

GUIDANCE NOTE: ALL INDUSTRIES

HOW TO CONDUCT A COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT



This information explains how to undertake a risk assessment to work out if your COVID-19 controls are adequate for your workplace and if you need additional controls.

Situation

Employers must undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* and Public Health Directions.

Response

Conducting a COVID-19 risk assessment and the 'risk profile' you develop (covered later in this guidance note) helps you make informed decisions about the effectiveness of the COVID-19 controls you have. It's especially important if you are considering specific controls that are not required for your workplace by Public Health (such as the mandatory vaccination of your workers).

Work out how COVID-19 could enter your workplace

To work out how COVID-19 could enter or be transmitted in your workplace, things to do include:

- ▶ identify the points of entry for the COVID-19 virus into your workplace. Typically this will be via workers, contractors, customers or other people entering your workplace, but you may identify more
- ▶ review your work processes and identify the workers who may have a greater likelihood of coming into contact with someone with COVID-19 via the points of entry you've identified. Customer service staff and workers who travel from workplace to workplace are examples of 'higher risk' positions. Assess what controls you are relying on to reduce their risk of being exposed to COVID-19
- ▶ review the controls identified within your COVID-19 Safety Plan and assess if these controls are adequately protecting your workers or if there are remaining risks

- ▶ ask your workers if they have been vaccinated. While it is not mandatory for workers to share this information with you, most will. This will help you identify those workers who may be at higher risk of infection
- ▶ identify which workers may be more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to underlying medical conditions. You may need further controls for these workers to reduce the likelihood of exposure
- ▶ identify the risks of workers being identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and assess what controls you are relying on to reduce their risk of being exposed to COVID-19. A close contact is anyone who has had face-to-face contact with someone with COVID-19; other factors to consider is how long they spent together, and where; whether masks were being worn; and the vaccination status of the people
- ▶ consider the impact of your workers entering workplaces that may be deemed vulnerable (for example, retirement homes and hospitals). Make sure your workplace and these workers comply with any Public Health Directions that apply
- ▶ workers who move from workplace to workplace have a higher likelihood of acquiring or transmitting COVID-19. Assess your controls for reducing the likelihood of these workers introducing COVID-19 into these workplaces
- ▶ consider controls that reduce interaction between workers, contractors, customer and other visitors to your workplace, such as physical barriers and 'click and collect' transactions.

How to do a risk assessment

Risks are assessed in terms of likelihood and consequence:

- ▶ likelihood refers to the probability that an event/issue will happen
- ▶ consequence refers to the impact if the event/issue does happen.

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In this case, the event/issue is COVID-19 transmission in your workplace.

You should consider your risks in terms of:

- ▶ the risks to your workers
- ▶ the risks to your customers and your business' service
- ▶ the risks to contractors and visitors entering your workplace
- ▶ the risks to the continuity of your business.

You'll need to consider the impact of a case (or cases) of COVID-19 in your workplace. What controls do you have in place to manage if that happens? How will they reduce the impact to your business?

You'll need to assess the likelihood:

- ▶ low: probability of work activities/other factors causing minimal transmission
- ▶ moderate: probability of work activities/other factors causing some transmission
- ▶ high: probability of work activities/other factors causing significant transmission

You'll need to assess the consequences:

- ▶ low: minimal impact to your business/workers if transmission occurs

- ▶ moderate: some impact to your business/workers if transmission occurs
- ▶ high: significant impact to your business/workers if transmission occurs

The risk rating is then determined after you've identified likelihood and consequence. Use the following table to help define the risk rating for each risk factor.

Likelihood	Consequence	Risk rating
Low	Low	Low
Low	Moderate	Low
Low	High	Moderate
Moderate	Low	Low
Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Moderate	High	High
High	Low	Moderate
High	Moderate	High
High	High	High

Example:

Risk factor	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk rating
Quantity of entry points into your business	Low if not many High if there are a lot	Low if not many High if there are a lot	The greater the points of entry the greater the risk
Quantity of 'high risk' tasks performed	Low if not many High if there are a lot	Low if not many High if there are a lot	The risk increases as high risks tasks are performed
How well will your COVID-19 Safety Plan reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission	Low when controls applied vigorously High when controls not applied	Low when controls applied vigorously High when controls not applied	Having a comprehensive COVID-19 Safety Plan and strictly applying your controls lower the risk rating

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Risk factor	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk rating
What level of worker vaccination already exists in your workplace	The greater the percentage of workers vaccinated, the lower the likelihood of transmission	The greater the percentage of workers vaccinated, the lower the impact on workers/business	Risk is lowest at 100% vaccination The lower the number of vaccinated workers, the greater the risk and the high the risk rating
What type of contact do your workers need to have	The likelihood is low when exposure is limited, masks are worn, and workers are vaccinated Where these are not controlled likelihood is high	The more close contact that exist in the workplace, the greater the consequence	Good physical distancing protocols reduce the risk of close contacts and transmission, resulting in a lower risk rating
Presence of vulnerable workers in your workplace	Where you have no vulnerable workers, the likelihood is low Multiple vulnerable workers mean the likelihood is higher	Vulnerable worker will be impacted if they become infected This may impact on the ongoing operation of the business	The more vulnerable workers you have in the workplace and the absence of strict controls will increase the risk rating
Workers attending multiple workplaces	Going to multiple workplaces increases the likelihood of exposure to workers and the workplaces they attend	Infected workers returning to your workplace may introduce COVID-19 to you workers or to others in vulnerable settings	Controls that reduce workers' interactions and good hygiene controls will provide a lower risk rating
Use of masks and physical barriers to reduce close contacts	Using physical barriers and masks to reduce the likelihood of transmission	Masks and physical barriers have minimal impact on influencing the consequence of infection should it occur	Controls of this type when used effectively lower the risk rating for this element
Effective case or outbreak management plan	No impact on influencing the likelihood of infection should it occur	Good response planning lowers the consequences of transmission	The presence of an effective response plan will reduce the impact on the business and lowers the risk rating

Risk profile

You have now developed a risk profile for the transmission of COVID-19 in your workplace.

As you strengthen or introduce new controls, you will need to re-assess the likelihood and consequence to see how change impacts on your risk profile.

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Example

We'll use deciding whether to mandate vaccination of workers, as an example of a new control, to see how it changes your risk rating.

Risk factor	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk rating
What level of worker vaccination already exists in your workplace	The greater the percentage of workers vaccinated, the lower the likelihood of transmission	The greater the percentage of workers vaccinated, the lower the impact if transmission occurs	The more vaccinated workers, the lower the risk rating
What type of contact do your workers need to have	Vaccinated workers are less likely to transmit the virus	The impact of COVID-19 on vaccinated workers is less than unvaccinated workers	The more vaccinated workers, the lower the risk rating
Workers attending multiple workplaces	Vaccinated workers are less likely to transmit the virus	The impact of COVID-19 on vaccinated workers is less than unvaccinated workers	The more vaccinated workers, the lower the risk rating

It can be seen in this example that mandatory vaccination may reduce your workplace's risks in some circumstances, such as when there are lower levels of vaccination in the workplace, and in others it may have very little effect.

By conducting the risk assessment, you will be able to make a decision on whether additional controls that are not required by Public Health should be implemented in your workplace.

By assessing the risk of COVID-19 in your workplace, and implementing controls to reduce the risk, you are taking steps to ensure the health and safety of your workers and others who may be affected by the work you carry out — and therefore comply with your duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* and Public Health Directions.