



# COVID-19 Business Re-Opening Plan



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## 1. Introduction

In a June 25, 2020 special 'Trust Barometer Report' on Brands by the independent Global Communications firm, Edelman, 90% of those surveyed for the research put safety & well-being of workers and suppliers as their top priority for businesses:

*"In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, people want brands to protect the well-being and safety of their employees and suppliers ... and to partner with government and relief agencies to address the crisis"*

<https://www.edelman.com/research/brand-trust-2020>

## 2. Purpose

This document is intended to provide guidance to businesses preparing to re-open and operate as COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

It is intended to be used as a general starting pack & reference document to help businesses give their employees<sup>1</sup>, customers, suppliers, or visitors and their communities confidence that, as much as is practically possible, a business can re-open and operate safely.

## 3. Scope

This generic guide should be used by personnel familiar with a businesses' specific operations, ensuring any mitigation controls and risk-minimisation recommendations are relevant to their organisation.

The key areas covered are:

- Protecting employees – minimising exposure to infection in the workplace.
- Protecting customers, suppliers, or visitors from infection when visiting the business.
- Effective cleaning to minimise disruption to operations.
- Effective communication of infection-minimisation strategies to employees, customers, suppliers, or visitors and the local community.

## 4. Infection Risk – Background Information

What we know about the risk of infection is that micro-droplets carrying the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted from one person to another through sneezing, coughing or simply exhaling, because they can remain suspended in the air for an extended period of time. Micro-droplets can also settle on surfaces and may be picked up via hand-to-face transmission, such as rubbing eyes, mouth, or nose.

Also, infection can be spread by infected people BEFORE they are experiencing symptoms themselves.

In terms of controls, what we also know is distancing is the primary measure to protect against infection transfer. This means separating people physically at work AND temporally (that is, over a specific time period via, for example, effective rostering).

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<sup>1</sup> In this plan employee includes all workers engaged by the business including full time staff, part time staff, casual staff, contractors, consultants etc.

The general guidance for distancing is to keep a minimum of 4 square metres of space per person and maintain a physical distance of at least 1.5 metres from others where possible.

In addition, hand washing/sanitizing facilities need to be available at the entry point to a workplace and in communal areas (restrooms, kitchens) and the correct PPE must be supplied to employees (with instructions for proper use).

## 5. Protecting Employees

Where continued working from home is NOT an option for a business re-opening, you need to give your employees confidence that it is safe to return to work. To this end, many organisations have a regulatory requirement to consult with employees and their elected Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) to conduct a risk assessment and implement control measures to eliminate, or if not reasonably practicable, to minimise any identified risks.

### Things to do before re-opening:

- Check the latest Commonwealth, State & Territory Government health advice (see references) to make sure you are compliant
- Conduct a pre-opening risk assessment with your employees /HSRs to include identification of personnel interaction and communal areas in the workplace (lifts, restrooms, kitchens etc)
- Implement any control measures identified (e.g. PPE requirements) in your risk assessment.
- Conduct a thorough pre-opening deep cleanse of the premises.
- Communicate with your business premises owner and other businesses in the premises (or nearby) to confirm return to work procedures and practises to be engaged for the use of any shared facilities – e.g. lifts, restrooms)
- Communicate all new work practices and procedures to all staff (e.g. hand washing protocols, facemask wearing or social distancing requirements):
  - Encourage employees to keep work areas clean and discourage employees from using other employees' desks, phones, offices, or other equipment, where possible.
  - Provide training in PPE use and disposal, basic personal hygiene (hand washing) & correct protocols for ad-hoc cleaning (e.g. desk areas)
- Consider what physical prompts and resources you require in the workplace to make control measures effective:
  - Print and post hand sanitisation advise; Use social distancing floor markers
  - Ensure hygiene stations are available and cleaning processes are in place for common areas e.g. kitchen areas, washrooms, meeting rooms – all to be disinfected daily
- Conduct a return to work survey for all employees to ascertain if they...
  - Are considered or are classified as a 'vulnerable' person (high risk)
  - Have caring responsibilities for a vulnerable person
  - Live with a vulnerable person
  - Have had any common COVID-19 symptoms in the last 14 days: fever, coughing, sore throat, headaches, runny nose, loss of sense of smell, difficulty breathing or a high temperature. In this case they should be tested for COVID-19 and isolate until the results are known.

Use this as an opportunity to confirm staff contact details, next of kin etc (for any future communications)

**Things to do to operate safely:**

- Implement return to work (and daily) health checks for all staff
  - Consider asking staff to do a health self-check BEFORE leaving home to come to work
  - Implement a signing-in procedure using a daily health check form (see example attached)
  - If practical consider temperature checking staff outside of the premises (If body temperature is over 37.4oC then access to the workplace must be denied, and the individual should seek urgent medical assessment)
  - Instruct employees to stay at home if they've had close-contact with a person who has, or has been tested, for COVID-19
  - Keep all staff informed of their workplace & Government entitlements if they are required to stay at home
  - Ensure you have an up-to-date emergency evacuation/treatment plan for dealing with anyone taken ill at work
- Maintain a signing-in and out register and keep written records of staff, working days, contact hours and workplace areas visited. This will be critical for contact & tracing in the event of anyone being taken ill at work or later testing positive having been to work
- Ensure all PPE supplies are stocked and refills for hand sanitiser etc are on premises and a process in place to check stock and use levels
- Ensure floor markings for distancing and health advice posters are in place and visible (replace as required) – see effective communications section below.

## 6. Protecting customers, suppliers, or visitors

Carefully consider all the interactions that take place on your business premises between employees, customers, suppliers, or visitors. Identify and implement any control measures required to minimise risk of infection to all parties.

Suppliers and visitors to a workplace can be a particularly high risk to an organisation as some will be moving from business to business, such as courier drivers. An organisation needs to establish which suppliers and visitors are critical to operations and those who can have their visit postponed or completed through alternative methods such as online meetings.

Some of the above guidelines (for employees) apply to workplace visitors too (e.g. delivery personnel) but some are specific to customers, suppliers, or visitors. Consider the following accordingly.

### **Things to do before re-opening:**

- Check the latest Commonwealth, State & Territory Government health advice (see references) to make sure you are compliant.
- Organise and communicate contactless delivery protocols from suppliers where possible.
- Communicate any changes to your visiting protocols and procedures to employees, customers, suppliers, or visitors.

### **Things to do to operate safely:**

- Instigate online meetings with 3rd parties where possible.
- Prior to site access, ensure each visitor completes a daily Health Checklist (Section 10) to confirm they are not currently experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, or at risk of having been in contact with a confirmed case.
- Ensure suppliers, or visitors sign-in and out recording names, contact details, date & time of visit etc.
- Inform suppliers, or visitors to your business of any new health and safety requirements:
  - Signpost rules outside the premises (e.g. point of entry & exit; requirement to wear a mask and sanitise hands etc).
  - All suppliers (e.g. delivery personnel) to be temperature checked and/or consider changing delivery protocols and practises to minimise infection risk – and make sure any new rules are communicated clearly and in a timely manner.
- Provide hand-sanitiser and spare masks for use by visitors entering and leaving your business.

## 7. Effective Cleaning

Your employees need to be confident they are returning to a hygienic workplace. A thorough deep clean of work surfaces and equipment / assets (e.g. phones, desks, computers, door handles, light switches, taps and other high-touch surfaces) should be conducted prior to staff returning. In addition:

- Daily cleaning of high touch surfaces should be undertaken at the close of business or between shifts. A 2-in-1 detergent and disinfectant (min 70% alcohol) solution or appropriate wipes can be used for routine cleaning.
- Instruct employees to clean any personal equipment (e.g. laptops) they will be bringing to work.
- Train your employees in how to clean correctly and the procedures required to minimise infection risk (e.g. how to put PPE on and take PPE off, including washing or sanitising hands between steps).
- Minimise the use of enclosed spaces in the work environment (open doors, windows etc).
- Provide relevant resources for ad-hoc and daily cleaning:
  - Supply detergent, disinfectant, 2-in-1, wipes, hand sanitiser.
  - Supply disposable gloves (& instructions on correct use, non-sharing & disposal).
  - Have bins to ensure correct disposal of re-usable gloves.
  - Instruct employees about the need for safe hand washing and sanitising after wearing gloves.

## 8. Effective Communications

*“Assumption is the mother of all mistakes”* (Eugene Lewis Fordsworthe, Philosopher).

It is critical to communicate to employees, customers, suppliers, or visitors clearly and regularly to minimise the possibilities of infection spread.

- Ensure you have a Communications Plan & nominated Communications coordinator.
- This plan should identify key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications (including suppliers, customers, and employees), and processes for tracking and communicating to these stakeholders.
- Identify the key messages you want to convey to relevant stakeholders (employees, customers, suppliers, or visitors) and be proactive in your dialogue with them.
- Establish and maintain clear internal and external protocols for routine and emergency communication with employees, customers, and other key stakeholders.
- Use posters around the workplace to remind employees & visitors to:
  - Socially distance
  - Wear PPE (correctly)
  - Wash hands (correctly)
  - Maintain a clean & hygienic work area
  - Dispose of PPE correctly
  - Provide socially distancing markers on the floors to help people stay appropriately apart.
  - Provide a single point of contact for employees to discuss safety procedures and new protocols or alert management of any concerns. Also ensure that employees have the current contact details for their supervisors, Human Resources or 24hr emergency contacts if required after hours.
  - Keep employees informed of your business continuity plans and the measures to be taken in the event of a virus outbreak at work.
  - Ensure you regularly update employees (and next of kin) contact information in case employees need to be contacted when not at work.
  - Establish a process for checking on employees who are currently in isolation regularly by phone or email during their absence from work to ensure they and their families are ok and have the required supplies.

For more detailed advice on safe returning to work we recommend consulting any of the resources listed in Section 11.

## 9. Action Checklist

Activity	Done	By	When
<b>Re-Opening</b>			
Check latest Commonwealth, State or Territory Health Advice			
Conduct a pre-opening risk assessment with your employees /HSRs			
Implement identified risk mitigation measures in your assessment			
Conduct a deep clean of the workplace before opening and set up hygiene stations in appropriate locations per your assessment			
Conduct a 'return to work survey' for all personnel & update personnel & family/next of kin records for contacts.			
Create/update a <i>Communications Plan</i> for all identified stakeholders (employees, families, suppliers, customers, local government/community organisations, nearby & same-premises businesses, 3 <sup>rd</sup> party contractors etc)			
Liaise with building owners / other occupants on procedures for use of communal areas (lifts etc)			
Communicate all new work practise changes and procedures to all staff using your <i>Communication Plan</i>			
Order any PPE identified in your risk assessment & organise training in the effective use and maintenance of PPE for employees			
Organise your evacuation and communication procedures in the event of a employee falling ill at work			
Established criteria and approvals process to control physical access to premises and minimise numbers at the workplaces?			
Set up an attendance register to collect signed confirmation of health status to track all people who physically attend the worksite?			
Order and set up information posters, physical distancing markers and other critical items required to ensure physical distancing & good personnel hygiene (Hand washing, disposal of PPE etc)			
Review emergency response plans, confirming they are current, personal identified are available and alternates are identified.			
<b>Operating Safely</b>			
Instigate daily health checks for staff & visitors on arrival			
Organise daily cleaning routine, order supplies & communicate procedures to staff			
Organise regular health & welfare check-ins (talk direct or call) with staff (& their families)			
Conduct ongoing (& new personnel) training in the effective use and maintenance of PPE for employees			
Ensure PPE supplies and stock are available and in store			
Regularly check the latest Commonwealth, State or Territory Health Advice			

## 10. Daily Health Checklist

Businesses can use this COVID-19 screening checklist to help ensure the safety of their workplace, provide employees, customers, suppliers, or visitors with confidence in your procedures and help control the spread of COVID-19.

Completion and signing of a form incorporating these questions should be a part of your daily record keeping. Employees should consider answering these questions at home BEFORE coming to work as a means of self-testing suitability to work (& if they determine themselves unsuitable, follow your workplace health notification procedures).

**ALL employees, suppliers or visitors entering the workplace should answer the following questions:**

**1 Have you had any of the following symptoms in the last 2 weeks?**

- a. Fever
- b. Sore Throat
- c. Cough
- d. Runny Nose
- e. Shortness of breath
- f. Loss of taste or smell
- g. Headaches
- h. Chills
- i. Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea or loss of appetite

If YES to any of the above restrict the individual from entering the building and advise they undertake a COVID-19 test and self-isolate until the result is known.

**2 Have you been in close contact with anyone who has had any of these symptoms?**

If YES either, restrict the individual from entering the building or take a temperature reading and record it on your admin entry form. Anyone with a temperature reading equal to or greater than 37.4°C should not be allowed entry.

(Note: Anyone with a temperature reading equal or greater than 37.4°C should be advised to self-isolate and check temperature regularly. If high temperature persists for more than 24 continuous hours, they should seek a COVID-19 test and quarantine until the result is known.

**3 Have you, or anyone you have been in close contact with, tested positive for COVID-19 or been asked to quarantine for possible contact with COVID-19, in the last 2 weeks?**

If YES, they should be denied entry.

**4 Have you or anyone you are in close contact with been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting test results?**

If YES, they should be denied entry.

**Before allowing an individual to proceed onto the premises:**

- Ensure they wash their hands or use an alcohol-based sanitiser
- Ensure they are wearing a mask correctly
- Ensure they understand the need for social distancing at all times
- Ensure they are familiar with any other, new, or changed, workplace practices

## 11. Government Agency Advice

Safe Work Australia – [www.swa.gov.au](http://www.swa.gov.au)

Safe Work NSW - <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/>

Safe Work VIC - <https://www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

Safe Work QLD – <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>

Safe Work SA – <https://www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/>

Safe Work WA – <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus>

Safe Work TAS – <https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au/>

Safe Work NT - <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/>

Safe Work ACT - <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>