Pandemic Emergency Response and Management
Sustainable Showcase Central Coast

1. Purpose and Scope

This procedure provides a guide to the emergency management of public health and safety and has been developed in response to the World Health Organisation's announcement of a worldwide pandemic following the outbreak of COVID-19. The procedure provides information and direction to employees and workers on processes to be followed to maintain a safe and healthy working environment and the tools to develop a tailored plan to identify, control and mitigate the risks of spreading of the virus in the workplace. The procedure applies to all company operations, employees, subcontractors, visitors, suppliers and members of the public.

2. Background

2.1 COVID-19

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold or flu to more serious diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). COVID-19 is a coronavirus believed to have originated in a wet market in Wuhan, China.

2.2 Virus Transmission

COVID-19 is most commonly spread from person to person through the following:

- *Close Contact* with a person while they are in a contagious state or in the 24 hours before their symptoms occur.
- *Close Contact* with a person with a confirmed case who coughs or sneezes in close proximity to another person.
- *Touching* objects or surfaces such a lift buttons, tables or door handles contaminated by droplets from a cough or a sneeze from a person with a confirmed case of infection and then touching your mouth, nose, face or eyes.

2.3 Common Definitions

In the response to COVID-19 several new terms have emerged:

Term	Definition
Close contact	- Greater than **15 minutes** face-to-face contact in any setting with a confirmed case, in the period extending from 24 hours before onset of symptoms, or - Sharing a closed space with a confirmed case, for a prolonged period (e.g. more than 2 hours) in the period extending from 24 hours before onset of symptoms.
Casual contact	Any person having **less than** 15 minutes face-to-face contact with a symptomatic confirmed case in any setting or sharing a closed space with a symptomatic confirmed case for less than 2 hours. Examples of closed spaces provided by the NSW Government include GP or ED waiting rooms.
Confirmed case	Any person who has received a positive test result for COVID-19.
Pandemic	The worldwide spread of a new disease.
Social Distancing	Defined as keeping a minimum 1.5m space between yourself and another person and an occupancy rate of one person per $4m^2$.
Hot Spot	An area that has been identified by the authorities as being at high risk of community transmission of the virus.

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2.4   COVID-19 Symptoms Compared to the Common Cold and Flu

Australian Government

Coronavirus
(COVID-19)

COVID-19: IDENTIFYING THE SYMPTOMS

SYMPTOMS	COVID-19 Symptoms range from mild to severe	COLD Gradual onset of symptoms	FLU Abrupt onset of symptoms
Fever	Common	Rare	Common
Cough	Common	Common	Common
Sore Throat	Sometimes	Common	Common
Shortness of Breath	Sometimes	No	No
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Aches & Pains	Sometimes	No	Common
Headaches	Sometimes	Common	Common
Runny or Stuffy Nose	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Diarrhea	Rare	No	Sometimes, especially for children
Sneezing	No	Common	No

Adapted from material produced by WHO, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It is very difficult to distinguish between the symptoms of COVID-19, influenza and a cold. If you have any infectious or respiratory symptoms (such as a sore throat, headache, fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches, cough or runny nose) don't go to work. You need to self-isolate and to be assessed by a medical professional. You may need testing for COVID-19. You must not return to work until cleared by a medical professional. You need to ensure that the people you care for are protected and safe.

TOGETHER WE CAN HELP STOP THE SPREAD AND STAY HEALTHY
For more information about **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** visit **health.gov.au**

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3. Responsibilities

Position	Responsibilities
PCBU	The person in control of the business or undertaking (PCBU) is responsible for: ▪ Preparation, communication and implementation of the Pandemic Emergency Response and Management Procedure. ▪ Allocating responsibilities to appropriate staff. ▪ Providing resources and training to implement the procedure across the workplace. ▪ Consulting with staff and other interested parties to assess the risks and identify appropriate controls. ▪ Appointing a competent person or external Risk Consultant to analyse the risks associated with the pandemic and implement and monitor controls in accordance with Federal and State Government authorities. ▪ Establishing a specific chain of communication to be followed in the event of a suspected or confirmed case being identified at the workplace using COVID-19 Chain of Communication; see Annexure 1. ▪ Consulting with the NSW Department of Health with regard to any required contact tracing and reporting responses.
Competent Person or External Risk Consultant	The PCBU will appoint a competent person or external Risk Consultant to: ▪ Conduct a workplace risk assessment. ▪ Ensure that workers are inducted into the workplace and trained in pandemic procedure. All workers must complete the COVID-19 Worker and Visitor Declaration on arrival daily; see Annexure 2. ▪ Ensure that visitors and delivery drivers complete the COVID-19 Worker and Visitor Declaration before entering the workplace; see Annexure 2. ▪ Implement controls in the workplace using a checklist appropriate to the working area; see Annexures 3-5. ▪ Review subcontractor Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS) to ensure pandemic controls are in place. ▪ Allocate resources in the workplace to enable compliance with this procedure. ▪ Assess members of staff for approval to work from home and provide training using COVID-19 Working from Home Safety Checklist; see Annexure 5.
All Staff	▪ Must follow all directions given on social distancing, hygiene and sanitation. ▪ Must follow the established chain of communication and notify their supervisor immediately if exposure to COVID-19 is suspected or upon receiving a positive test result. ▪ Must remain at home and do not present for work if any COVID-19 symptoms are suspected.

4. Procedure

4.1   Training, Consultation and Communication

The PCBU must follow advice from the Australian Government Department of Health and check with authorities daily for any updates to safety advice for the duration of the declared pandemic.

During a declared pandemic, a competent person should be appointed to conduct workplace inspections to identify COVID-19 related workplace risks and implement appropriate controls. This includes requirements for first aid officers and safety officers. Appointing an external Risk Consultant may be recommended to work in conjunction with safety officers and senior staff.

The appointed person must train all staff and workers in the use and implementation of risk control measures including appropriate practices and communication procedures. Workplace emergency procedures should be reviewed to include the need for practicing social distancing during emergency evacuation procedures and assembly areas may need to be increased.

Staff and workers must be provided with all information available on the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and receive training in infection control where necessary. Communication and training may be delivered through Government Campaign Guidelines signage, the sign-in process, internal meetings (using online platforms if necessary) or email. It is essential that staff and workers are:

- Trained to recognise the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Directed to stay at home if they are sick or displaying those symptoms.
- Aware of the chain of communication and actions to be taken if they are displaying symptoms.
- Are aware of their leave entitlements if they are sick or required to self-quarantine.

4.2   Chain of Communication

The initial risk assessment must include the establishment of a specific chain of communication to be followed in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 being identified in the workplace. Using COVID-19 Chain of Communication (Annexure 1), in consultation with all staff, responsibilities and actions can be agreed and each person in the chain made aware of their duties should an emergency situation occur.

4.3   Venue Safety

All staff and visitors are to sign the COVID-19 Worker and Visitor Declaration (Annexure 2) at a designated point prior to entering the premises. The information requested will follow the recommendations of the Department of Health and may change with the official level of the declared pandemic. Each person will be requested to use the thermometer provided and record their body temperature as well as declaring the presence of any symptoms, if they have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or have recently visited a 'hot spot'.

If a person has symptoms typical of COVID-19, their temperature exceeds 37.5 °C, or the answer is yes to any of the questions on the declaration, the person is not permitted past the sign in point and **MUST** leave the premises immediately.

4.3.1   Separation of Display Areas

Display areas should be spaced in a manner which complies with the $4m^2$ per person rule. A risk assessment should be undertaken and the following control measures considered and implemented where possible:

- Can display areas be separated so that workers are spaced 1.5m apart?
- Can screens be used between display areas?
- Can furnishings be moved to ensure compliance with the $4m^2$ per person rule?

4.3.2   Social Distancing

All persons must maintain a minimum of 1.5m separation at all times, including meal breaks and in all communal areas and amenities.

4.3.3   Cleaning Management

High traffic areas and items that are frequently touched must be identified and targeted in an increased cleaning regime which includes intensive disinfection. A risk assessment of the venue should be conducted and a list compiled of areas such as toilets, kitchens, reception areas, light switches, lift controls etc that are to be targeted for extra cleaning during peak use periods.

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Ensure adequate hand washing facilities are kept stocked and regularly disinfected and place hand sanitisers in common areas and reception points and near items that are frequently touched.

4.4 Personal Hygiene and Cleanliness

The following practices are the minimum hygiene standards expected of all workers:

- Sanitise or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before entering the workplace.
- Sanitise or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds every 2 hours.
- Sanitise or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after you leave the workplace.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue or elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Place all rubbish, including used tissues, in the bins provided immediately.
- Wipe down all work areas and frequently touches items everyday with antibacterial spray and paper towel.
- DO NOT use another person's telephone, pens etc.
- Keep surfaces as clear as possible so that surfaces can be thoroughly and regularly cleaned and ensure anything that can be stored is put away immediately .
- Clean up after yourself; use and clean personal utensils and coffee cups and avoid using communal plates, cups and tea towels.
- Carry and use your own pen and sanitise it regularly.

4.5 Monitoring

Planning has been undertaken to identify processes that will prevent, as far as practicable, disruptions to operations. Compliance with all steps implemented to control the risk of COVID-19 is a condition of entry to the venue and will be monitored by a competent person during scheduled inspections which may increase in frequency when required. Any breach of social distancing measures, workplace hygiene or safety controls will be recorded and persons may be asked to leave the venue in accordance with current Government guidelines.

A Hygiene warden will be on site to verify social distancing and cleaning requirements are complied with.

6. References

Legal and other requirements
NSW Government Gazette No. 65 30 March 2020
OFSC Guidance - COVID-19
Safework NSW COVID-19 Fact sheet for employers
Safework NSW COVID-19 Construction site checklist
NSW Government COVID-19Advice Hub
Safework Australia- Information on COVID-19 and work health and safety
WHS Regulation 2017 clause 43 duty to prepare, maintain and implement emergency plan
FSC Guidelines WH 13.1 – WH 13.5
ISO 14001 section 8.2 Emergency preparedness and response
First Aid in the Workplace – Code of Practice
Building and Construction Industry: Minimising the risk of exposure to COVID-19

7. Tools

Form	Name
Annexure 1	COVID-19 Chain of Communication
Annexure 2	COVID-19 Worker and Visitor Declaration

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Annexure 3	COVID-19 Workplace Safety Checklist

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