

COVID-19 UPDATE SOCIAL DISTANCING

What this document covers:

- This document deals with social distancing and provides some basic information for all building and construction businesses.

Who should use this document:

- This document is designed to encourage all building and construction businesses to (a) **think** about social distancing risks; and (b) **act** to reduce those risks.
- Master Builders is encouraging every business to practice basic social distancing techniques. Regardless of size or sophistication, all businesses should consider the information in this document, review the arrangements it has in place and fill any gaps that might be identified.
- This document is not exhaustive and is not legal or other professional advice.

Where to get more information:

- You are encouraged to contact your local Master Builders office to get further information and advice to suit your particular business and workplace situation.
- A list of links to other information sources and helpful materials is outlined below.

Social distancing **is crucial**:

- While every person and business must implement and adopt some basic social distancing practices to help stop the spread of COVID-19, this is absolutely critical for the building and construction industry.
- At present, construction is considered an 'essential service' but Governments are constantly reviewing this status and won't hesitate to direct the industry into some type of 'lock-down' if they think we may be a source of virus spread.

Here's what Governments are telling Master Builders:

- Government and various regulators are concentrating on making sure that every building and construction business has basic safety protocols in place.
- They have made it clear that unless every business has the basics right, the entire industry risks losing its 'essential service' status and may be directed to close.

This is what 'social distancing' means:

- Social distancing is one way to help slow the spread of viruses. Social distancing includes:
 - staying at home when people are sick
 - avoiding gatherings if they are not essential
 - following the 4sqm rule (allowing 4sqm of space per person) for essential gatherings
 - staying 1.5 metres away from other people as much as they can
 - avoid touching others such as shaking hands, kissing or hugging.
- Practicing social distancing can help protect the people in our community who are most at risk.

How to use this document:

This document sets out:

- a basic checklist of things to consider relevant to COVID and social distancing;

- some handy tips and ideas that Master Builders members have found useful to date; and
- a list of other information sources you should investigate.

CORONAVIRUS “KEEP YOUR DISTANCE - STOP THE SPREAD” CHECK-LIST

#	ITEM – ISSUE – ACTION ¹	DATE TO COMPLETE	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	REVIEW DATE	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	HOW HAS THIS ITEM BEEN ACTIONED?
GENERAL ON-SITE PROTOCOLS						
1.	Workers have been informed that they should stay at home if they are sick or present symptoms ⁱ .					
2.	Workers have been consulted about all COVID-19 business safety processes and changes ⁱⁱ .					
3.	We are monitoring information from Regulators and Government and will update policies/ procedures as and when required ⁱⁱⁱ .					
4.	Workers have been provided with up to date information on how to identify symptoms of COVID-19 ^{iv} .					
5.	We have identified the required PPE and provided this to all affected workers ^v .					
6.	We have directed all workers to wash their hands as regularly as practicable.					
7.	We have a backup plan if we can't get access to the desired PPE and hygiene equipment ^{vi} .					
8.	We have a plan for what we will do if someone is diagnosed with COVID-19 (or it's suspected that a worker has contracted COVID-19), and this has been communicated to workers.					
9.	We have delegated a person responsible for managing COVID-19 related safety concerns. Workers know who this is.					
10.	We are limiting workers from working across multiple sites as much as possible.					
11.	We have considered ways to minimise gatherings of workers in the workplace ^{vii} .					

¹ Where an item is denoted by an 'Endnote', it reflects a Regulators mandate; the endnote provides a reference to the relevant regulator material, however this may differ by state.

12.	We have a process in place for monitoring the effects COVID-19 might have on the mental health of workers					
13.	We enforce a strict social distancing policy for all on site work, and all necessary meetings (including toolbox talks, safety meetings) ^{viii} .					
14.	We have told workers to stop handshaking and other physical greetings ^{ix} .					
15.	We are holding meetings outside in the open air if possible (while still implementing social distancing measures) ^x .					
16.	We have encouraged workers to take lunch and breaks outside rather than in the lunchroom or site shed ^{xi} .					
17.	We have a process in place to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements and the 4m2 rule for lunch sheds, site sheds, meeting rooms and work areas.					
18.	We have processes to ensure that we clean and disinfect shared high-touch surfaces regularly ^{xii} .					
19.	We have provided guidance to all workers to not share tools where possible and to avoid touching surfaces if unnecessary					
20.	We have provided workers in 'at risk' categories an opportunity to speak with us about specific measures they may need ^{xiii} .					
21.	Workers who believe they are at a higher risk of infection have been advised who to contact within the business ^{xiv} (for example, after contact with a confirmed case).					
22.	We have identified vulnerable workers within the business and made alternative arrangements for them, to minimise the risk of exposure					
23.	We have made sure non-English speaking workers have received the same information as English-speaking workers.					
SITE AND JOB SPECIFIC PROTOCOLS						
24.	We have conducted a risk assessment to determine if this site has any site-specific COVID-19 risks ^{xvvi} .					
25.	We will follow established incident notification processes (including maintenance of records) as required, if any infections are identified on site.					

26.	We are monitoring conditions daily to determine if there are areas of safety that can be improved ^{xvii} .					
27.	We have, or have considered whether we need, a site-specific quarantine plan in the event a case of COVID-19 is identified in a worker ^{xviii} .					
28.	We have considered whether staggered rosters might assist in social distancing and increased hygiene, including during meal breaks					
29.	All shared areas are cleaned regularly and contain extra hygiene and sanitary items for use by workers.					
30.	We are providing COVID-19 information at all site inductions ^{xix} .					
31.	We assess everyone who attends the site for flu-like symptoms ^{xx} .					
32.	We have considered the need for site-specific PPE measures and implemented these ^{xxi} .					
33.	We have established methods to minimise work being undertaken in groups, and where we must, meet social distancing protocols ^{xxii} .					
34.	We have established ways to ensure social distancing is adhered to when work must be carried out by more than one person ^{xxiii} .					
35.	We have ways to ensure workers in confined or closed spaces have access to fresh air ^{xxiv} .					
36.	We are promoting strictest hygiene among everyone on site involved in food preparation (canteen) staff.					
37.	We have established hygiene processes for use of plant and equipment, including shared motor vehicles.					
38.	We have provided subcontractors a copy of this checklist and ensured that have carried out similar assessments ^{xxv} .					
39.	We have reviewed if there are any areas that may require extra hygiene attention on this site, ^{xxvi} including high traffic areas.					
40.	We have reviewed our emergency evacuation procedures and assembly area to ensure there is enough space to comply with the 4m2 rule					

OFF-SITE PROTOCOLS

41.	We have implemented a 'work from home' policy for office staff ^{xxvii} .					
42.	We have asked all office staff to minimise contact with site staff by contacting them using email and phone where possible.					
43.	We will limit unnecessary visitor access to sites as much as possible.					
44.	We have considered ways to minimise gatherings of workers in the workplace, including how meetings or gatherings can be rescheduled, staggered or cancelled ^{xxviii} .					
45.	We have considered ways to hold meetings via video conferencing or phone call ^{xxix} .					
46.	We have considered how to approach non-essential business travel ^{xxx} .					
47.	Privacy and confidentiality protocols have been established with respect to the personal and medical information we may hold on behalf of staff ^{xxxi} .					
48.	Only the minimum amount of personal information reasonably necessary to prevent and manage infection or possible infection will be collected, used, or disclosed ^{xxxii} .					
49.	We have advised staff of our information management policies ^{xxxiii} .					
50.	We will ensure any staff working remotely will be afforded the same privacy of information rights ^{xxxiv} .					
51.	We have ensured those working from home have adequate information to establish a safe work place					
52.	We have implemented communication procedures to ensure we can monitor the physical and mental health of our workers offsite					

ⁱ "When can an employer direct a worker to stay away from their usual place of work under the model WHS laws?", Safe Work Australia: Managing the Risk from COVID19. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-employers#Managing>

ⁱⁱ "Do I have to consult my workers about measure I put in place to minimise the risk of COVID-19", Safe Work Australia: Managing the Risk from COVID19. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-employers#Managing>

ⁱⁱⁱ Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice and guidance for NSW workplaces; Safe Work NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/diseases/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance-for-nsw-workplaces>

^{iv} "Symptoms", Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

^v What else should an employer take into account when deciding whether a worker or other people need to stay away from their usual place of work? Safe Work Australia: Managing the Risk from COVID19. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-employers#Managing>

^{vi} What should an employer do if they cannot get supplies of real or perceived necessities (e.g. hand sanitiser, masks)? <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-employers#account>

^{vii} "Social Distancing", Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

^{viii} "Social Distancing", Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

- ^{ix} “Social Distancing”, Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- ^x “Social Distancing”, Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- ^{xi} “Social Distancing”, Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- ^{xii} Department of Health: What you need to know about Coronavirus information: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- ^{xiii} Safe Work NSW: Coronavirus: Advice for NSW Workplaces: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/news/safework-public-notice/coronavirus>
- ^{xiv} “Worker Advice”; Safe Work NSW: Coronavirus: advice for NSW workplaces <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/news/safework-public-notice/coronavirus>
- ^{xv} Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice and guidance for NSW workplaces; Safe Work NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/diseases/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance-for-nsw-workplaces>
- ^{xvi} Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): CDNA National guidelines for public health units (21 March 2020); Section 4, page 11.
- ^{xvii} Worksafe Vic: Exposure to Coronavirus in Workplaces: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/safety-alerts/exposure-coronavirus-workplaces>
- ^{xviii} Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice and guidance for NSW workplaces; Safe Work NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/diseases/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance-for-nsw-workplaces>
- ^{xix} Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice and guidance for NSW workplaces; Safe Work NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/diseases/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance-for-nsw-workplaces>
- ^{xx} Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice and guidance for NSW workplaces; Safe Work NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/diseases/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance-for-nsw-workplaces>
- ^{xxi} “What else should an employer take into account when deciding whether a worker or other people need to stay away from their usual place of work?”, Safe Work Australia: Managing the Risk from COVID19. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-employers#account>
- ^{xxii} Safe Work NSW: Coronavirus: advice for NSW workplaces. <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/news/safework-public-notice/coronavirus>
- ^{xxiii} Safe Work NSW: Coronavirus: advice for NSW workplaces. <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/news/safework-public-notice/coronavirus>
- ^{xxiv} Safe Work NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/diseases/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance-for-nsw-workplaces>
- ^{xxv} Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) - <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00293>; Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice and guidance for NSW workplaces; Safe Work NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/diseases/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance-for-nsw-workplaces>
- ^{xxvi} Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): CDNA National guidelines for public health units (21 March 2020); Section 4, page 11.
- ^{xxvii} “What else should an employer take into account when deciding whether a worker or other people need to stay away from their usual place of work?” Safework Australia: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-employers>
- ^{xxviii} “Social Distancing”, Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- ^{xxix} “Social Distancing”, Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- ^{xxx} “Social Distancing”, Australian Government Department of Health: What you need to know about COVID19. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- ^{xxxi} OAIC: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Understanding your privacy obligations to your staff. <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/guidance-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19-understanding-your-privacy-obligations-to-your-staff/>
- ^{xxxii} OAIC: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Understanding your privacy obligations to your staff. <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/guidance-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19-understanding-your-privacy-obligations-to-your-staff/>
- ^{xxxiii} OAIC: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Understanding your privacy obligations to your staff. <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/guidance-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19-understanding-your-privacy-obligations-to-your-staff/>
- ^{xxxiv} OAIC: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Understanding your privacy obligations to your staff. <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/guidance-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19-understanding-your-privacy-obligations-to-your-staff/>

TOP FIVE TIPS AND PRACTICAL IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE THINKING

We’ve heard about lots of new and innovative ideas that Master Builders members are adopting to ensure they have solid social-distancing practices in place. Each business will be different, but we thought it could be useful to give an overview of what some members are doing to encourage everyone to think and act.

Our top five tips can be thought about as:

- *Don’t let COVID-19 in* – site access controls
- *Contain COVID-19 by working smarter* – worker teams
- *Friends don’t expose friends to COVID-19* – lunchrooms and site sheds
- *You touch it – you clean it* – hygiene and disinfection; and
- *Keep your distance Champions* – designated workers to monitor social-distancing rules.

Don’t let COVID in - site access points:

Some construction sites have used site access points as one way to ensure good hygiene and minimise virus spread. Strict control of site access points is required by law anyway, however some companies are using them to maximum effect. For example:

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- Every single person who enters the site is required to undertake some basic practices like disinfecting with sanitizer, being reminded of the 1.5m rule, and being checked for any flu-like symptoms;
 - This happens every time a person enters and exists the site – even if it's for a short break;
 - There are no exceptions, and this applies to everyone – from subbies to delivery drivers;
 - Basic but accurate records are kept in case they are needed.

Contain COVID-19 if you can - worker teams:

Some sites have implemented a 'teams' system whereby workers are grouped with a limited number of colleagues, so they only have contact with the smallest number of people possible. This minimises the spread and possibly avoids the need to shut-down an entire workplace if someone contracts COVID-19, because it is easier to quickly and accurately know the extent of possible contact. For example:

- On a large multi-storey site, workers on each floor are grouped (while adhering to social distancing protocols) to minimise contact with workers on other levels; and
- Each group enters and leaves the site together, and only engages with other workers when they absolutely have to – and only does so with particular focus on social distancing basics.

Friends don't expose friends to COVID-19- Lunchrooms and site sheds:

Most members have already limited numbers of people who can be in lunchrooms and site sheds at any one time, and there are also rules that Government has established that must be followed. These rules are:

- All non-essential gatherings should be cancelled, and essential gatherings should be highly restricted. Lunch and working breaks are essential but must follow social distancing procedures.
- All essential gatherings must adhere to the four-square-metre rule, meaning that there must be 4sqm of space for each person. You need to know how large your lunchroom is, and how many people can be in it at any one time.
- Even when you have met the requirements of the 4sqm rule, you must have 1.5m distance between you and the other people in the site shed.
- If it is not possible or practical to stagger breaks so all can access the site shed and adhere to the four-square-metre rule, you should take your meal break in another appropriate area – focussing on outdoor spaces.

You touch it, you clean it – regular cleaning and disinfection

In some sites, people are being asked to take a 'touch it – clean it' approach. This involves a direction that any equipment or commonly touched items or surfaces are regularly cleaned and disinfected. For example:

- Each worker is required to ensure that touch points of equipment they use is cleaned and disinfected once they've finished with it and before anyone else uses it;
- Asking everyone to clean equipment touch points when they use equipment, even if the last person has also disinfected it;
- At the start and finish of shifts and breaks, some companies are asking that all equipment is cleaned and disinfected before and afterwards.

Keep Your Distance Champions - designated workers to monitor social-distancing rules.

Some companies have tasked particular workers with the job of ensuring people follow the social distancing rules, known as a 'Keep your distance Champion'. These workers are asked to do things such as:

- remind people about social distancing rules;
- assist any COVID initiatives, such as worker teams or groups,
- answer any employee questions;
- hold cleaning and disinfectant supplies, and undertake basic related tasks for commonly touched areas;
- collate worker feedback, suggestions or tips;
- identify practical approaches to specific types of work that may involve close contact with others;
- provide feedback to management about new ideas,
- record basic details about what's happened during their shift to ensure basic social-distancing rules are followed and;
- keep basic records of who comes into close contact with who in a particular area, so they can be referenced if someone contracts COVID-19 in the future.

RELEVANT INFORMATION SOURCES AND OTHER GUIDANCE MATERIALS

Commonwealth

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) - <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00293>
- Safe Work Australia: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-employers#Managing>
- Communicable Diseases network Australia (CDNA): CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units: [https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/7A8654A8CB144F5FCA2584F8001F91E2/\\$File/interim-COVID-19-SoNG-v2.2.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/7A8654A8CB144F5FCA2584F8001F91E2/$File/interim-COVID-19-SoNG-v2.2.pdf)
- Department of Health: Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information: <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm>
- Department of Health: What you need to know about Coronavirus information: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- Fair Work Ombudsman: Coronavirus and Australia Workplace Laws: <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>
- Office of the Australian Information Commissioner: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/guidance-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19-understanding-your-privacy-obligations-to-your-staff/>
- Comcare (Workers Compensation): <https://www.comcare.gov.au/prevent-harm/coronavirus>

New South Wales:

- Safe Work NSW: Coronavirus: Advice for NSW Workplaces: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/news/safework-public-notice/coronavirus>
- Safe Work NSW: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice and guidance for NSW workplaces: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/diseases/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance-for-nsw-workplaces>
- NSW Government Department of Health: COVID-19 (Coronavirus); <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

Queensland

- Worksafe QLD: Coronavirus (COVID-19) workplace risk management: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/news/2020/coronavirus-covid-19-workplace-risk-management>
- Queensland Government, Department of Health: Novel coronavirus (COVID-19): <http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/14/217/838/novel-coronavirus>
- Queensland Government: FAQs and myth-busters – Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/find-the-facts/faqs-and-myth-busters>

Victoria:

- Worksafe VIC: Exposure to coronavirus in workplaces: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/safety-alerts/exposure-coronavirus-workplaces>
- Victorian Government, Department of Health and Human Services: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

Northern Territory

- NT WorkSafe: Advice on coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/forms-and-resources/news-and-events/news/2020/advice-on-coronavirus-covid-19>
- NT WorkSafe: Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19 (Coronavirus): <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/forms-and-resources/guides/getting-your-workplace-ready-for-covid-19-coronavirus>
- Northern Territory Government: 'Coronavirus.nt.gov.au': <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/>

Western Australia

- Government of Western Australia: Department of Mines, Industry, Regulation and Safety: Coronavirus - What can be done to prepare for the possibility of a viral outbreak in the workplace?: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/announcements/coronavirus-what-can-be-done-prepare-possibility-viral-outbreak-workplace-0>
- Government of Western Australia: Department of Health: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus
- Government of Western Australia: Department of Health: Coronavirus (COVID19): <https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus>

South Australia

- SafeWorkSA: Coronavirus (COVID-19) workplace information: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/news/coronavirus-covid-19-workplace-information>
- Government of South Australia: SA Health: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+topics+a+--+z/COVID+2019>

Australian Capital Territory

- WorkSafe ACT: *NB: Redirects to ACT Government Health guidance below.*
- ACT Government: Health: Novel coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

Tasmania

- WorkSafe Tas: Novel coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/Health-and-Safety/safety-alerts/coronavirus>
- Tasmanian Government, Department of Health: Coronavirus: https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable_diseases_prevention_unit/infectious_diseases/coronavirus