

Industry Restart Guidelines Seasonal Horticulture

26 March 2021

Seasonal Horticulture

Agriculture has remained open during Victoria's restrictions. As Victoria's roadmap for reopening progresses, additional requirements are in place to ensure the safe employment of seasonal horticultural workers.

COVIDSafe

All businesses need to know their obligations and ensure they understand the current restrictions in place throughout Victoria. All Victorian farm businesses and labour hire providers need to have a COVIDSafe Plan.

Farm businesses/hosts using seasonal workers for seasonal horticultural work (including the picking, packing and harvesting of seasonal produce but not production of nuts, wine grapes and olives or storage/distribution activities post production) and labour hire providers also have additional obligations as determined by the Workplace Additional Industry Obligations Directions.

Farm businesses/hosts, labour hire providers and seasonal horticulture workers should refer to the Workplace (Additional Industry Obligations) Directions for further information on what their additional industry obligations are.

Other information about managing COVID-19 exposure risk in the agriculture industry is available on the [Worksafe website](#).

Horticultural harvest season

For many of Victoria's vital horticultural industries the harvest season has begun with the peak expected to occur between January and March 2021.

This document is intended to provide advice to **farm businesses/hosts and labour hire providers** on how to limit the potential for transmission of COVID-19 between workers and outline how harvest can be undertaken in a COVIDSafe way to protect seasonal workers, agriculture businesses, and our regional communities.

Under directions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*, **all horticultural (fruit and vegetable) operations (farm businesses/hosts) using seasonal workers for seasonal horticultural work, as well as labour hire providers**, must abide by the following requirements outlined in this guideline.

A **seasonal worker** is a worker who is temporarily employed or engaged to perform seasonal picking, packing or harvesting of horticulture (fruit and vegetables, excluding nuts, wine grapes and olives).

A **farm business/host** is the operator of a seasonal work premises who enters into a contract of employment with a seasonal worker, engages a seasonal worker in exchange for payment or enters into a contract with a labour hire provider for the engagement of seasonal workers.

A **labour hire provider** is a person who arranges, engages, supplies, subcontracts or otherwise provides seasonal workers (as employees, independent contractors or otherwise) for seasonal horticultural work in a seasonal work premises. This also includes a person who is self-employed or a sole trader.

A **seasonal work premises** is a farm or workplace where seasonal horticultural work is undertaken.

Current restrictions on Seasonal Horticulture

All businesses need to know their obligations and ensure they understand the current restrictions in place throughout Victoria.

Victorian moved to COVIDSafe settings from 11:59pm on Friday 26 February 2021, and the restrictions were updated from 6:00pm 26 March 2021. These restrictions will be reviewed regularly, to ensure they reflect current public health advice. You must stay up to date with any changes for your industry.

Industry Restart Guidelines have been prepared to assist workplaces to operate safely, in accordance with the changing of restrictions, while ensuring the public feels confident that their health and safety is being protected. Workplaces covered include all farms and workplaces where seasonal horticultural (fruit and vegetables, excluding nuts, wine grapes and olives) picking, packing and harvesting work is performed and where seasonal workers are employed or engaged. There are also requirements for labour hire providers who engage seasonal workers for horticultural businesses.

Under directions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*, all Victorian workplaces in this industry must abide by the following restrictions.

Current restrictions	
Open with COVIDSafe requirements	
COVIDSafe Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All workplaces with onsite operations (including businesses/hosts using workers for seasonal horticultural work and labour hire providers) must have a COVIDSafe Plan. Home-based businesses must also have a COVIDSafe Plan.
Capacity	<p>Seasonal Horticulture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to density quotient (one person per two square metres). <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tours and transport must operate consistent with Tour and Transport Guidelines. Accommodation must operate consistent with Accommodation Guidelines.
Record keeping	<p>For all Victorian workplaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers must keep a record of all workers and visitors who attend the workplace for longer than 15 minutes, including first name, contact number, date and time of visit and areas of the workplace visited. Many workplaces are required to use electronic record keeping (e.g. QR code systems) for this purpose. These workplaces must use the Free Victorian Government QR Code Service or an electronic system linked to the Victorian Government API (Application Programming Interface) (venues will have a 28-day compliance amnesty starting from 6:00pm 26 March 2021). Electronic recording keeping is strongly recommended in all other workplaces. Find out more about which workplaces require electronic record keeping and the Victorian Government Visitation Application Programming Interface (API). If a worker or visitor to the workplace does not have a mobile phone or other device that allows them to access the electronic record keeping system, the workplace should make reasonable efforts to record the relevant information using its own electronic devices (e.g., a tablet or terminal). If it is not possible to record the information electronically because no device is available, the workplace should use an alternative record keeping method to record the information. Employers must keep records to show compliance with directions in force including all logs created during the time of directions being in force, work premises rosters, time and attendance records and payroll data.
Face masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must always carry a face mask with you when you leave home unless you have a lawful reason not to. Face masks continue to be mandatory in some locations, unless a lawful reason not to wear one applies. For a full list of settings where masks continue to be mandatory, see: Face masks page.
Signage	<p>For all Victorian workplaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where a workplace has a publicly accessible space, employers must display signage at each public entry to each indoor and outdoor space, indicating maximum capacity and face mask restrictions where required.

Current restrictions on Seasonal Horticulture - continued

All businesses need to know their obligations and ensure they understand the current restrictions in place throughout Victoria.

Current restrictions	
Open with COVIDSafe restrictions	
Cleaning	<p>For all Victorian workplaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers should ensure shared spaces and public spaces are cleaned with disinfectant regularly, with high touch surfaces cleaned twice each day. Shared equipment should be cleaned between uses. Provide clean water and soap for washing hands, and well-maintained toilet facilities for workers in locations that are reasonably adjacent to work areas, and as far as reasonably practicable, separate from the employers' premises or farm homestead.
Training requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm businesses/hosts or labour hire providers must provide training to seasonal workers, including but not limited to: good hygiene practices, advising workers not to attend when unwell and arrangements for workplace bubbles.
Workplace bubbles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm businesses/hosts should group workers with the same workers where reasonably practicable, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing separate shifts to minimise physical interactions between groups of workers attending different shifts separating workers into work areas dividing work areas into separate teams providing separate break areas for the separate teams, outdoor (with shade) where possible grouping workers from the same household in the same area or same team. To the extent it is reasonably practicable, there should be no mixing of the worker bubbles on site. Workers within a bubble should work and take breaks together. In addition, worker bubbles should, to the extent that is reasonably practicable, be maintained with respect to accommodation and transport.
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers must consult with health & safety representatives and directly affected workers in relation to risk identification and decision-making. Authorised officers or inspectors may inspect premises and records.

Six COVIDSafe Principles

All work premises must have a **COVIDSafe Plan** (see [Creating a COVIDSafe Plan](#)). A COVIDSafe Plan applies the six COVIDSafe Principles and sets out actions to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19 in the workplace. Display COVIDSafe signage in appropriate, high visibility locations.



1. Ensure physical distancing

All people in the workplace should be at least 1.5 metres apart and there should be no overcrowded areas. This means:

- Ensure workers and customers are 1.5 metres apart at all times. Where this is not possible, the duration of the close contact should be minimised
- Ensure the workplace abides by the relevant density quotient
- Limit the total number of workers and customers in an enclosed area.
- Avoid carpooling where possible.



2. Wear a face mask

- You must always carry a face mask with you when you leave home unless you have a lawful reason not to
- [Face masks](#) continue to be mandatory in some locations, unless a [lawful reason](#) not to wear one applies
- For a full list of settings where masks continue to be mandatory, see: [Face masks](#) page.



3. Practise good hygiene

Operators must regularly clean high touch-surfaces and encourage good hygiene practices by workers and customers. This means:

- Schedule regular cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces (including all surfaces and handrails) and make gloves available for this purpose
- Encourage regular handwashing by workers and customers, and make soap and hand sanitiser available for all workers and customers throughout the workplace.



4. Keep records and act quickly if workers become unwell

Have a strict policy that any workers who feels unwell must stay at home. This means:

- Support workers to stay home and get tested even if they only have mild symptoms
- Have a plan in place to immediately close down for cleaning and contact tracing if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Keep records of workers and customer details for contact tracing
- Ask workers to complete a pre-shift declaration (recommended).



5. Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces

Where possible, move activities to an outdoor area. This includes:

- Meetings
- Lunch breaks
- Customer registration.



6. Create workforce bubbles

Limit the number of people that workers are in prolonged close contact with. This means:

- Keep pools of workers rostered on the same shifts
- Avoid overlap in shift changes
- Limit or decrease the number of visitors or workers attending multiple worksites where possible.

Creating a COVIDSafe workplace: Seasonal Horticulture workplaces

All work premises **must** ensure they apply the six COVIDSafe Principles to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Workplaces included: Agricultural businesses where seasonal horticultural (fruit and vegetables) picking, packing and harvesting work is performed.

Create 'workforce bubbles' where practicable

Reduce the number of workers interacting with each other by creating workforce bubbles (teams within shifts) which remain separate during breaks. As far as practicable workplace bubbles should live and travel together.

Density quotient of one worker per two square metres applies in communal indoor areas (e.g. lunchrooms) and outside break areas

Air conditioner set to optimum air flow (non-recirculate) at the start of each workday

Encourage opening of windows or roller doors to circulate fresh air where possible

Face mask requirements

Adhere to current face mask restrictions (see Current Restrictions page at the start of this document). You must also adhere to specific face mask or other PPE guidelines for your industry.

Provide each worker with their own allocated equipment or tools where possible

Separate entrances and exits where possible

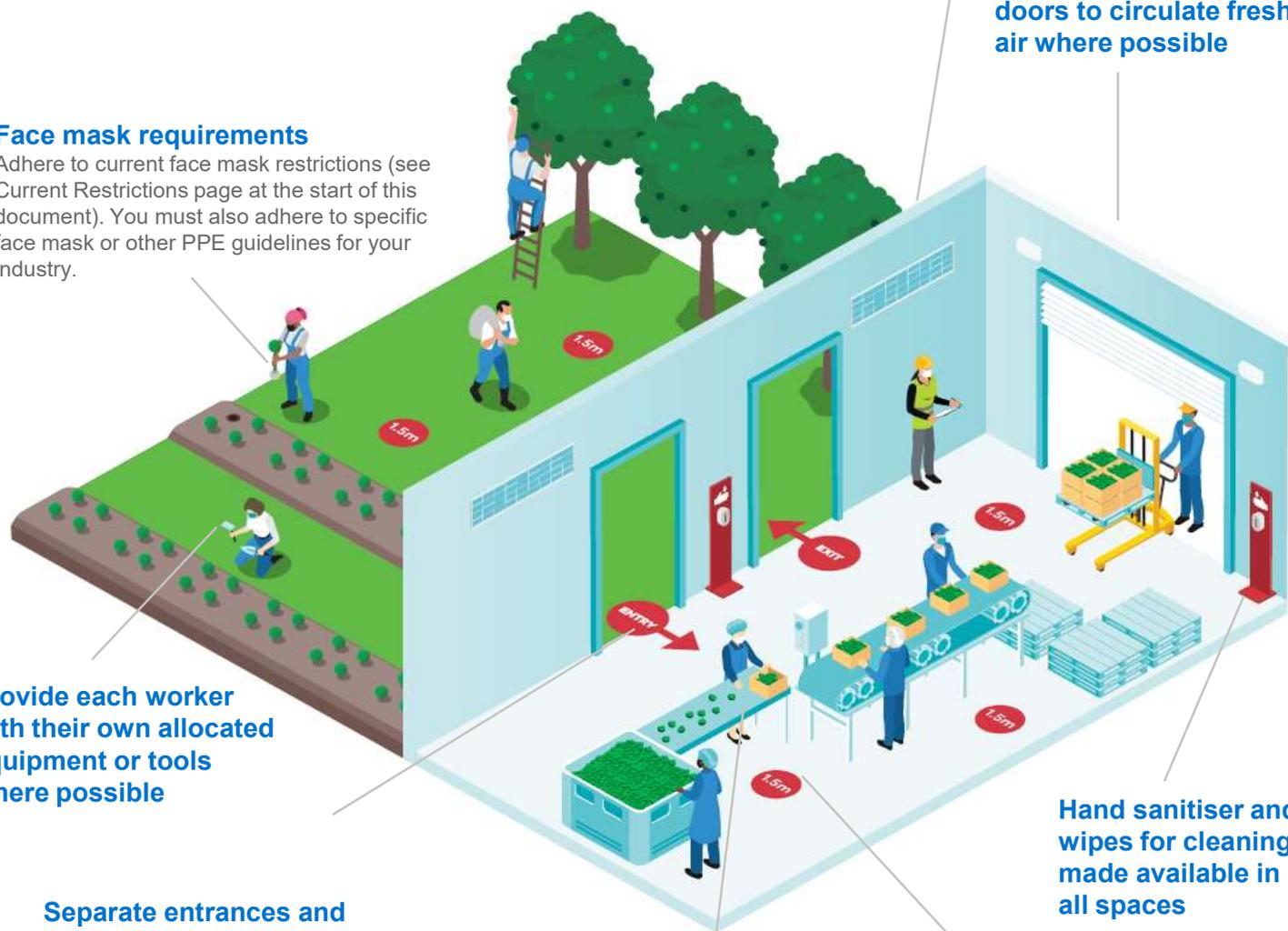
Cleaning and disinfecting schedule

Implement and display a cleaning schedule so it is easily accessible to workers.

Clean high-touch surfaces

Ensure all parts of tools, plant and equipment (e.g. buttons, switches, levers, handles and handrails) are cleaned and disinfected before and after use.

Floor markings spaced at least 1.5 metres apart to minimise contact





1. Ensure physical distancing

Physical distancing remains one of the most effective ways of minimising the spread of COVID-19 and is a vital part of creating a safe working environment.

Employers should implement physical distancing measures to create a COVIDSafe workplace. This means keeping a minimum distance of at least 1.5 metres between workers and visitors, where industry practices allow.

Density quotients apply to the number of people who can be in a venue or facility at the same time (see the 'Current Restrictions' table in this guideline).

Where a business has publicly accessible space(s), the business must display a sign at each public entrance to each space that specifies the maximum number of members of the public that may be present in the space at a single time. For additional information on calculating your density quotient, visit: [Two, four and eight square metre rules](#).

Ensuring physical distancing in your workplace

Worker breaks

Spread out break times to reduce the number of workers using communal facilities at the same time. Encourage workers to take breaks outdoors.

Minimise contact

Remove excess chairs and tables from communal break areas to encourage workers to maintain a minimum of 1.5 metres from one another.

Maintain physical distancing

Provide physical barriers to ensure physical distancing is maintained; consider installation of sneeze guards between operational areas or desk spaces between workers; and separate entry and exit points if practicable.

Training for workers

Provide all workers with training and guidance on physical distancing expectations while undertaking work tasks and socialising during breaks.

Provide site inductions

Establish appropriate site induction and training materials to inform workers of relevant COVID-19 risk management policies and procedures.

Work from home arrangements

Develop and provide workers with IT related guidance to enable remote working arrangements, for periods in which such arrangements are necessary, including connecting to the internet, use of VPN services, accessing relevant software and utilising platforms to facilitate virtual collaboration.

Avoid carpooling

Workers should avoid carpooling where possible. Employers should assist workers to find alternate transport options.

Floor markings

Use floor markings to provide physical distancing guides in areas that are likely to create a congregation of workers, customers or visitors (e.g. entrances and exits, counters, cashiers and break areas).



1. Ensure physical distancing - continued

Physical distancing remains one of the most effective ways of minimising the spread of COVID-19 and is a vital part of creating a safe working environment.

Ensuring physical distancing in sheds and communal facilities

Shed layout

Where possible, the shed layout should be configured to ensure that workers are spaced at least 1.5 metres apart from one another, do not directly face one another and have discrete 'working zones'.

Floor markings

Place floor markings in packing sheds to indicate how workers can maintain physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres. Floor markings can also be used for high-density areas of the work site such as reception or canteen areas where workers queue.



2. Wear a face mask

Adhere to current face mask restrictions (see [Current Restrictions](#) page at the start of this document). You must also adhere to specific face mask or other PPE guidelines for your industry.

A face mask must be fitted and cover the nose and mouth to provide the wearer protection against infection. Face shields on their own do not meet these requirements. Please refer to the [Department of Health \(DH\) guidelines](#) for further information. For the purposes of minimising environmental impact, reusable masks should be used instead of disposal alternatives where possible. Stay informed about the latest public health advice on washing your reusable masks.

Employers should encourage their workers to bring their own face mask. Where employers require employees to wear masks, there is an obligation for employers to provide a face mask if the worker does not have one. Where the work or task requires the use of specific types of face masks in the workplace, these must be provided by the employer. Where a worker seeks to provide and use their own face mask at work, an employer must ensure that it is meeting its obligations under the current Public Health Directions and the OHS legislative framework.

Employers have a responsibility to identify whether there is a risk to the health of workers from exposure to COVID-19 at their workplace.

Employers and workers have legal duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. See [WorkSafe Victoria](#) for information about minimising health risks in your workplace.

Additional information

Responsibility for wearing a face mask

Responsibility for wearing a face mask rests with the individual. Employers must take reasonable steps to ensure their employees wear a face mask at all times when working at the employer's premises, unless there is a lawful reason not to wear one.

Provide training on how to use PPE

Consider providing all workers with training/guidance on how to use PPE (e.g. face masks, face shields, gloves, etc) while undertaking work tasks and socialising during breaks.

Removing face masks to communicate

A face mask may be removed where a worker is communicating with another person who is deaf or hard of hearing, and the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication. You should maintain physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres.

Refusing service of customers not wearing a face mask

For the safety of workers and other customers, a business owner or worker can refuse service to customers not wearing a face mask when it is required for that workplace.

Display signage

When face masks are required appropriate [signage](#) (e.g. posters) must be displayed at entrances to indicate face mask requirements. A workplace could also consider displaying signage that highlights appropriate hygiene practises for changing face masks, such as the importance of washing hands before and after changing a face mask.



3. Practise good hygiene

Additional hygiene measures are a priority. Business managers should review these guidelines to maintain good hygiene in their premises, and document hygiene practices in their COVIDSafe Plan.

Health and hygiene go hand in hand. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of your workers, business owners are encouraged to refer to WorkSafe Victoria, '[How employers can use occupational health and safety \(OHS\) practice to plan for a pandemic](#)'.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 set out the requirements for businesses registered under the Act. Proprietors and workers should be familiar with the Australian Standards as they relate to their premises and businesses.

Workplace cleaning and disinfecting

Undertake initial pre-opening comprehensive cleaning and implement an environmental cleaning schedule to ensure frequent cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces and bathrooms.

Further advice about cleaning can be found at [Department of Health cleaning and disinfecting information](#).

Cleaning and disinfecting schedule

Ensure surfaces are cleaned regularly, with high-touch surfaces cleaned at least twice on each day.

Accessible cleaning products and disinfectants

Make cleaning products available near commonly used surfaces where possible (e.g. placing hand sanitiser near the printer/copiers, on tables and chairs, and in bathrooms).

Reduce high touch-points

Reduce touch points where possible, such as using contactless payments and workplace access cards, and using contactless drink fountains and entry-points.

Educate workers and visitors

Display posters on good hygiene and handwashing practices in prominent places and establish hygiene stations (with hand sanitiser) at entrances and throughout the workplace to encourage hand hygiene of workers and customers. Check [information](#) about appropriate disposal of masks and other PPE.

Employers of seasonal workers must provide an induction for all new workers that covers good hygiene practices, advising workers not to attend when unwell and arrangements for workforce bubbles.

Free infection control training

Free, short, accredited training is available to help workers identify and manage the ongoing risk of COVID-19 infections in the workplace.

[Free infection control training](#) will help businesses prepare to safely reopen and ensure their customers and workforce are protected. It is recommended that someone from each work premises completes this training.

Workplaces should regularly check that they are complying with current directions and advice provided by health authorities.



3. Practice good hygiene - continued

Provide suitable facilities

Provide clean water and soap for washing hands and well-maintained toilet facilities for workers, in a location or locations that are reasonably adjacent to work areas and as far as is practicable, separate from the farm homestead.

Cleaning shared tools and equipment

Ensure that all shared tools and equipment of harvest aids such as knives and shears, are cleaned and disinfected between users and are included in a comprehensive cleaning and disinfecting schedule. Where possible, consider providing workers with their own tools.

Hygiene tips for workers

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Wash or sanitise hands after making or receiving deliveries.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterwards.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- If you are required to wear gloves do not touch your face with gloved hands. Take care when removing gloves. Ensure you wash your hands after removing them.
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.

Workplaces should regularly check that they are complying with current directions and advice provided by health authorities.



4. Keep records and act quickly if workers or customers become unwell

All businesses must keep records of every person attending the workplace and must record staff attendance and shift rosters – see below. Businesses must also have a response plan, as part of their COVIDSafe Plan, in case a person with COVID-19 attends their premises.

Workplace attendance register

Under current public health advice, all Victorian workplaces are required to establish and maintain a '[workplace attendance register](#)' of every person who attends the workplace for a period of more than 15 minutes. This includes all workers (including sub-contractors) and any customers or visitors permitted in the workplace (including workplace inspectors). This may include using electronic record keeping, via the [Services Vic app](#) (the Victorian Government QR Code Service) or a [government API-linked electronic system](#). In some workplaces, electronic record keeping is required. Check [whether electronic record keeping is required](#) at your workplace.

If a worker or customer tests positive for COVID-19, a current and accurate workplace attendance register will allow the employer to immediately identify anyone who has been in close contact with that person within the 48 hours prior to the onset of their symptoms.

For more information regarding the definition of a close-contact, see: [DH COVID-19 Information](#).

Maintain business records

Under current public health advice, all Victorian workplaces must keep records to show compliance with these restrictions and must record worker movements, including rosters; time and attendance records; and payroll data.

Pre-shift declaration

It is recommended that workers declare in writing at the start of each shift and before entering a work premises that they are free of COVID-19 symptoms, have not been in contact with a confirmed case and are not currently required to self-isolate or self-quarantine. Refer to the [Staff Health Questionnaire](#) within these guidelines.

If a customer or worker who is a confirmed case of COVID-19 has attended your business while they are infectious, you must:

Undertake a risk assessment

You must undertake a risk assessment to help determine what actions are required. This may include closing part or all of the work premises to allow a comprehensive clean, as well as the identification and notification of [close contacts](#).

For more information see the [Workplace guidance for managing suspected and confirmed cases \(including risk assessment template\)](#).

Contact Department of Health and WorkSafe

- Notify DH of the case as per the Employer obligations in the Workplace Directions, providing it with your workplace attendance registers.
- Consult with DH on whether the business is required to stay closed for a short period to facilitate cleaning and enable contact tracing.
- Report the case to [WorkSafe](#).

Determine hot spots

- Determine what areas of the business were visited, used or impacted by the persons with COVID-19.

Clean the premises

- Close the affected area to prevent access prior to and during cleaning and disinfection.
- Consider engaging suitably qualified personnel to clean and disinfect the area.
- Open doors and windows to increase air circulation. Fans are not recommended.
- The workplace should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before it can be reopened and workers can return to work.

For more information, see [How to clean and disinfect after a COVID-19 case in non-healthcare settings](#).



4. Keep records and act quickly if workers or customers become unwell – continued

Next steps: Slowing the spread

Department of Health actions

The Department of Health (DH) will liaise with operators where someone has been at the business while infectious with COVID-19. DH may request information from the operator to assist with contact tracing. DH may also request the operator to assist with contact tracing. DH will contact anyone who is identified as a close contact of the case.

Business actions

Work with DH to ensure that all appropriate preventative measures have been taken prior to reopening the business.

Provide DH with a list of the customers, workers and other visitors (e.g. contractors, delivery workers) who may be close or casual contacts. Employers must keep a record of all workers and visitors who attend the workplace for longer than 15 minutes over the past 28 days.

Any worker who tests positive for COVID-19 should remain in home isolation until they have been notified by DH that they are no longer required to self-isolate and have met its criteria for release. The worker should follow DH guidance and their employer's policy.

Close contacts

Workers who are determined by DH as close contacts of a person with COVID-19 should not come to work until they have been cleared by the Department of Health. Close contacts includes both primary and secondary close contacts, and clearance criteria varies.

Contingency plans

If multiple workers are directed to be quarantined and this affects operational capacity, the business will need to consider its own contingency plans for disposing of raw materials (especially fresh ingredients), any work in progress, or short shelf-life stock to ensure food safety is maintained.

A note on privacy

Please respect the privacy of people with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and treat their condition with understanding and compassion. If a worker is quarantining, check in on their wellbeing regularly and monitor their mental health.

Additional resources

Workers who have been required to self-quarantine after a COVID-19 test may be eligible to receive a one-off payment of \$450 from the Victorian Government. Workers who are confirmed as COVID-19 positive may be eligible to receive a one-off \$1500 payment from Commonwealth Government's Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment for Victoria. Further information on coronavirus-related pay and leave entitlements can be found through the Fair Work Ombudsman at:

- [Pay and Leave During Coronavirus](#)
- [Health and Safety in the Workplace During Coronavirus](#)



5. Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces

In Victoria, employers have OHS duties and obligations to do what is reasonably practicable to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees.

As part of creating a safe working environment that addresses risks associated with potential exposure to COVID-19, businesses should have a plan in place to minimise the number of interactions conducted indoors and maximise ventilation, air quality and use of outdoor spaces.

This means, wherever possible, moving activities outside or to well-ventilated areas and keeping doors and windows open to ensure maximum ventilation. Where activity cannot be moved outdoors, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems may have a role in decreasing the risk of transmissions in indoor spaces by increasing the rate of air change, decreasing recirculation and increasing the use of outdoor air.

Actions your business can take

Air quality and ventilation

Open windows and outside doors where possible to maximise ventilation. Reduce or eliminate recirculated air and increase the use of outdoor air where possible. Use air conditioning to enhance the flow of air, ensuring that the fresh air mode is selected (rather than the recirculated air function). All air conditioning and ventilation systems should be regularly inspected, maintained and cleaned.

Fans (ceiling or free-standing) which move or disperse air are suitable for use in work and industrial settings provided they are not moving air across adjacent or nearby workers. Exhaust and industrial fans may also be beneficial in hot weather when strategically placed to move heat or air outside a building. Fans should not be used in enclosed indoor spaces such as elevators.

See [public health advice](#) on safely cooling your workplace.

Air quality when cleaning

Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation before commencing cleaning and disinfection. Keep doors and windows open after cleaning and disinfection to allow the cleaning agents to disperse in the airflow.

Move activities outside

Where possible, move internal meetings and activities to an outdoor area. Encourage workers to take their lunch breaks and any other breaks outdoors as well.

Consider steps to improve ventilation

Work with your building owner or manager to improve ventilation indoors. Measures include increasing the percentage of outdoor air and disabling demand-control ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.

Filter performance

Monitor and manage filters in accordance with manufacturer instructions. However, upgrading HVAC systems by incorporating higher grade filters can be very expensive and is not always feasible. Further, even a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter will not eliminate all concerns about airborne transmission.

Elevators

Work with your building owner or manager to consider whether supplemental air ventilation or local air treatment devices should be added to frequently-used elevator cars.



6. Create workforce bubbles

Having 'workforce bubbles' can help minimise the risk of infection and support contact tracing initiatives.

A 'workforce bubble' is a group of workers who limit their in-person interactions to other members of the group. This strategy focuses on reducing the number of individuals a worker comes into contact with, rather than the number of interactions. Should a worker test positive or have symptoms of COVID-19, it will help contain the spread to a minimum number of people within the bubble, rather than requiring the entire workforce to quarantine.

To minimise possible exposure and contact, businesses should:

Limit

the number of people that workers have prolonged close contact with

Modify

processes to minimise interactions between workers during breaks or when transitioning into or out of work periods where possible

Consult

with workers whose work is not essential to the physical operation of the business to determine if working from home or remotely is reasonably practicable

Review

shift arrangements to create smaller teams and avoid mixing workers across shifts.

Actions your business can take

Set up 'workforce bubbles'

Where practical, arrange operations to group workers consistently with the same workers including:

- developing staggered shifts to minimise physical interactions between groups of workers attending different shifts
- separating workers into work areas
- dividing work areas into separate teams
- providing separate break areas for the separate teams
- where workers are from the same household, ensure they work in the same area and same team.

Define work zones

Encourage assignment of workers to specific workstations to minimise the need to go into other spaces. Limit role or task rotation where possible so that workers can remain at a single workstation where possible. If workstations need to be shared, they should be shared by the smallest possible number of people.

Stagger shifts

Stagger or increase the time between shifts to eliminate bottlenecks and avoid intermingling between different teams.

Separate communal areas

Separate communal areas such as change rooms and tea rooms per workforce bubble to minimise intermingling between different teams.

Limit worker movement between sites

Where possible, limit each worker's movements to one worksite. It is recommended that employers keep a log of all employees working across multiple sites including date, time and place of attendance.



6. Create workforce bubbles - continued

Having 'workforce bubbles' can help minimise the risk of infection and support contact tracing initiatives.

Actions your business can take – continued

Limit interactions

Where possible there should be no mixing of the worker bubbles on site. Workers within a bubble should work and take breaks together. Worker bubbles should also be maintained with respect to accommodation and transport where possible.

Keep contact records

Keep records that will help manage workforce bubbles, such as knowing which workers are in different pools, start and end times of shifts etc. Employers must keep a record of all workers and visitors who attend the workplace for longer than 15 minutes in the past 28 days.



Create a COVIDSafe environment: Transportation

Where a **farm business/host or labour hire provider** provides transportation to a seasonal worker they should make the transport COVIDSafe, having regard to their COVIDSafe Plan.

Travel in bubbles

Where 'workforce bubbles' are used, workers should travel as part of this bubble and as far as practical only one 'workforce bubble' should be transported at one time. Records of all trips will be kept.

When commuting by bus, minibus or van, passengers should keep at least one vacant seat in all directions, in a checkerboard pattern, separating them from other passengers.

Handle own possessions

Passengers should handle their own possessions and equipment following the directions of the driver for placement unless safe loading procedures require the driver to place the equipment.

Regular cleaning

Ensure surfaces are cleaned regularly, and high touch surfaces are cleaned and disinfected at least twice on each given day.

Wear masks and sanitise

The driver and all passengers must wear face masks. Passengers should clean their hands with soap and running water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser before boarding the vehicle.

Circulate fresh air

Wherever possible vehicles should have as much fresh air circulation by adjusting air conditioning to external airflow mode or opening windows and allowing air circulation between trips by leaving windows down.

Avoid carpooling

Workers should avoid carpooling with other workers, unless: they are from the same workforce bubble or household bubble, or if there is no alternative mode of transport to work.

Masks must be worn if you are travelling in a commercial passenger vehicle or on public transport, and are strongly recommended in the car. If travelling with anyone outside your work/accommodation bubble then physical distancing should be practised in the car.

Ensure there is ventilation in the car by opening windows (if possible).

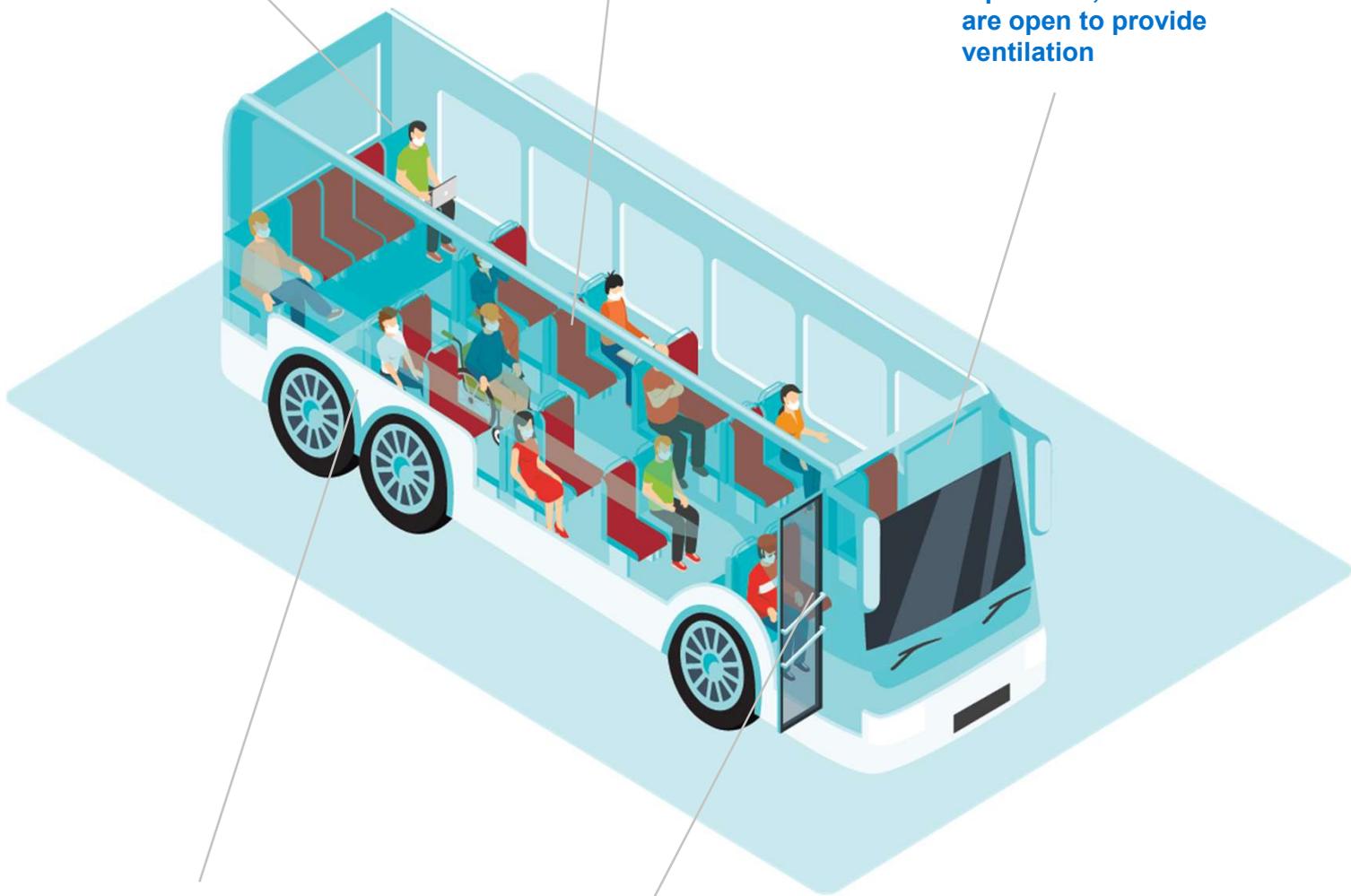
Create a COVIDSafe environment: Transportation

All farm owners/hosts and labour hire providers **must** apply the six COVIDSafe Principles to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19 in the workplace.

All passengers and driver in commercial passenger vehicles must wear a face mask (unless an exemption applies)

Encourage keeping at least one vacant seat in all directions, in a checkerboard pattern

Ensure that air-conditioning flow is maximised and, if possible, windows are open to provide ventilation



Where possible, ensure all workers travel in 'workforce bubbles' to avoid mixing

Ensure that hand sanitiser is available at the door of the bus and each person entering applies it

Ensure that each passenger handles only their own belongings



Create a COVIDSafe environment: Accommodation

Where a **farm business/host or labour hire provider** provides accommodation to a seasonal worker they should consider taking the following steps

Maintain a minimum distance of 1.5 metres

Make sure the number of people staying in an accommodation enables people to spread out, maximise distance between people and maintain social distancing. Consider using outdoor spaces to provide additional communal space.

Workers should maintain a minimum distance of 1.5 metres from others staying in accommodation at all times. Each worker should have two square metres of communal space including lounge/kitchen/dining.

Record keeping

Accommodation venues must use the [free Victorian Government QR Service](#) or [Victorian Government Application Programming Interface](#) linked system for record keeping of visitors to shared or communal spaces (venues will have a 28-day compliance amnesty until 23 April 2021).

Communal areas and accommodation density

Numbers in communal sleeping quarters should be minimised. Beds should be staggered apart to ensure physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres.

The number of people that can stay in an accommodation space is calculated using the density quotient of one person per two square metres. For example, if the communal space (kitchen, dining, lounge) of a house/hostel is 40 square metres, then a maximum of 20 residents should live in this premises.

Where different accommodation units (e.g. several dorms) need to use a common communal area (kitchens, bathrooms), rosters should be adopted to allocate the use so that there is no more than the density limit allows in the area at any one time. The communal area should be cleaned thoroughly between uses by the different household groups using a roster.

Household bubbles

Where possible workers within a 'workforce bubble' should be allocated to the same 'household unit'. Workforce bubbles should work and share transport and facilities with other members of the same 'bubble'.

Food preparation

Promote strict hygiene during food preparation and ensure the food preparation area is cleaned thoroughly between uses.

At any one time, kitchens are to be used by the minimum number of 'bubbles' by roster and cleaned thoroughly between uses. Records of rosters should be maintained.

Alternative facilities in case of awaiting test result, confirmed case or close contact

Each farm business/host or labour hire provider who provides accommodation needs to consider how they will provide an isolation room for a worker who is a confirmed case, a close contact or who has symptoms and is awaiting a test result.

Provide regular cleaning

Strict adherence to effective routine cleaning, with a focus on increased frequency of cleaning of high contact surfaces and communal facilities is recommended. High-touch surfaces should be cleaned at least twice daily, and it is recommended that each accommodation unit have a roster to ensure it is done. Reduce high-touch points in the kitchen by providing sachets for condiments and adding contactless bins.

For advice about regular cleaning go to: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19#cleaning-and-disinfection>

Hygiene

Promote strict hygiene in bathrooms and ensure bathrooms are cleaned thoroughly between uses. At any one time, shower blocks to be used only by the minimum number of 'workforce bubbles' by roster and showers cleaned thoroughly between uses. If practical, toilets in combined toilet/shower blocks to be closed to other 'workforce bubbles' during shower roster times to minimise intermingling of workers in 'household units'.



Creating a COVIDSafe Plan

Every business with on-site operations, is required to complete a COVIDSafe Plan so that we can stay safe and stay open.

All businesses **must** have a completed [COVIDSafe Plan](#) for each workplace to continue operating in Victoria. This includes home-based businesses, and businesses that provide services in other people's homes.

As part of a spot check by Victoria Police or other authorities, businesses must be able to demonstrate that they have an adequate COVIDSafe Plan.

If a business has an existing COVIDSafe Plan, you must conduct regular reviews to ensure it meets up-to-date requirements (e.g. on face masks).

Your COVIDSafe Plan must set out:

- ✓ Your actions to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19 in your workplace.
- ✓ The level of face mask or personal protective equipment (PPE) required for your workforce.
- ✓ How you will prepare for, and respond to, a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in your workplace.
- ✓ How you will meet all of the requirements set out by the Victorian Government. Some higher-risk industries or workplaces may have additional requirements of employers and workers.

Workplaces should regularly check that they are complying with current directions and advice provided by health authorities.

Occupational Health and Safety Act

A [COVIDSafe Plan](#) forms part of the development of a safe system of work.

Workplaces should also note that the workplace health and safety obligations remain under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act) with respect to identifying hazards and eliminate or, where is not possible to eliminate, reduce risks as far as reasonably applicable.

Workers must also comply with their obligations under the OHS Act.

The screenshot shows the top part of a COVIDSafe Plan document. It features a blue header with the text 'COVIDSafe Plan' and the Victorian State Government logo. Below the header is a section titled 'About the COVIDSafe Plan' with a clipboard icon. The text explains that the plan is developed to support businesses to safely reopen, maintain a COVIDSafe workplace, and prepare for a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace. It states that all Victorian businesses with on-site operations must complete their COVIDSafe Plan by 28 September 2020. It also lists requirements for businesses with five or more workers on-site in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, and for high-risk industries. The document includes a 'How to develop your COVIDSafe Plan' section with two main steps: '1. Understand your responsibilities' and '2. Prepare your plan'. It also includes a 'Please note' section with a warning triangle icon, stating that mandatory requirements under public health direction feature this symbol and that some requirements may not apply to certain businesses.

For further information on your obligations under the OHS Act, please visit [the WorkSafe website](#).

For more information about creating a COVIDSafe workplace, please visit:

- [WorkSafe: COVID-19](#)
- [WorkSafe: Preparing a pandemic guide](#)
- [Department of Health: Business and industry - COVID-19](#)
- [Department of Health: Preventing infection in the workplace](#)
- [Department of Health: Workplace obligations](#)
- [Department of Health: Confirmed case in the workplace](#)

Create a COVIDSafe environment: Accommodation

Where a farm business/host or labour hire provider provides accommodation to a seasonal worker they should apply the six COVIDSafe Principles to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Implement a cleaning roster in the kitchen to ensure that communal facilities are thoroughly cleaned in between users

Reduce high-touch points in the kitchen by providing sachets for condiments and adding contactless bins

Maintain density quotient of one person per two square metres in communal areas

Ensure strict hygiene in bathrooms and shower block facilities and implement workforce bubbles to avoid inter-mingling between workers

High-touch surfaces should be cleaned twice-daily or in between users

Maintain physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres from others in communal areas

Calculate a maximum occupancy per accommodation that ensures appropriate physical distancing measures can be maintained

Beds should be staggered apart to ensure physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres

Providing appropriate outdoor spaces is recommended





Compliance and enforcement

Venues should regularly check that they are complying with current directions and advice provided by health authorities.

Each business has an obligation to ensure that their workplace is comprehensively cleaned prior to reopening or recommencing operations. Comprehensive cleaning involves a thorough and extensive cleaning and disinfection regime with a focus on surfaces that may have been exposed to the virus.

Workplaces may consider nominating a worker to be the COVID Marshal (or similar) to oversee the implementation of the workplace's COVIDSafe plan, ensuring that correct processes are being followed, any relevant documentation is complete, workers are trained, and procedures are kept up-to-date to comply with current health information.

Evidence of compliance with the directions of the Victorian Chief Health Officer may be requested from a relevant compliance/enforcement officer. Victoria Police, and other authorities involved in the regulation of businesses, may conduct spot checks to ensure compliance with the directions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*. WorkSafe will continue compliance and enforcement action under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act).

Where can I find further information on safely reopening my workplace?

Business Victoria is ready to support businesses and answer questions about preparing for a safe reopening. Business Victoria can be contacted on 13 22 15 or online by the [Contact Us form](#).

For information on health and safety requirements under the OHS Act, businesses should refer to [WorkSafe Victoria's website](#) or contact its advisory service on 1800 136 089.

How will you enforce compliance? Who will enforce it?

Victoria Police, and other authorities involved in the regulation of businesses may conduct spot checks to ensure compliance with the directions of the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

WorkSafe will continue compliance and enforcement action under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act). For information on health and safety requirements under the OHS Act, businesses should refer to [WorkSafe Victoria's website](#) or contact its advisory service on 1800 136 089.

Fines and penalties

Victoria Police can issue on the spot fines of up to \$1,652 for individuals and up to \$9,913 for businesses for:

- Refusing or failing to comply with the emergency directions;
- Refusing or failing to comply with a public health risk power direction; or
- Refusing or failing to comply with a direction by the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

Fines can be imposed through the Magistrates' Court to a maximum of \$20,000 for individuals and \$100,000 for businesses.

WorkSafe may take a range of compliance and enforcement action against an employer which fails to comply with its duties under the OHS Act.

Cleaning guidelines – building owners and managers

All building owners and managers should ensure their workers follow the below COVIDSafe cleaning guidance to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Documentation

Consider maintaining a cleaning log and schedule that set out dates, times and frequency each area has been cleaned. If you outsource your cleaning services, the documentation should clearly specify the cleaning activities and standards expected of the service provider.

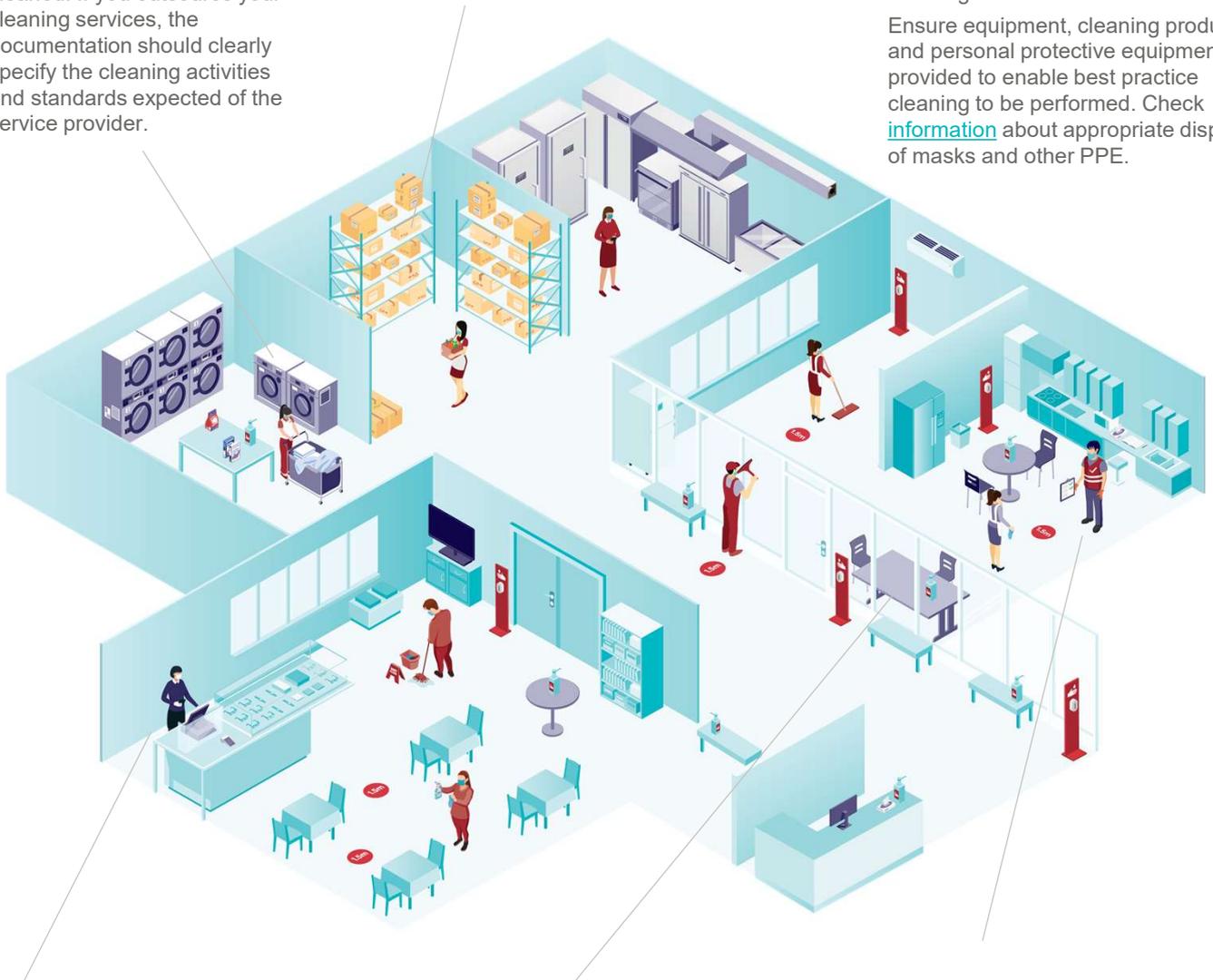
Storage

Ensure your buildings' cleaning and laundry supply rooms are clean and workers can come in and out easily.

Clean and safe environment

It is the responsibility of the building owner or business owners to ensure cleaning is performed to the expected standard. This can be achieved by either an in-house or contracted cleaning services.

Ensure equipment, cleaning products and personal protective equipment is provided to enable best practice cleaning to be performed. Check [information](#) about appropriate disposal of masks and other PPE.



Communication

Clear lines of communication need to be set up between all parties i.e. building occupier/manager and its occupants (workers, tenants, visitors, customers) the cleaning service provider and the cleaning staff.

Risk-based cleaning

Target high use communal areas like chilled areas, kitchens and toilets that may require higher frequency cleaning with appropriate cleaning products.

Have ability to increase cleaning services in the event of a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case.

Roles and responsibilities

Define the responsibility for each role that has a cleaning duty.

Agree who will be responsible for monitoring cleaning quality and that it meets the expected standard.

Provide workplace cleaning training for workers who have site specific cleaning duties and to support any changes in cleaning schedules.



Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that apply as at publication of this guideline.

Checklist for farm business owners/managers

Prepare your COVIDSafe Plan

- Every business is required to have a [COVIDSafe Plan](#) that is regularly updated in order to reopen their workplace.

Ensure workplace is set up to adhere to relevant limits and density quotient

- Workplaces must adhere to the relevant capacity limits and density quotients for their industry (see [current restrictions table](#)).
- all seating is spaced so that workers are at least 1.5 metres apart if/when seated.

Prepare a cleaning schedule

- Business must regularly clean shared spaces and areas accessible to the public using a surface disinfectant.
- Establish new processes and schedules for cleaning and sanitising to maintain good hygiene, including frequent cleaning of high touch points (see our [Cleaning and Sanitising Fact Sheet](#)).

Signage requirements

- Display signage for workers and customers in appropriate, high visibility locations, to include:
 - At workplace entrances to advise of the maximum number of customers allowed.
 - Information about the symptoms of COVID-19 and the need to stay home when unwell.
 - Hygiene and physical distancing practices.
 - Face mask restrictions [where required](#).
- Promote physical distancing, including between workers and customers, with floor or wall markings or signs. Use physical barriers where appropriate (e.g. installation of sneeze guards).

Establish your record keeping

- Record the contact details of any worker or customer who attends your workplace for longer than 15 minutes (this includes contractors and delivery workers) including: first name and a contact phone number to support contact tracing. Retain for at least 28 days following the visit. Check [whether electronic record keeping is required](#) at your workplace.
- Recommend collecting Staff COVID-19 Health Questionnaires from workers at the start of each shift.
- Set up a roster to ensure workers do not work across multiple sites unless impractical to do so. For those who do work across multiple sites employers should keep records of these workers.

Consult with workers

Employers must, so far as is reasonably practical, consult with workers and HSRs (if any), on matters related to health or safety that directly affect, or are likely to directly affect them.

Checklist for farm business owners/managers cont.

Worker and management policies, practices and training

- Ensure you as the operator or manager understand your obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and have reviewed the COVID-19 guidance from WorkSafe Victoria available at [here](#).
- Encourage workers to complete [free infection control training](#) and download the COVIDSafe App. It is the Government's expectation that:
 - at least one worker at every workplace will have completed the training
 - workers should make themselves familiar with these guidelines.
- Consider appointing a worker to be your COVID Marshal to ensure policies and practices are being followed, workers are trained, and records are kept. More information on the roles and responsibilities of COVID Marshals is available [here](#).

Accommodation

- Ensure that accommodation facilities are COVIDSafe with respect to density, sanitation, communal facilities, regular cleaning and provision of alternative facilities should a resident be forced to isolate as a confirmed case or quarantine as a close contact.

Transportation

- Transport arrangements should have regard to this guidance with respect to ventilation, wearing of face masks and regular cleaning.



Additional resources

For additional information about creating a COVIDSafe workplace, please refer to the following guidance:

- WorkSafe: [Industry obligations](#)
- WorkSafe: [Managing COVID-19 risks – face coverings in workplaces](#)
- Department of Health: [Preventing infection in the workplace](#)
- Department of Health: [Preparing for a case of COVID-19 in your workplace](#)
- Department of Health: [Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce COVID-19 transmission](#)
- WorkSafe: [Other relevant industry specific guidance](#)

Checklist for labour hire providers



Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that apply as at publication of this guideline.

Prepare your COVIDSafe Plan

- Every workplace is required to have a [COVIDSafe Plan](#) that is regularly updated.

Review your additional industry specific obligations

- Refer to the [Workplace \(Additional Industry Obligations\) Directions](#) for further information on what your additional industry specific obligations are.

Establish your record keeping and testing requirements

- Record the contact details of any seasonal worker engaged by your business to include: first name and a contact phone number, the date and time at which the person attended the Work Premises; and the areas of the Work Premises which the person attended. Retain for at least 28 days.
- Keep records to show compliance with directions in force including all logs created during the time of directions being in force, work premises rosters, time and attendance records and payroll data.
- Ensure any records kept containing personal information are stored securely and a process is in place to ensure this information is securely destroyed as soon as reasonably practicable after 28 days, unless another statutory requirement permits or requires the personal information to be retained.
- Recommend [Staff COVID-19 Health Questionnaires](#) to be completed at the start of each shift.

Accommodation

- Ensure that accommodation facilities are COVIDSafe with respect to density, sanitation, communal facilities, regular cleaning and provision of alternative facilities should a resident be forced to isolate as a confirmed case or quarantine as a close contact.

Transportation

- Transport arrangements should have regard to this guidance with respect to, ventilation, wearing of face masks and regular cleaning.



Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that apply as at publication of this guideline.

Checklist for workers



Complete free infection control training (optional)

All current workers are encouraged to complete [free infection control training](#). Any new workers being engaged are also encouraged to complete this training.



Avoid carpooling with other colleagues, unless they are from the same household



Adhere to current face mask restrictions (see Current Restrictions page at the start of this document). You must also adhere to specific face mask or other PPE guidelines for your industry.



Practise good hygiene

- Be rigorous in maintaining the new cleaning and sanitising schedule (for example, touch points such as tables and counters need to be cleaned and sanitised before and after use by customers).

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at the very minimum:

- On arrival at work
- Before preparing or delivering food and/or beverages to tables
- After collecting/clearing used food and beverage items
- Before returning to food or beverage preparation areas
- At the start and end of each meal break
- Before and after touching a customer or their belongings
- After handling money
- Before leaving work
- After blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the toilet.



Avoid interacting with colleagues in enclosed spaces where possible



Avoid working across multiple work sites where possible



Stay home if unwell

- If you have symptoms, get tested for COVID-19. Stay in isolation at home until you get the result and it is negative for COVID-19.
- Do not come to work if you have a fever (a temperature of 37.5C or greater), or if you have any symptoms.

Staff health questionnaire



STAFF COVID-19 HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

We encourage each worker to complete this questionnaire before starting any shift and give your completed questionnaire to the shift manager for record keeping purposes.

Worker name: _____

Date: _____ Time of shift _____

Are you currently required to be in quarantine because you have been diagnosed with COVID-19?

YES NO

Have you been directed to a period of 14-day quarantine by the Department of Health (DH) as a result of being a close contact of someone with COVID-19?

YES NO

Have you been to a Tier 1 exposure site?

YES NO

Have you been in an interstate red zone in the last 14 days?

YES NO

Have you recently been tested for COVID-19 and not yet received a result?

YES NO

If you answered YES to either of the above questions you should not attend work until advised by the Department of Health that you are released from quarantine or until your 14-day quarantine period is complete.

If you answered NO to the above questions, proceed to the symptom checklist below.

Are you experiencing any of these symptoms?

Fever (If you have a thermometer, take your own temperature. You are considered to have a fever if above 37.5C) YES NO

Chills YES NO

Cough YES NO

Sore throat YES NO

Shortness of breath YES NO

Runny nose YES NO

Loss of sense of smell YES NO

If you answered **YES** to any of the above questions you should **not** enter your workplace (or you should leave your workplace, if already there). Tell your employer, go home, and get tested for COVID-19.

If you answered **NO** to all the above questions, you can enter your workplace.

If you develop symptoms, stay at home and seek further advice from the 24-hour COVID-19 hotline 1800 675 398 or your general practitioner.