

Industry Restart Guidelines Religion and Ceremonies

December 2020

Current restrictions on religion and ceremonies

All leaders and faith organisations need to know their obligations and ensure they understand the current restrictions in place throughout Victoria.

Victoria moved to COVIDSafe Summer restrictions from 11:59pm on Sunday 6 December 2020. These restrictions will be reviewed regularly, to ensure they reflect current public health advice.

Industry Restart Guidelines have been prepared to assist workplaces and places of worship to operate safely, in accordance with the easing of restrictions, while ensuring the public feels confident that their health and safety is being protected. Places covered include churches, meeting houses, mosques, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras and other places of worship (using the legal definition in the Vic Heritage Act 2017).

Under directions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*, all faith organisations must abide by the following restrictions, **effective from 11.59pm 6 December 2020**.

These restrictions may be updated at any time based on the latest public health advice. You must stay up to date with any changes for your industry.

Current restrictions

Open with COVIDSafe requirements

COVIDSafe Plan

- All places of worship with onsite operations must have a COVIDSafe Plan. Many places of religion and worship are also workplaces or places of worship.
- Home-based faith organisations must also have a COVIDSafe Plan.

Capacity

All places of worship:

No food or drink is permitted to be shared by participants, except where food or drink ('consumables') are essential to the act of worship. Using communal vessels and utensils, such as spoons, is not permitted.

Food or drink can be served for the purpose of hospitality before or after a religious gathering. For example, providing congregants with tea, coffee and refreshments. It is recommended that single use items are used to serve food or drink. It is recommended that only designated people serve or distribute food or drinks. For example one designated person uses the urn to dispense hot water for tea or one person serves food using tongs and gloves. No self serve buffet style set ups should be used.

Indoor gatherings and ceremonies:

- Permitted subject to a density quotient of one person per two square metres, if the venue is using electronic record keeping (e.g. QR code system). If using manual record keeping a density quotient of one person per four square metres must be applied. Electronic preregistration is an acceptable form of electronic record keeping.

Outdoor gatherings and ceremonies:

- Permitted subject to a density quotient of one person per two square metres, if the venue is using electronic record keeping (e.g. QR code system). If using manual record keeping a density quotient of one person per four square metres must be applied.

Weddings:

- Permitted subject to a density quotient of one person per two square metres, if the venue is using electronic record keeping (e.g. QR code system). If using manual record keeping a density quotient of one person per four square metres must be applied. Electronic preregistration is an acceptable form of electronic record keeping.
- If the wedding is held at a private residence, the private gathering restrictions apply.
- A maximum 50 people are allowed on the dance floor, subject to density quotient of one person per four square metres.

Funerals:

- Permitted subject to a density quotient of one person per two square metres, if the venue is using electronic record keeping (e.g. QR code system). If using manual record keeping a density quotient of one person per four square metres must be applied. Electronic preregistration is an acceptable form of electronic record keeping.
- If the funeral is held at a private residence, the private gathering restrictions apply.

Last updated: 24 December 2020

Current restrictions on religion and ceremonies

All leaders and faith organisations need to know their obligations and ensure they understand the current restrictions in place throughout Victoria.

Current restrictions	
Open with COVIDSafe requirements	
Record keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Faith organisations must keep a record of all attendees and visitors who attend the workplace or place of worship for longer than 15 minutes, including first name, contact number, date and time of visit and areas of the workplace or place of worship visited. These records must be kept for at least 28 days.Faith organisations are strongly recommended to use electronic record keeping for this purpose. This includes the free Victorian Government's QR Code Service.Faith organisations must keep records to show compliance with directions in force including all logs created during the time of directions being in force such as work premises rosters, time and attendance records and payroll data.
Face masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Face masks must be carried at all times.Face masks must be worn on public transport, in commercial passenger vehicles (e.g. taxis and rideshare), shopping centres and indoor markets and in large format retail stores (e.g. department stores and supermarkets), unless a lawful reason not to wear one applies.Face masks are strongly recommended whenever physical distancing of 1.5 metres from others cannot be maintained.Further details on mask wearing requirements are available here.
Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Where a workplace or place of worship has a publicly accessible space, faith organisations must display signage at each public entry to each indoor and outdoor space, indicating maximum capacity, face mask restrictions where required, COVIDSafe hygiene and physical distancing requirements.
Cleaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Faith organisations should ensure shared spaces and public spaces are cleaned with disinfectant regularly, with high touch surfaces cleaned twice each day. Shared equipment should be cleaned between uses.Reusable and communal resources such as prayer mats, service sheets, religious texts, etc. may be used but must be cleaned between uses. It is recommended that single use print outs be used, or people should be encouraged to bring their own items of significance.Devotional items may be left in place but must be venerated in ways that do not involve touching or kissing them (such as by bowing or other faith appropriate action).Attendees are encouraged to bring their own items such as prayer mats, shoe bags and service books.

Last updated: 24 December 2020

For additional information and FAQs, visit:

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/guidance-sectors>

Six COVIDSafe Principles

All faith organisations must have a **COVIDSafe Plan** (see [Creating a COVIDSafe Plan](#)). A COVIDSafe Plan applies the six COVIDSafe Principles and sets out actions to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19). Display COVIDSafe signage in appropriate, high visibility locations.



1. Ensure physical distancing

All people in the workplace or place of worship should be at least 1.5 metres apart and there should be no overcrowded areas. This means:

- Work from home if you can. Faith organisations must permit their attendees to work from home if their work can be done from home
- Ensure attendees are 1.5 metres apart at all times. Where this is not possible, the duration of the close contact should be minimised
- Ensure the workplace or place of worship abides by the relevant density quotient
- Limit the total number of attendees in an enclosed area



2. Wear a face mask

Face masks must be carried at all times in Victoria and are strongly recommended to be worn when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Face masks must be worn:

- on public transport
- indoors at airports
- in commercial passenger vehicles (e.g. taxis and rideshare)
- in shopping centres and indoor markets and in large format retail stores (e.g. department stores and supermarkets)

Face masks do not need to be worn if a [lawful reason](#) not to wear one applies.



3. Practise good hygiene

Venue operators must regularly clean high touch-surfaces and encourage good hygiene practices by attendees. This means:

- Schedule regular cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces (including all surfaces and handrails) and make gloves available for this purpose
- Encourage regular handwashing by attendees, and make soap and hand sanitiser available for all attendees throughout the workplace or place of worship



4. Keep records and act quickly if attendees become unwell

Have a strict policy that any attendees who feel unwell must stay at home. This means:

- Support attendees to stay home and get tested even if they only have mild symptoms
- Have a plan in place to immediately close down for cleaning and contact tracing if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Keep records of attendees details for contact tracing



5. Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces

Where possible, move activities to an outdoor area. This includes:

- Meetings
- Lunch breaks
- Registration



6. Create workforce bubbles

Limit the number of people that attendees are in prolonged close contact with. This means:

- Keep pools of people rostered on the same shifts
- Avoid overlap in shift changes
- Limit or decrease the number of visitors or attendees attending multiple sites where possible.



1. Ensure physical distancing

Physical distancing remains one of the most effective ways of minimising the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and is a vital part of creating a safe working environment.

Faith organisations should implement physical distancing measures to create a COVIDSafe workplace or place of worship. This means keeping a minimum distance of at least 1.5 metres between attendees and visitors. Density quotients apply to the number of people who can be in a venue or facility at the same time (see the 'Current Restrictions' table in this guideline).

Where a faith organisation has publicly accessible space(s), the faith organisation must display a sign at each public entrance to each space that specifies the maximum number of members of the public that may be present in the space at a single time. For additional information on calculating your density quotient, visit: [Two, four and eight square metre rules](#)

Ensuring physical distancing in your workplace or place of worship

Implement virtual forms of worship

Where possible, services, prayers and other forms of worship may be held virtually or in outdoor areas that allow for appropriate physical distancing between participants. Ceremonies and services can still be recorded or broadcast live from the place of worship for viewing online.

Minimise contact

Remove excess chairs from communal areas to encourage all people participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities to stay a minimum 1.5 metres from one another. Participants should avoid sharing items such as prayer mats and service books. Devotional items may be left in place but must be venerated in ways that do not involve touching or kissing them (such as by bowing or other faith appropriate action). Faith leaders should frequently remind participants to avoid physical contact.

Greetings and goodbyes

Replace handshakes and hugs with friendly words, a bow or other sign language to minimise contact and maintain at least 1.5 metres physical distance.

Avoid carpooling

Faith leaders and participants should avoid carpooling where possible.

Minimise gathering proximity

Use physical barriers or floor markings to provide minimum physical distancing guides and direct one-way flow where possible. Minimise the congregation of people in outdoor spaces where people are participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities. Where possible, stagger arrival times to minimise queues or crowds and ensure physical distancing at hand sanitiser stations. For carparks, consider directing people to park in every other spot. It is recommended that attendees avoid gathering before or after services.



1. Ensure physical distancing - continued

Physical distancing remains one of the most effective ways of minimising the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and is a vital part of creating a safe working environment.

Ensuring physical distancing in your workplace or place of worship

Breaks

Spread out break times to reduce the number of people using communal facilities at the same time. Encourage all people participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities to take breaks outdoors.

Singing

Singing and chanting in religious settings has been shown to spread the virus.

Singing is allowed, but it is best for singing and chanting to occur in well ventilated places or outside where the risk is lower. It is best that masks are worn by congregants when singing occurs.

Food and drink during ceremonies

Where food or drink ('consumables') are essential to the act of worship, they can be used, however the sharing of food must be avoided. No crockery, utensils, vessels or other equipment is permitted to be shared by participants. The use of communal vessels and utensils, such as spoons, is not permitted.

If it is necessary to handle consumables as a part of a faith practice, those giving food items and those receiving the food items should sanitise or wash their hands immediately prior to this act. The person distributing the consumable should release it, in such a way to avoid any contact between them and those receiving it.

Food and drink after ceremonies

Food or drink as hospitality can be served before or after a religious gathering. For example providing congregants with tea, coffee and refreshments. It is recommended that single use items are used to serve food or drink. It is recommended that one person serves or distributes food or drinks. For example one person uses the urn to dispense for hot water for tea.



2. Wear a face mask

Face masks must be carried at all times in Victoria and are strongly recommended to be worn when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Face masks must be worn on public transport, indoors at airports, in commercial passenger vehicles (e.g., taxis and rideshare), shopping centres, indoor markets and in large format retail stores (e.g., department stores and supermarkets), unless a [lawful reason](#) not to wear one applies.

A face mask must be fitted and cover the nose and mouth to provide the wearer protection against infection. Face shields on their own do not meet these requirements. Please refer to the [Department of Health and Human Services' guidelines](#) for further information. For the purposes of minimising environmental impact, reusable masks should be used instead of disposal alternatives where possible. Stay informed about the latest public health advice on washing your reusable masks.

Faith organisations should encourage their attendees to bring their own face mask. Where faith organisations require employees to wear masks, there is an obligation for faith organisations to provide a face mask if the attendee does not have one. Where the activity requires the use of specific types of face masks in the workplace or place of worship, these must be provided by the faith organisation. Where an attendee seeks to provide and use their own face mask, a faith organisation must ensure that it is meeting its obligations under the current Public Health Directions and the OHS legislative framework.

Faith organisations have a responsibility to identify whether there is a risk to the health of attendees from exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) at their workplace or place of worship. Faith organisations and attendees have legal duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. See [WorkSafe Victoria](#) for information about minimising health risks in your workplace or place of worship.

Faith leaders who are leading services or events in a place of worship, and those who assist them (for instance by reading, or leading prayer) do not need to wear a face mask, when doing that particular activity but are strongly recommended to wear face mask at other times in indoor settings. Faith leaders are strongly recommended to wear masks when in proximity to participants, such as for distribution of consumables.

The person managing the religious gathering, ceremony or activity has a responsibility to identify whether there is a risk to the health of participants from exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) at the event.

Many places of religion and worship are also workplace and should therefore be aware of their legal duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. See [WorkSafe Victoria](#) for information about minimising health risks in your place of worship.

Additional information

Responsibility for wearing a face mask

Responsibility for wearing a face mask rests with the individual. Faith organisations must take reasonable steps to ensure their employees wear a face mask at all times when working at the faith organisation's premises, unless there is a lawful reason not to wear one a lawful exception applies.

Provide training on how to use PPE

Consider providing all faith leaders and assistants with training/guidance on how to use PPE (e.g. face masks, face shields, gloves, etc) while undertaking work tasks and socialising during breaks.

Removing face masks to communicate

A face mask may be removed where an attendee is communicating with another person who is deaf or hard of hearing, and the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication. You should maintain physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres.

Display signage

Where face masks are required for your industry, appropriate [signage](#) (e.g. posters) must be displayed at entrances to indicate face mask requirements. A workplace or place of worship could also consider displaying signage that highlights appropriate hygiene practises for changing face masks, such as the importance of washing hands before and after changing a face mask.

Face masks recommended for vulnerable people

Face masks are strongly recommended for vulnerable individuals whenever leaving home and for all people indoors when unable to maintain physical distancing and outdoors when unable to physically distance.



3. Practise good hygiene

Additional hygiene measures are a priority. Faith organisations should review these guidelines to maintain good hygiene in their premises, and document hygiene practices in their COVIDSafe Plan.

Health and hygiene go hand in hand. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of your attendees, faith organisations are encouraged to refer to WorkSafe Victoria, '[How businesses can use occupational health and safety \(OHS\) practice to plan for a pandemic](#)'.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 set out the requirements for faith organisations registered under the Act. Proprietors and attendees should be familiar with the Australian Standards as they relate to their premises and organisations.

Cleaning and disinfecting

Undertake initial pre-opening comprehensive cleaning and implement an environmental cleaning schedule to ensure frequent cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces and bathrooms.

Further advice about cleaning can be found at [DHHS cleaning and disinfecting information](#).

Cleaning and disinfecting schedule

Ensure surfaces are cleaned regularly, with high-touch surfaces cleaned at least twice on each day.

Accessible cleaning products and disinfectants

Make cleaning products available near commonly used surfaces where possible (e.g. placing hand sanitiser on tables and chairs, and in bathrooms).

Reduce high touch-points

Reduce touch points where possible, such as using contact-less payments and workplace or place of worship access-cards, and using contact-less drink fountains and entry-points.

Educate attendees and visitors

Display signage on good hygiene and handwashing practices in prominent places and establish hygiene stations (with hand sanitiser) at entrances and throughout the workplace or place of worship to encourage hand hygiene of attendees and people. Check [information](#) about appropriate disposal of masks and other PPE.

Free infection control training

Free, short, accredited training is available to help attendees identify and manage the ongoing risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) infections in the workplace or place of worship .

[Free infection control training](#) will help faith organisations prepare to safely reopen and ensure their people and workforce are protected. It is recommended that someone from each place of worship completes this training.

Hygiene tips for attendees

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wash or sanitize hands after making or receiving deliveries.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterwards.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- If you are required to wear gloves do not touch your face with gloved hands. Take care when removing gloves. Ensure you wash your hands after removing them.
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.

Workplace or place of worship and should regularly check that they are complying with current directions and advice provided by health authorities.



4. Keep records and act quickly if attendees or people become unwell

All faith organisations must keep records of every person attending the workplace or place of worship and must record staff attendance and shift rosters – see below. Faith organisations must also have a response plan, as part of their COVIDSafe Plan, in case a person with coronavirus (COVID-19) attends their premises.

Attendance register

Under current public health advice, all Victorian workplaces and places of worship are required to establish and maintain a '[workplace attendance register](#)' of every person who attends the workplace or place of worship for a period of more than 15 minutes. This includes all attendees (including sub-contractors) and any people or visitors permitted in the workplace or place of worship (including workplace inspectors).

If an attendee tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), a current and accurate workplace or place of worship attendance register will allow the faith organisation to immediately identify anyone who has been in close contact with that person within the 48 hours prior to the onset of their symptoms.

For more information regarding the definition of a close-contact, see: [DHHS coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Information](#).

Electronic record systems (e.g., QR code systems) are recommended for maintaining these records. Where a faith requires observers to abstain from using electronics on given days, faith organisations should consider pre-registering attendees using electronic systems ahead of time. Faith organisations are strongly recommended to use electronic record keeping for this purpose. This includes the free [Victorian Government's QR Code Service](#).

Maintain business records

Under current public health advice, all Victorian workplace and places of worship must keep records to show compliance with these restrictions and must record attendee movements, including rosters; time and attendance records; and payroll data.

Pre-shift declaration

It is recommended that faith leaders or assistants declare in writing at the start of each shift and before entering a work premises that they are free of coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, have not been in contact with a confirmed case and are not currently required to self-isolate or self-quarantine. Refer to the [Staff Health Questionnaire](#) within these guidelines.

If a customer or attendee who is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) has attended your place of worship while they are infectious, you must:

Undertake a risk assessment

You must undertake a risk assessment to help determine what actions are required. This may include closing part or all of the work premises to allow a comprehensive clean, as well as the identification and notification of [close contacts](#).

For more information see the [workplace or place of worship guidance for managing suspected and confirmed cases \(including risk assessment template\)](#).

Contact DHHS and WorkSafe

- Notify DHHS of the case as per the faith organisation obligations in the workplace Directions, providing it with your workplace or place of worship attendance registers.
- Consult with DHHS on whether the organisation is required to stay closed for a short period to facilitate cleaning and enable contact tracing.
- Report the case to [WorkSafe](#)

Determine hot spots

- Determine what areas were visited, used or impacted by the persons with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Clean the premises

- Close the affected area to prevent access prior to and during cleaning and disinfection.
- Consider engaging suitably qualified personnel to clean and disinfect the area.
- Open doors and windows to increase air circulation. Fans are not recommended.
- The workplace or place of worship should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before it can be reopened and attendees can return.

For more information, see [How to clean and disinfect after a COVID-19 case in non-healthcare settings](#)



4. Keep records and act quickly if attendees or people become unwell – continued

Next steps: Slowing the spread

DHHS actions

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will liaise with operators where someone has been at a religious or faith gathering while infectious with coronavirus (COVID-19). DHHS may request information from the faith organisations and/or faith leaders to assist with contact tracing. DHHS may also request the faith organisation to assist with contact tracing. DHHS will contact anyone who is identified as a close contact of the case.

Faith organisation actions

Work with DHHS to ensure that all appropriate preventative measures have been taken prior to reopening.

Provide DHHS with a list of the people, attendees and other visitors (e.g. contractors, delivery people) who may be close or casual contacts. Faith organisations must keep a record of all attendees and visitors who attend the workplace or place of worship for longer than 15 minutes over the past 28 days.

Any attendee who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) must remain in home isolation until they have been notified by DHHS that they are no longer required to self-isolate and have met its criteria for release. The attendee should follow DHHS guidance and their faith organisation's policy.

Close contacts

Attendees who are determined by DHHS as close contacts of a person with coronavirus (COVID-19) must quarantine for 14 days after their last close contact with the confirmed case, or until they are cleared by the department. They should watch for symptoms and seek medical assessment and testing if they become symptomatic.

A note on privacy

Please respect the privacy of people with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) and treat their condition with understanding and compassion. If a worker is quarantining, check in on their wellbeing regularly and monitor their mental health.

Additional resources

Workers, including employees of faith organisations, who have been required to self-quarantine after a coronavirus (COVID-19) test may be eligible to receive a one-off payment of \$450 from the Victorian Government. Workers who are confirmed as coronavirus (COVID-19) positive may be eligible to receive a one-off \$1500 payment from Commonwealth Government's Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment for Victoria. Further information on coronavirus-related pay and leave entitlements can be found through the Fair Work Ombudsman at:

- [Pay and Leave During Coronavirus](#)
- [Health and Safety in the workplace or place of worship During Coronavirus](#)



5. Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces

In Victoria, faith organisations have OHS duties and obligations to do what is reasonably practicable to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees.

As part of creating a safe working environment that addresses risks associated with potential exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19), faith organisations should have a plan in place to minimise the amount of interactions conducted indoors and maximise ventilation, air quality and use of outdoor spaces.

This means, wherever possible, moving activities outside or to well-ventilated areas and keeping doors and windows open to ensure maximum ventilation. Where an activity cannot be moved outdoors, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems may have a role in decreasing the risk of transmissions in indoor spaces by increasing the rate of air change, decreasing recirculation and increasing the use of outdoor air.

Actions your business can take

Air quality and ventilation

Open windows and outside doors where possible to maximise ventilation. Reduce or eliminate recirculated air and increase the use of outdoor air where possible. Use air conditioning to enhance the flow of air, ensuring that the fresh air mode is selected (rather than the recirculated air function). All air conditioning and ventilation systems should be regularly inspected, maintained and cleaned.

Fans (ceiling or free-standing) which move or disperse air are suitable for use in work and industrial settings provided they are not moving air across adjacent or nearby attendees. Exhaust and industrial fans may also be beneficial in hot weather when strategically placed to move heat or air outside a building. Fans should not be used in enclosed indoor spaces such as elevators.

See [public health advice](#) on safely cooling your workplace or place of worship .

Air quality when cleaning

Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation before commencing cleaning and disinfection. Keep doors and windows open after cleaning and disinfection to allow the cleaning agents to disperse in the airflow.

Move activities outside

Consider which religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities can move to an outdoor area.

Considerations should be made for how to manage those waiting in outdoor areas for religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities to begin, including the introduction of physically distanced queuing systems.

Ensure signage and passages of movement are clear and promote one way traffic only, use separate entry and exit points

Consider steps to improve ventilation

Work with your building owner or manager to improve ventilation indoors. Measures include increasing the percentage of outdoor air and disabling demand-control ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.

Filter performance

Monitor and manage filters in accordance with manufacturer instructions. However, upgrading HVAC systems by incorporating higher grade filters can be very expensive and is not always feasible. Further, even a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter will not eliminate all concerns about airborne transmission.

Elevators

Work with your building owner or manager to consider whether supplemental air ventilation or local air treatment devices should be added to frequently-used elevator cars.



6. Create workforce bubbles

Having 'workforce bubbles' can help minimise the risk of infection and support contact tracing initiatives.

A 'workforce bubble' is a group of Faith Leaders or assistants who limit their in-person interactions to other members of the group. This strategy focuses on reducing the number of individuals a worker or attendee comes into contact with, rather than the number of interactions. Should a Faith Leader or assistants test positive or have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), it will help contain the spread to a minimum number of people within the bubble, rather than requiring the entire workforce to quarantine.

To minimise possible exposure and contact, faith organisations should:

Limit

the number of people that attendees have prolonged close contact with

Modify

processes to minimise interactions between attendees and Faith Leaders during breaks or when transitioning into or out of worship or work periods where possible

Consult

with workers whose work is not essential to the physical operation of the organisation to determine if working from home or remotely is reasonably practicable

Review

shift arrangements to create smaller teams and avoid mixing across shifts.

Actions your organisation can take

Set up 'pools' of rostered workers

Review shift arrangements to create smaller teams and have each team work independently (known as cohorting) and avoid mixing attendees across shifts.

Stagger shifts or services

Stagger or increase the time between shifts or services to eliminate bottlenecks and avoid intermingling between different groups.

Define work zones

Encourage assignment of Faith Leaders to specific areas or stations to minimise the need to go into other spaces. Limit role or task rotation where possible. If areas or stations need to be shared, they should be shared by the smallest possible number of people.

Separate communal areas

Separate communal areas such as change rooms and tea rooms per workforce bubble to minimise intermingling between different teams.

Limit movement between sites

Where possible, limit movements to one site. It is recommended that faith organisations keep a log of all employees working across multiple sites including date, time and place of attendance.

Keep contact records

Keep records that will help manage bubbles, such as knowing which attendees are in different pools, start and end times of shifts etc. Faith organisations must keep a record of all attendees and visitors who attend the workplace or place of worship for longer than 15 minutes in the past 28 days.

Faith organisations are strongly recommended to use electronic record keeping for this purpose. This includes the free [Victorian Government's QR Code Service](#).



Creating a COVIDSafe Plan

Every organisation with on-site operations is required to complete a COVIDSafe Plan so that we can stay safe and stay open.

All faith organisations **must** have a completed [COVIDSafe Plan](#) for each workplace or place of worship to continue operating in Victoria. This includes home-based organisations, and faith organisations that provide services in other people's homes.

As part of a spot check by Victoria Police or other authorities, faith organisations must be able to demonstrate that they have an adequate COVIDSafe Plan.

If a business has an existing COVIDSafe Plan, you must conduct regular reviews to ensure it meets up-to-date requirements (e.g. on face masks).

Your COVIDSafe Plan must set out

- ✓ Your actions to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace or place of worship .
- ✓ The level of face mask or personal protective equipment (PPE) required for your workforce or attendees.
- ✓ How you will prepare for, and respond to, a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace or place of worship.
- ✓ How you will meet all of the requirements set out by the Victorian Government. Some higher-risk industries or workplaces or places of worship may have additional requirements of faith organisations and attendees.

Occupational Health and Safety Act

A [COVIDSafe Plan](#) forms part of the development of a safe system of work and places of worship should also note that the workplace health and safety obligations remain under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act) with respect to identifying hazards and eliminate or, where is not possible to eliminate, reduce risks as far as reasonably applicable.

Workers must also comply with their obligations under the OHS Act.

For further information on your obligations under

The thumbnail shows the cover page of the COVIDSafe Plan document. It features the Victorian State Government logo and the title 'COVIDSafe Plan'. Below the title, there is a section titled 'About the COVIDSafe Plan' which explains the purpose of the plan and lists key requirements. Another section, 'How to develop your COVIDSafe Plan', provides a step-by-step guide for creating the plan, including understanding responsibilities and preparing the plan itself. The document also includes a 'Please note' section with a warning symbol, indicating that certain requirements are mandatory and others are highly recommended but not mandatory.

Workplaces and places of worship should regularly check that they are complying with current directions and advice provided by health authorities.

the OHS Act, please visit [the WorkSafe website](#).

For more information about creating a COVIDSafe workplace or place of worship , please visit:

- [WorkSafe: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WorkSafe: Preparing a pandemic guide](#)
- [DHHS: Business and industry - coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [DHHS: Preventing infection in the workplace](#)
- [DHHS: workplace obligations](#)
- [DHHS: Confirmed case in the workplace](#)



Compliance and enforcement

Venues should regularly check that they are complying with current directions and advice provided by health authorities.

Each organisation has an obligation to ensure that their workplace or place of worship is comprehensively cleaned prior to reopening or recommencing operations. Comprehensive cleaning involves a thorough and extensive cleaning and disinfection regime with a focus on surfaces that may have been exposed to the virus.

Workplaces or places of worship may consider nominating a worker to be the COVID Marshal (or similar) to oversee the implementation of the workplace or place of worship's COVIDSafe plan, ensuring that correct processes are being followed, any relevant documentation is complete, attendees are trained, and procedures are kept to up-to-date to comply with current health information.

Evidence of compliance with the directions of the Victorian Chief Health Officer may be requested from a relevant compliance/enforcement officer. Victoria Police, and other authorities involved in the regulation of organisations, may conduct spot checks to ensure compliance with the directions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*. WorkSafe will continue compliance and enforcement action under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act).

Where can I find further information on safely reopening my workplace or place of worship?

Business Victoria is ready to support faith organisations and answer questions about preparing for a safe reopening. Business Victoria can be contacted on 13 22 15 or online by the [Contact Us form](#).

For information on health and safety requirements under the OHS Act, faith organisations should refer to [WorkSafe Victoria's website](#) or contact its advisory service on 1800 136 089.

How will you enforce compliance? Who will enforce it?

Victoria Police, and other authorities involved in the regulation of faith organisations may conduct spot checks to ensure compliance with the directions of the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

WorkSafe will continue compliance and enforcement action under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OHS Act). For information on health and safety requirements under the OHS Act, faith organisations should refer to [WorkSafe Victoria's website](#) or contact its advisory service on 1800 136 089

Fines and penalties

Victoria Police can issue on the spot fines of up to \$1,652 for individuals and up to \$9,913 for organisations for:

- Refusing or failing to comply with the emergency directions;
- Refusing or failing to comply with a public health risk power direction; or
- Refusing or failing to comply with a direction by the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

Fines can be imposed through the Magistrates' Court to a maximum of \$20,000 for individuals and \$100,000 for organisations.

WorkSafe may take a range of compliance and enforcement action against an organisation which fails to comply with its duties under the OHS Act.

Cleaning guidelines – building owners and managers

All building owners and managers should ensure their attendees follow the below COVIDSafe cleaning guidance to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace or place of worship.

Documentation

Consider maintaining a cleaning log and schedule that set out dates, times and frequency each area has been cleaned. If you outsource your cleaning services, the documentation should clearly specify the cleaning activities and standards expected of the service provider.

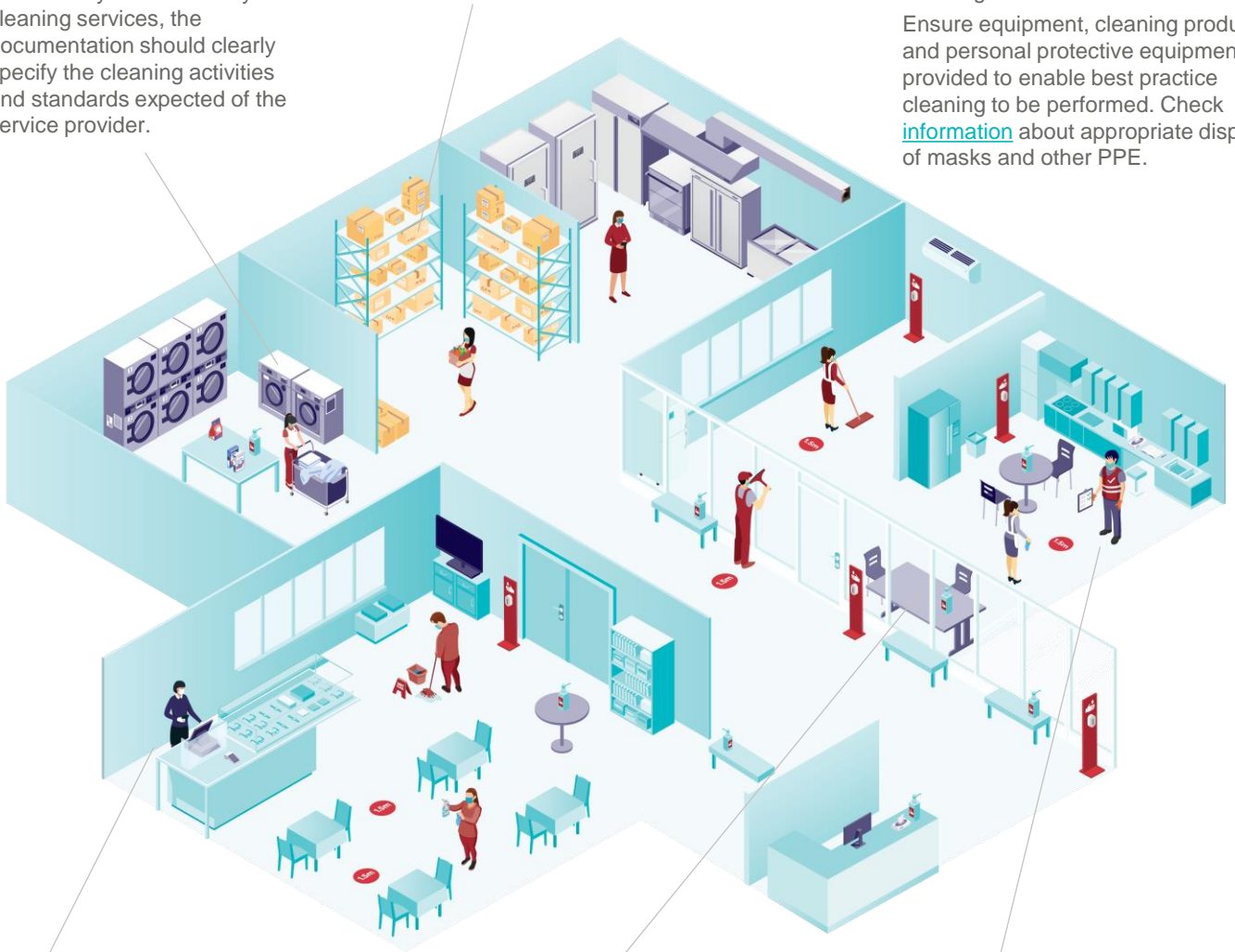
Storage

Ensure your buildings' cleaning and laundry supply rooms are clean and attendees can come in and out easily.

Clean and safe environment

It is the responsibility of the building owner or faith organisations to ensure cleaning is performed to the expected standard. This can be achieved by either an in-house or contracted cleaning services.

Ensure equipment, cleaning products and personal protective equipment is provided to enable best practice cleaning to be performed. Check [information](#) about appropriate disposal of masks and other PPE.



Communication

Clear lines of communication need to be set up between all parties i.e. building occupier/manager and its occupants (attendees, tenants, visitors, people) the cleaning service provider and the cleaning staff.

Risk-based cleaning

Target high use communal areas like chilled areas, kitchens and toilets that may require higher frequency cleaning with appropriate cleaning products.

Have ability to increase cleaning services in the event of a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case.

Roles and responsibilities

Define the responsibility for each role that has a cleaning duty.

Agree who will be responsible for monitoring cleaning quality and that it meets the expected standard.

Provide workplace or place of worship cleaning training for attendees who have site specific cleaning duties and to support any changes in cleaning schedules.



Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that apply from 11.59pm on 6 December 2020.

Checklist for faith organisations/managers

Prepare your COVIDSafe Plan

- Every organisation is required to have a [COVIDSafe Plan](#) that is regularly updated in order to reopen their workplace or place of worship .

Ensure workplace or place of worship is set up to adhere to relevant limits and density quotient

- workplaces and places of worship must adhere to the relevant capacity limits and density quotients for their industry (see [current restrictions table](#))
- all seating is spaced so that attendees are at least 1.5 metres apart if/when seated

Prepare a cleaning schedule

- Organisations must regularly clean shared spaces and areas accessible to the public using a surface disinfectant.
- Establish new processes and schedules for cleaning and sanitising to maintain good hygiene, including frequent cleaning of high touch points (see our [Cleaning and Sanitising Fact Sheet](#)).

Signage requirements

- Display signage for attendees in appropriate, high visibility locations, to include:
 - At entrances to advise of the maximum number of people allowed
 - Information about the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the need to stay home when unwell
 - Hygiene and physical distancing practices.
 - Face mask restrictions [where required](#).
- Promote physical distancing, including between attendees, with floor or wall markings or signs. Use physical barriers where appropriate (e.g. installation of sneeze guards).

Establish your record keeping

- Record the contact details of any attendee or customer who attends your workplace or place of worship for longer than 15 minutes (this includes contractors and delivery attendees) including: first name and a contact phone number to support contact tracing. Retain for at least 28 days following the visit.
- Recommend collecting Staff Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Questionnaires from attendees at the start of each shift.
- Set up a roster to ensure workers do not work across multiple sites unless impractical to do so. For those who do work across multiple sites faith organisations should keep records of these attendees.

Consult

Faith organisations must, so far as is reasonably practical, consult with attendees and HSRs (if any), on matters related to health or safety that directly affect, or are likely to directly affect them.

Checklist for faith organisations/managers cont.

□ Policies, practices and training

- Ensure you as the operator or manager understand your obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and have reviewed the coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance from WorkSafe Victoria available at [here](#).
- Encourage attendees to complete [free infection control training](#) and download the COVIDSafe App. It is the Government's expectation that:
 - at least one attendee at every workplace or place of worship will have completed the training
 - attendees should make themselves familiar with these guidelines
- Consider appointing a worker to be your COVID Marshal to ensure policies and practices are being followed, workers are trained, and records are kept. More information on the roles and responsibilities of COVID Marshals is available [here](#).



Additional resources

For additional information about creating a COVIDSafe workplace or place of worship, please refer to the following guidance:

- WorkSafe: [Industry obligations](#)
- WorkSafe: [Managing COVID-19 risks – face coverings in workplaces](#)
- DHHS: [Preventing infection in the workplace](#)
- DHHS: [Preparing for a case of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in your workplace](#)
- DHHS: [Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce COVID-19 transmission](#)
- WorkSafe: [Other relevant industry specific guidance](#)



Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that are effective from 11.59pm on 6 December 2020.

Checklist for attendees



Complete free infection control training (optional)

All current attendees are encouraged to complete [free infection control training](#).



Avoid carpooling, unless with the same household



Face masks must be carried at all times and are strongly recommended to be worn when physical distancing cannot be maintained. A face mask **must** be worn (unless a legal exception applies) on public transport, indoors at airports, while in taxis or ride share vehicles, or when going to large retail venues, including shopping centres, supermarkets and department stores



Practise good hygiene

- Be rigorous in maintaining the new cleaning and sanitising schedule (for example, touch points such as tables and counters need to be cleaned and sanitised before and after use by people).

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at the very minimum:

- On arrival
- Before preparing or delivering food and/or beverages to tables
- After collecting/clearing used food and beverage items
- Before returning to food or beverage preparation areas
- At the start and end of each meal break
- Before and after touching a customer or their belongings
- After handling money
- Before leaving work
- After blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the toilet.

Avoid interacting with others in enclosed spaces where possible



Avoid working across multiple work sites where possible



Stay home if unwell

- If you have symptoms, get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19). Stay in isolation at home until you get the result and it is negative for COVID-19.
- Do not come to work if you have a fever (a temperature of 37.5C or greater), or if you have any symptoms.



Staff health questionnaire



STAFF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

We encourage each worker to complete this questionnaire before starting any shift and give your completed questionnaire to the shift manager for record keeping purposes.

Name: _____

Date: _____ Time of shift _____

Are you currently required to be in quarantine because you have been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19)?

YES NO

Have you been directed to a period of 14-day quarantine by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as a result of being a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19)?

YES NO

If you answered YES to either of the above questions you should not attend work until advised by the Department of Health and Human Services that you are released from quarantine or until your 14-day quarantine period is complete.

If you answered NO to the above questions, proceed to the symptom checklist below.

Are you experiencing any of these symptoms?

Fever (If you have a thermometer, take your own temperature. You are considered to have a fever if above 37.5C) YES NO

Chills YES NO

Cough YES NO

Sore throat YES NO

Shortness of breath YES NO

Runny nose YES NO

Loss of sense of smell YES NO

If you answered **YES** to any of the above questions you should **not** enter your workplace or place of worship (or you should leave your workplace or place of worship, if already there). Tell your organisation, go home, and get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19).

If you answered **NO** to all the above questions, you can enter your workplace or place of worship .

If you develop symptoms, stay at home and seek further advice from the 24-hour coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 or your general practitioner.