



COVID-19 preparation and response guidelines for industrial facilities

This document provides guiding principles for industrial facilities to prepare for and respond to cases of COVID-19. This guideline is divided into three sections:

1. Planning and preparedness;
2. Testing and isolation;
3. Principles of outbreak management

An industrial facility includes, but is not limited to, warehouses and buildings used by abattoirs, manufacturers, importers, exporters, wholesalers, transport businesses, food processing plants, distribution centres, and customs. These facilities may provide wholesale point of sale functions and often have a concentration of workers who have workstations close together or frequent repetitive, close interactions over the course of a day such as in meal rooms and locker rooms.

1. Planning and preparedness

General preparedness

Each facility is responsible for their own preparedness for an outbreak with guidance and support from their peak bodies and the Department of Health, Western Australia (DoH WA). Services need to develop plans for prevention and prepare for response to an outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) by:

- ensuring management plans for workforce and supplies are in place,
- promoting public health and infection prevention and control (IPC) principles, and
- developing and maintaining an outbreak management plan.

The preparedness measures listed below may reduce the risk of large numbers of staff being required to quarantine, reduce the transmission of COVID-19 between staff, and potentially reduce the duration that a facility needs to remain closed. However, WA Health is unable to guarantee that employing these measures will prevent a facility from being closed for a short period of time to manage a COVID-19 outbreak.

IPC measures should be maximised as these protect all individuals, however these alone will not completely mitigate the COVID-19 risk to the workforce. Implementing split shifts is the *best mitigation strategy* to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the facility (refer to Workforce section in Table 1) and should be employed with other IPC measures.

COVID-19 vaccination should be encouraged for all staff and contractors in a facility, as this protects the individuals from severe disease and has a role in limiting disease transmission. However, vaccination status will not change quarantine requirements for close contacts of a COVID-19 case. This may change in the future if evidence emerges to support this change.

Table 1. Industrial facility COVID-19 preparedness measures

Infection prevention and control measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any staff member who is unwell, must not attend work. If they become unwell at work, they must be sent home with a surgical mask. Staff must inform their supervisor and present for a COVID-19 test at a COVID-19 testing clinic. Staff should practise respiratory etiquette i.e. cough/sneeze into elbow or use a tissue. Discard the used tissue immediately. Perform hand hygiene.• Hand hygiene facilities including soap, water and paper towels/hand dryer and alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) that contains between 60-80% alcohol is to be readily available and easily accessible for staff. Regular hand hygiene behaviour is to be supported and promoted. Posters on how to perform hand hygiene are available from the Healthy WA website• Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfection of the environment with attention to high touch surfaces in line with IPC guidelines. Refer to Environmental Cleaning for workplaces.• Ensure staff are trained in the correct use of personal protective equipment (see appendix 1). Adhere to current National guidelines and State Directions e.g. limits on external agencies allowed on site.
Workforce
<p><u>Splitting shifts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The aim of split shifts is to completely separate the workforce into two or more smaller work streams in an attempt to reduce the number of staff identified as close contacts and being required to quarantine for 14 days. This measure will only be effective where IPC measures including cleaning have been adhered to and where all contact between the work streams has been eliminated. To effectively implement split shifts, the following principles should be employed:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Splitting the staff into two or more shifts or work streams and ensuring no contact between the shift or work streams.○ Ensuring that all staff (including managers) only work one of the shift streams, unless there is a reasonable break (at least 7 days) between working across two or more shift streams.○ There should be adequate time between the shifts / work streams to ensure they do not overlap elsewhere at the facility e.g. in the changerooms, in the carpark.○ Work streams should be selected based on skill and social groups to minimise risk of cross-exposure between staff in a social setting.• The time to implement split shifts should be considered in the context of what is happening in the environment outside the facility, e.g. this could occur prior to community transmission or at the time of community transmission in WA. <p><u>General principles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify critical positions and undertake contingency planning for replacement of staff; multiple personnel may be unable to work for an extended period.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a contact list of casual staff members, which may include external agency staff. • Consider additional staff requirements for other roles that may be needed in the event of a COVID-19 case, such as additional cleaning staff. • Ensure staffing considerations include recognising that staff working across multiple areas of the facility may have contact with a large proportion of the workforce. • Consider staff working in multiple locations; additional precautions (such as strict physical distancing) for these employees may be required.
Vaccination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage COVID-19 vaccination for staff • Encourage influenza vaccination for staff
Record keeping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an up to date register of all staff, including contact details. • Maintain ongoing and up to date visitor logs which include the location, date, name, telephone number and arrival time of each visitor. Contact information can be provided either directly to the facility, or by using the SafeWA app.
Other business considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review business continuity plans to consider the impacts of an outbreak and potential closure of the workplace.

2. Testing and isolation

The following steps should be followed when a staff member in an industrial facility shows symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Testing

If a staff member develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (refer to [HealthyWA](#) for current details) they should be advised to have a COVID-19 test at a [COVID Clinic](#). If the staff member attends a COVID Clinic, the COVID Clinic staff should be advised that the individual works in an industrial facility and specify a meat processing setting if this is the case.

What to do while waiting for the test result

The staff member must [isolate](#) at home and follow the instructions provided by the COVID Clinic until the COVID-19 test result is known. If the COVID-19 test is negative they should stay at home until the symptoms have resolved.

Employees should be supported to remain in isolation whilst unwell or whilst waiting for a COVID test result. Financial hardship is recognised as a risk factor for breaching isolation.

COVID-19 test result

COVID-19 tests usually return a result [within 24 to 48 hours](#).

Negative test results will be sent by SMS text or phoned to the mobile number provided at the time of testing.

If a test result has not been received within 48 hours and the individual had a COVID-19 test at a public COVID Clinic in WA, or at public testing facilities in country WA, the result can be obtained by phoning 1800 313 223 on Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm (excluding public holidays).

What happens if there is a positive COVID-19 test result

If the COVID-19 test is **positive**, the individual will be contacted by the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC), WA Department of Health and further information will be provided.

Refer to 'Notification of the case to the workplace' in Section 3.

For additional information on COVID-19 testing please refer to the [Healthy WA website](#).

3. Principles of outbreak management and response in an industrial facility

This section provides information on the broad principles of outbreak management as they apply to industry settings thought to be at higher risk of outbreaks of COVID-19.

The following steps will be undertaken in response to an outbreak (or a single case) in an industrial facility. Note that these steps may occur in a different order to which they are written and commonly several steps will occur concurrently. Industry employers should also refer to separate, industry specific advice (such as "[Food safety and COVID-19](#)") about practices and principles for reducing the risk of COVID-19 impacts in their work place. Adherence to such advice is also likely to influence outbreak management and response requirements.

Notification of a COVID-19 case to the workplace

It is a statutory requirement for the testing laboratory to notify the Department of Health urgently if a positive test result is detected.

PHEOC will immediately contact the individual and commence the interview process and contact tracing to identify other people who may be close contacts.

If the individual confirmed as positive for COVID-19 is a staff member and was infectious while in the workplace, PHEOC will contact their employer (after first informing the individual) to discuss implications for the workplace.

At the time of notification to the Department of Health, the employee is likely to be at home, as they are likely to be [self-isolating](#) after having a COVID test; the employer will be informed either by the employee or by PHEOC with the knowledge of the employee.

If a staff member is unable to isolate at their usual place of residence, they can contact the State Welfare Incident Coordination Centre (SWICC) on 13 COVID (13 268 43). This number is applicable in the metropolitan area and regional areas.

Formation of an Outbreak Management Team and role of the facility

Once an individual is identified as positive for COVID-19, the Department of Health will form an Outbreak Management Team (OMT). In addition to members of PHEOC and the State Health Incident Coordination Centre (SHICC), this team will include a representative from a workplace if it is determined the COVID-19 positive individual was infectious while at the workplace.

The workplace involved in the outbreak will be requested to provide a representative with operational decision-making responsibility to participate in the OMT.

Other activities the facility may be asked to do include (but are not limited to):

- Activate local outbreak management plans;
- Implement measures and conduct cleaning as advised by PHEOC; and
- Immediately cease communication of information in relation to the outbreak and coordinate the release of all information with the SHICC Public Information Cell.

Case management

An employee who is confirmed as a case of COVID-19 infection will need to go into isolation to prevent further spread of the virus to fellow workers, the public or their family. The Public Health team in the PHEOC establishes if the case is safe in their home and may put them in touch with support agencies or health professionals to manage their health and social needs.

An employee with COVID-19 can return to work once they are released from isolation, as determined by PHEOC. The employee will be told by PHEOC when they are to be [released from isolation](#) (clearance testing is not usually recommended or required).

Contact tracing

All confirmed cases of COVID-19 must be interviewed by a member of PHEOC to identify all close contacts. This is generally performed via phone call. Employers should work with PHEOC to identify close contacts in the workplace including providing accurate records of attendance at the facility. PHEOC will identify close contacts who need to quarantine and will contact these individuals to provide information and instructions.

Work place management during investigation

Following initial notification of a case of COVID-19, PHEOC will undertake a situational analysis and make a risk assessment of the work place. This can often be completed by phone with the business manager, although sometimes a site visit is helpful. PHEOC will assist the employer with decisions about when and if they need to send staff home prior to the end of a shift, and/or if they need to temporarily close the facility for cleaning, investigation or contact tracing purposes.

Additional case finding

Following the notification of a case of COVID-19 in a workplace, it may be recommended by PHEOC to test other people in the workplace to determine if they have been infected. PHEOC will provide advice about this (note: testing of asymptomatic people will require approval by the Chief Health Officer, which will be arranged by PHEOC if needed).

Management of contacts

PHEOC will work with the business manager to identify all contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in their workforce.

All close contacts will be required to quarantine for 14 days following their last contact with the confirmed case and follow PHEOC's directions, including getting tested. Following this period of quarantine, the employee may return to work.

Casual contacts will be advised by PHEOC regarding testing requirements and whether a short initial period of quarantine is required. Casual contacts may later be reclassified as close contacts if there is evidence of transmission within a facility; these decisions will be made by the PHEOC.

Implementation of Infection Prevention and Control measures

PHEOC will provide advice regarding IPC and any additional measures that are required at the workplace. The facilities may need to undergo cleaning and disinfection prior to return of the workforce. Additional signage and/or supportive measures may be recommended to reduce further cases in the workplace.

Provision of information

PHEOC has factsheets and information available including in languages other than English and for varying literacy levels. PHEOC will provide advice on who needs to be informed about the case or an outbreak. Additional reporting and/or media can be discussed with the SHICC Public Information Cell or the Department of Health Communications team.

Shut downs

It is recognised that closure of a food processing establishment or other business may have significant effects on the business and its employees. A temporary lockdown of the facility may be required, particularly where contact tracing is difficult or complex. A period of restriction of services may be needed to allow all close contacts to be identified and managed.

Similarly, a business may need to close temporarily for thorough cleaning and disinfection to take place. [Cleaning of a site post COVID-19 exposure](#).

For some businesses which are considered higher risk for large or ongoing outbreaks, a very precautionary approach may be taken resulting in a short-term closure or reduction in operations. Businesses may need to close if a large proportion of their workforce is required to quarantine following exposure to a case; measures to split shifts and/or isolate 'teams' of employees may assist in limiting the extent of a prolonged closure.

To limit the number of close contacts identified in the workforce, the industrial facility must be able to demonstrate adequate procedures and processes are in place to manage employee behaviour and/or demonstrate adequate separation of staff such that some staff would not have been exposed to a case in the facility.

It is noted that a full shutdown of food processing business may pose a risk to food security and have animal welfare consequences.

Further information

Additional information about the principles of outbreak response to COVID-19 can be found in the COVID [CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#). Information specifically for the meat and poultry processing industry can be found on the [Worksafe Victoria website](#).

Additional information for employers can be found on the [WA health website](#). Please find additional easy-read resources for people with disability on the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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Appendix 1



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Department of Health

Donning PPE

1. Hand hygiene

- Using an alcohol-based hand rub, cover all hand surfaces and rub until dry

OR

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds



2. Disposable gown or apron

- Fasten ties at the neck (if present) and at the waist to the side

3. Surgical mask

- Secure loops around the ears
- If ties are present, secure one tie at the crown of the head and the other at the base
- Mould the metal band over the nose for a secure fit
- Gently extend the pleats downwards to sit underneath the chin
- Change if soiled, wet or damaged or contaminated (sneezed or coughed on/in)
- Mask must not be worn around the neck or under your chin or mouth
- Avoid touching the front of the mask once fitted

4. Eye protection

- Goggles or Faceshield
- These items provide protection above, below and around the sides of the eyes
- NB prescription glasses are not considered protective eye wear

5. Gloves

- Don gloves if touching a person or their belongings
- Gloves are disposable and should not be reused
- Change between interactions/client (single use only) or when soiled



For more information on staying safe at work visit health.wa.gov.au



Doffing PPE

1. Remove gloves

- Grasp outside of glove with opposite hand, peel off turning glove inside-out
- Hold removed glove in gloved hand
- Slide fingers of ungloved hand under remaining glove at wrist
- Peel glove off over first glove, turning inside out and forming a ball
- Discard into a waste bin

2. Perform hand hygiene

3. Remove gown

- Untie ties at the neck and waist
- Touching only the inside of the gown, fold or roll the gown inside-out and into a bundle
- Discard directly into general waste bin

4. Perform hand hygiene

5. Remove protective eyewear

- Remove goggles or faceshield
- Avoid touching the front of the goggles or faceshield and remove from face
- Resuable goggles/faceshields can be set aside for cleaning and disinfection

6. Perform hand hygiene

7. Remove mask

- Avoid touching the front of the mask
- Handle by the loops/ties only
- Drop away from the face
- Discard into general waste bin

8. Perform hand hygiene

9. Waste

- All PPE is to be placed into a plastic bag, tied off and placed into general waste

