

Update: Victorian 5-day 'Circuit Breaker' Lockdown ends at 11:59pm tonight

The Victorian Premier has today confirmed in a [Statement](#) that the 5-day 'Circuit Breaker' lockdown throughout Victoria will end as planned at **11:59pm on Wednesday, 17 February 2021**. As a result, Victoria will return largely to the 'COVIDSafe Summer' arrangements that were previously in place – with a full list of restrictions released with the Premier's statement available [here](#).

Under the new COVIDSafe Summer arrangements, it will be **mandatory to wear face covering indoors** (except in a residential home) – **and outdoors where unable to maintain 1.5m physical distancing**.

Workers may be required to attend onsite as required. For office-based work premises, onsite office work is capped at no more than 50% of a workforce onsite (for both private and public sectors) – provided that where fewer than 40 workers ordinarily work at the premises at one time, VACC understands that the previous arrangement enabling up to 20 workers at the premises at one time will apply. **Note:** the cap only applies to office-based work premises.

Employers must take reasonable steps to ensure that workers:

- **carry a face covering with them at all times** (unless the worker has a physical or mental health illness or condition or disability which makes wearing a face covering unsuitable); and
- **wear a face covering** where required to do so in accordance with any Directions currently in force (unless an exemption applies).

There continue to be **limited exemptions** to this requirement, which relevantly include:

- the person has a physical or mental health illness or condition, or disability, which makes wearing a face mask covering unsuitable;
- the nature of a person's work or education means that wearing a face covering creates a risk to their health and safety;
- the person is working by themselves in an enclosed indoor space (unless and until another person enters that indoor space).

Face Mask Risk Assessment

Whilst face masks are now required to be worn again in all Victorian workplaces, there is still flexibility offered for particular tasks, where face masks are identified as posing a risk to workers. These particular tasks must be **risk assessed** and if deemed as hazardous, the employee can remove their face mask for these activities only. The tasks could include activities whereby:

- Employees are working on their own in a restricted space (i.e. under a vehicle in hot conditions)
- The task involves heavy lifting or is strenuous in nature.

It is important to note that where a task has been risk assessed as not requiring the use of a face mask, **physical distancing of 1.5m** must be strictly adhered to.

Employers must be able to demonstrate a documented risk assessment process has been conducted; and that as soon as the specific task is completed, the mask must be reapplied as soon as practical.

Record Keeping and Density Requirements

Members should also note that the updated Workplace Directions also confirms that record-keeping obligations remain for all workers and visitors who attend the Work Premises for **longer than 15 minutes**; and that density requirements also remain for both shared spaces (such as lunchrooms) and publicly accessible areas at the Work Premises to **1 person every 2 square metres**.

VACC recommends that employers take the time to familiarise themselves with the new level of restrictions and **review and update their COVIDSafe Plans** accordingly. Consultation on any changes to workplace requirements or updated COVIDSafe Plans must take place with all affected staff.

Members are encouraged to contact the VACC OHSE Unit for further information or assistance with their COVIDSafe Plans on 03 9829 1265.

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