



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety



Safe transport during the COVID-19 pandemic – guide

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Guides

A guide is an explanatory document that provides more information on the requirements of legislation, details good practice and may explain means of compliance with standards prescribed in the legislation. The government, unions or employer groups may issue guidance material.

Compliance with guides is not mandatory. However, guides could have legal standing if it were demonstrated that the guide is the industry norm.

This guide has an operations focus and is set out in the context of risk assessment and legislative requirements of all responsible persons. Consequently, each operation needs to understand its limitations and skills base.

The guide is based on current experience and is not claimed to be complete.

Who should use this guide?

Employers and workers involved in approved and controlled traffic, and the delivery of essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to note that that while the nature of work will be likely be altered during the COVID-19 pandemic the duties and responsibilities still remain to provide a safe workplace.

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1 The *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* places certain duties on employers, workers, self-employed people and others

The Western Australian (WA) Government has closed regional borders and a person must not enter a region from another region except to the extent that they are fulfilling the duties of their employment or providing an essential service. Essential services are defined under the *Emergency Services Act 2005* (WA) to include:

- a person responsible for transport of freight and logistics services
- specialists required for business continuity of essential industry, requiring in-person attendance
- emergency services work
- health services work
- national or state security and governance
- a person travelling for essential medical treatment

A person can only be involved in these essential services provided they are not showing any symptoms consistent with COVID-19, has not had close contact with a person with COVID-19 and is not awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.

Detailed information on the restrictions and exemptions can be found on the government's [Prohibition on Regional Travel Directions](#) (Prohibition Direction).

Regions are defined in the *Planning and Development Act 2005* (WA). A map of these can be found on the [Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development](#) website. For the purposes of the Prohibition Direction the Perth and Peel regions have been combined.

Employers must, as far as practicable, provide and maintain a working environment in which workers are not exposed to safety and health hazards. This requirement applies in delivering these essential services.

Employers also have a duty to manage health and safety risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

2 Why is it important to manage disease risks during transport work?

Some types of transport are essential work and will continue during a pandemic emergency. As approved and controlled traffic and essential workers move between regional areas, they may be at greater risk of contracting an illness from people or places they come in contact with, or transmitting the virus to locations where it has not previously been established.

3 What should employers do?

The section below provides guidance to employers involved in managing the risks associated with approved and controlled traffic and essential services across regional borders during the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation is subject to rapid change, and as such employers must stay up-to-date with the latest official health advice from government sources; for example, the Australian Department of Health, the WA Department of Health and the WA Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. The [Australian Government Coronavirus App](#) may be a useful resource for employers and employees.

3.1 Information, instruction and training

Employers should consult employees in developing safe systems of work to reduce disease risks during work activities. Refer to the [Guidance note – Formal consultative systems at the workplace](#) for further information.

In consultation with their employees and others such as contractors, employers must ensure that employees have received appropriate information, instruction and training in relation to the hazards of the virus and safe systems of work to be used to minimise risks.

3.2 Planning and documentation

Consider whether the travel is essential or whether the outcome can be achieved in any other way. For essential travel, plan and document the route, including all stops.

Consider any special risks in relation to the route; for example, stopping at a remote Aboriginal community presents an increased risk to that community and may require additional control measures.

Consider calling ahead to ensure roadhouses and their facilities are open.

Limiting the number of people travelling in a vehicle must be considered. When having a single occupant is not possible, distancing within the vehicle must be applied to the extent that it is practicable. When two people do share a vehicle, place the passenger in a rear seat, where available, and consider opening windows for additional ventilation

Two-up driving may place two workers in an enclosed space for a period of time, increasing the risk of transmission if one worker is carrying the virus. Where practicable, use a single driver and consider picking up an alternate driver at a designated point for long trips.

If planned travel will include crossing interstate borders ensure jurisdictional COVID-19 travel restrictions are considered.

3.3 Fitness for work

Ensure there is a policy in place such that no person with any symptoms consistent with a virus, even mild symptoms, is permitted to work.

Ensure all employees are aware of requirements for self-isolation in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Updated information on self-isolation requirements can be found on the government's [information pages](#).

These conditions are in addition to standard fitness requirements for commercial vehicle drivers under regulation 3.131 of the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996.

3.4 Vehicle cleanliness

Interior and exterior surfaces which may be touched, must be regularly cleaned using a cleaning product with disinfectant properties. For example, door handles, handles to assist getting in or out of the cab, the steering wheel, all control panels and levers and the inside of the doors.

It is especially important to ensure all such surfaces are thoroughly cleaned before another driver uses the vehicle. Employers should provide adequate supplies of cleaning products with disinfectant properties.

Personal items including vehicle keys, mobile phone, fuel card and work pass card should also be regularly cleaned.

3.5 Hygiene

Employers must encourage all workers to maintain high standards of personal hygiene. Measures can include:

- cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue
- put used tissues straight into the bin
- wash your hands often with soap and water (for 20 seconds), including before and after eating and after going to the toilet (consider carrying soap, water and paper towels for hand washing)
- use alcohol-based hand sanitisers
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- keep personal items clean (e.g. mobile phone, keys)
- have a bin bag in the vehicle and ensure all rubbish goes straight into it and empty it regularly to avoid overfilling.

Hands should be thoroughly washed where bathroom facilities are available. Avoid touching doors in bathrooms or roadhouses – use your foot or a piece of paper towel.

3.6 Social distancing

Implement systems to ensure social distancing as far as practicable. For example:

- using a single driver, where this does not create additional risk
- taking food and drinks to minimise the need to stop at roadhouses or takeaway food outlets
- standing at least 1.5 metres from other people
- using a card for payments and avoid cash handling
- avoiding going into a venue where there are more people than can maintain a safe distance
- minimising contact with others during delivery stops
- making stops at quieter times of the day where possible.

4 What should a self-employed person do?

A self-employed person has duties similar to those in section 3 above; however, duties in relation to providing information, instruction and training for employees are not applicable.

A self-employed person should:

- keep up to date with government advice in relation to the pandemic
- conduct trip planning as per section 3.2
- ensure they do not travel if they have a health risk, as per section 3.3
- maintain high standards of vehicle cleanliness, as per section 3.4
- maintain high standards of personal hygiene, as per section 3.5
- practice social distancing, as per section 3.6.

5 What should employees do?

Employees have a duty to comply, as far as the employee is reasonably able, with instructions given by the employer for the safety or health of the employee or for the safety and health of other persons. Employees should ensure they understand and implement all instructions for managing disease risks. In particular, employees must:

- stay home if unwell or if they have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, or if they have been tested for COVID-19 and do not have the results yet
- practice good personal hygiene as outlined in section 3.5
- maintain high standards of vehicle cleanliness, especially between drivers
- minimise contact with other persons, both while working and in personal life (excluding immediate family in the same household). This includes practicing social distancing as outlined in 3.6.
- report disease-related hazards or risks to the employer as soon as practicable.

Appendix 1 Checklist

Check		✓ ✘
1.	Is the trip essential?	
2.	Written trip plan, minimising stops at higher risk locations?	
3.	<p>Driver provided with information and training on hazards and safe systems of work? Consider the following topics (more information at the Department of Health website);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hazards of COVID-19, including all ages can be affected and can carry the virus • stay at home if unwell with any symptoms • stay at home if had close contact with person diagnosed with COVID-19 or have otherwise been required to self-isolate • cough/sneeze into elbow • regular handwashing and/or sanitising • handwashing for 20 seconds before meals or consuming food • how to maintain social distancing at work • cleaning the vehicle • taking food and drink to minimise stopping at food service facilities • managing risks at stops; e.g. roadhouses • carrying no other person unless essential • communication with clients on workplace systems/controls 	
4.	Single driver where practicable?	
5.	If more than one person is in the vehicle, they are seated to ensure maximum distance between individuals?	
6.	Fitness for work policy communicated?	
7.	All persons travelling are well and at low risk of having been infected with COVID-19?	
8.	Vehicle thoroughly cleaned pre-trip and between driver changes, with attention to frequently touched surfaces?	
9.	Cleaning supplies on board for regular cleaning?	
10.	Handwashing and sanitising supplies on board?	
11.	Vehicle has sufficient bin bags?	
12.	Food and drinks on board to minimise need to use takeaway facilities?	
13.	Fuel card or credit card to reduce cash handling?	
14.	Driver has cleaned personal items (e.g. keys, phone etc.)?	
15.	Social distancing systems in place? (e.g. workers not to enter venues where social distance cannot be maintained)	
16.	Personal protective equipment (PPE) provided where required to protect against identified hazards?	
17.	Employees trained in correct use of PPE?	
18.	All other applicable regulations are being complied with? e.g. <i>Regulation 3.133 Driver fatigue management plan, requirement for;</i> and <i>Regulation 3.20 Sanitary etc. facilities, duties of employer etc. as to.</i>	

Appendix 2 General requirements of occupational safety and health laws

“General duty of care” and “general duties” describe duties that the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (the Act) places upon people to ensure their own safety at work and that of others who are at the workplace. The general duty obligations extend beyond the traditional employer-employee relationship to take into account other types of work relationships such as contractors and labour hire arrangements.

Employers

General duties of employers towards employees [Section 19]

An employer is a person who engages a worker under a contract of employment, apprenticeship or traineeship scheme under the *Industrial Training Act 1975*.

The employer’s duty applies to other working relationships where specifically stated in the Act.

Employers must, as far as practicable, provide and maintain a working environment where employees are not exposed to hazards. This includes, but is not limited to, requirements to:

- provide and maintain workplaces, plant and systems of work that do not expose employees to hazards
- provide information, instruction, training and supervision so employees can perform their work safely
- consult and cooperate with safety and health representatives, if any, and other employees, regarding occupational safety and health at the workplace
- provide adequate protective clothing and equipment, where it is not practicable to avoid the presence of hazards at the workplace
- ensure safe use, cleaning, maintenance, transportation and disposal of substances and plant used in the workplace.

Employees

Duties of employees [Section 20]

An employee is a person who works under a contract of employment, apprenticeship or traineeship scheme under the *Industrial Training Act 1975*.

The employee’s duty also applies to workers in some other working relationships where specifically stated in the Act.

Employees are required to take reasonable care for their own safety and health at work and to avoid harming the safety and health of other people through any act or omission at work.

Employees must comply, as far as they reasonably can, with instructions given by their employer in the interests of safety or health. They must also cooperate with their employer when the employer carries out his or her duties under the Act.

Employees must report to their employer work-related injuries and any hazards at the workplace that they cannot correct themselves. Employees must use personal protective equipment (PPE) as properly instructed, and not damage or misuse any equipment provided in the interests of safety and health.

Duties of self-employed people [Section 21]

A self-employed person is required to take reasonable care in relation to his or her own safety and health at work. They are also to ensure, so far as practicable, that the health of other people is not adversely affected by the work they are doing.

The meaning of practicable

The Act defines “practicable” as follows:

Practicable means reasonably practicable having regard, where the context permits, to —

- (a) the severity of any potential injury or harm to health that may be involved, and the degree of risk of it occurring;
- (b) the state of knowledge about —
 - (i) the injury or harm to health referred to in paragraph (a);
 - (ii) the risk of that injury or harm to health occurring; and
 - (iii) means of removing or mitigating the risk or mitigating the potential injury or harm to health; and
- (c) the availability, suitability, and cost of the means referred to in paragraph (b)(iii).

The action must be capable of being done (practicable), it must also be reasonable (reasonably practicable) and, in assessing what is reasonable, the Act further specifies the matters that must be taken into account. The risk and severity of injury must be weighed up against the overall cost and feasibility of the safeguards needed to remove the risk, in the context of what is known about the hazard.

While the cost of putting safeguards in place is a factor, it must be measured against the consequences of failing to do so. Cost is not an excuse for failing to provide appropriate safeguards, particularly where there is risk of serious, or frequent but less severe, injury.

Common practice and knowledge throughout the relevant industry are taken into account when judging whether a safeguard is “reasonably practicable”. Individual employers could not claim that they did not know what to do about certain hazards if those hazards were widely known by others in the same industry, and safeguards were in place elsewhere.

Appendix 3 Other sources of information

Commission for Occupational Safety and Health codes of practice and guidance notes

- [General duty of care in Western Australian workplaces](#)
- [Fatigue management for commercial vehicle drivers](#)
- [First aid-workplace amenities-personal protective clothing](#)
- [Alcohol and other drugs at the workplace](#)
- [Preparing for emergency evacuation in the workplace](#)
- [Covert and dangerous operations in the Western Australia Police force](#)
- [Formal consultative processes at the workplace](#): safety and health representatives, safety and health committees and resolution of safety and health issues, including consultation on PINs.

WorkSafe online information and publications

- [The First Step – Managing hazards in the workplace](#)
- [Labour hire industry and duty of care](#)
- [Electing safety and health representatives](#)
- [Establishing safety and health committees](#)
- [Provisional improvement notices](#)

Commission for Occupational Safety and Health and Worksafe publications available:

- at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au;
- from WorkSafe 1300 307 877; and
- in the WorkSafe library.

The *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* and regulations can be purchased from the State Law Publisher or Electronic versions are available through the website www.legislation.wa.gov.au

Organisations that may be contacted for further information on COVID-19

- [Department of Health Western Australia](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)