

Best Practice COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Physical Distancing

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This factsheet provides best practice guidance on physical distancing in the workplace, to help protect against COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses.

Please use this information alongside other Tasmanian best practice guidance, including *Best Practice COVID-19 Safety: for Employers*.

Also review detailed Safe Work Australia COVID-19 physical distancing guidance.

About physical distancing

The more space between people, the harder it is for viruses to spread. Public Health recommends people maintain at least 1.5 metres (two large steps) between each other or groups where practicable, especially indoors and for people at risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

To support physical distancing, employers should understand and manage activities that may impact on physical distancing, including peak customer or visitor times; and patterns of queuing and congestion.

Employers can maximise physical distancing in the workplace by:

1. minimising the density of people within a space
2. increasing the space available
3. influencing movement within an area.

What to do

- When/where physical distancing is not feasible, increase other controls, including ventilation, use of face masks and physical screens.
- Use a site map to visualise the space available, areas of congestion and the flow of people. Use that to inform where to put signage, single-use face masks and hand hygiene stations.
- Place signage and posters about physical distancing around the workplace, including in areas prone to congestion (toilets, kitchens, around lifts and equipment).

Minimise density

- Encourage use of flexitime to spread out workers start/finish times and meal breaks. If flexitime is not feasible, consider staggered start and finish times for workers.
- Avoid crowded meetings. Opt for online meetings if appropriate. If a meeting must be held face-to-face, hold it outside or in a large room where seats can be spread out.
- Limit visitors to the workplace.
- Avoid crowded waiting rooms. Implement systems to enable customers/clients to:
 - make appointments
 - check the wait times in real time
 - join the queue remotely
 - wait off site (for example, in their vehicles) until receiving a notification.
- Discourage physical contact, including handshakes.
- Spread equipment out. For example, if your photocopier and laminator are both frequently used, have space between them.
- Permit workers to work from home or off-site some of the time, if safe and feasible.

Increase the space available

- Maximise space to provide workers, clients and visitors with choices about where to go to maintain physical distance.
- Remove unnecessary furniture, equipment and clutter.
- Provide additional spaces for meals outside the usual tea or lunchroom. For example, create additional meal spaces near windows or outdoors.
- Provide additional workers entry and exit points.
- Encourage use of stairs to minimise crowding in lifts.
- If workplace car travel is required, consider limiting the number of passengers in the car.

Influence movement within the setting

- Use clear visual markings such as posters, signage, ground markings or barriers to guide people on where to stand and what direction to travel in.

The management of COVID-19 continues to evolve, and with changes to community, advice may be revised. Updates are available at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au. If any information in this factsheet is inconsistent with information on that website, please use the information online.