tasks workers will need to complete a competency assessment in order to verify that their knowledge and skill level is at an adequate standard. Workers will need to be trained in any new procedures developed in response to COVID-19.

9. Fitness for work

You will need to take into consideration your workers level of work fitness when allocating work activities and hours of work. Workers fitness level may have decreased during the time spent away from the workplace. A graduated return to work schedule is may be required for some workers depending on the job role

10. Cleaning and hygiene practices

Cleaning protocols will need to be ramped up to clean and disinfect the workplace. Cleaners will need to be provided with PPE, cleaning tools and chemicals in order to undertake the cleaning needed. Additional hand wash facilities and sanitiser supplies will be needed and workers encouraged to use them. Hang posters with instructions on how to wash hands. Cleaning of plant and equipment prior to or post use should be implemented.

11. Sick leave procedures

Workers will need to be informed of the sick leave procedures. If workers are unwell or have any symptoms they should be instructed not to come to work and be tested as per the NSW Health guidelines. Results are to be communicated to their manager prior to returning to work.

12. Testing, inspection and maintenance regime

It is likely that certain routine safety tests or inspections due during the shutdown period may not have been conducted. Employers should prioritise such tasks with the aim of ensuring safe operations.

12. Mental Health

It is important that your workers are supported in returning to the workplace and any perceived risk is addressed. Workers facing changed work arrangements may display heightened emotional states. Job role clarity for workers, leadership and clear effective communication are important. 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.

Additional resources

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Employer toolkit:

[Video and PowerPoint presentation for a safe return to business: a WHS guide for reopening](#)

[Full report for a safe return to business: a WHS guide for reopening](#)

[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>