

MANAGING THE RISK OF COVID-19 FOR THE ROOFTOP SOLAR AND HOUSEHOLD BATTERY STORAGE INDUSTRY

COVID-19 presents solar installers and designers attending sites with a new set of workplace health and safety risks. To assist the rooftop solar and battery storage industry manage this risk in line with government recommendations, we have put together a list of precautions to take to ensure you and your customers stay safe. Please note that this list is not all inclusive and we advise checking the advice of your local workplace health and safety authority, you can find a list [here](#).

Managing risk in your team

To protect your colleagues or employees, it's important to practice social distancing with them. Because solar work takes place mostly outside, the risk of contracting COVID-19 is lower than in other situations. However, some suggestions to further reduce the risk include:

- put installers and apprentices into pairs for the duration of the pandemic
 - avoid having more than two installers on a job
 - set a roster for start and lunchtimes to ensure there is no contact between teams during the day
 - maintain a 1.5m space between individuals wherever possible
 - limit all contact between staff who are not working together daily.
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Check in with your work mates

At the start of your shift check in with your work mates. Have they:

- Been in contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19?
- Are they feeling unwell and showing symptoms of COVID-19/Coronavirus?
Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath.

You can check your symptoms using the [Coronavirus Symptom Checker](#).

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, they should be sent home to self-isolate and undertake a COVID-19 test at the earliest convenience. Follow the medical advice provided at the time of testing. Employees must inform their workplace if they have had a COVID-19 test and of the test results.

Ride sharing

If it is possible for you to take your vehicle to site, you should do so.

If you are sharing a ride to work with a colleague each day, it's important to remember that social distancing still applies. There should be no more than two people in a vehicle. If a back seat is available, the passenger should sit in the back seat.

In Victoria face masks need to be worn while in a vehicle.

Air conditioning settings should be set to fresh air to ensure clean air is being circulated throughout the cab of the vehicle.

Download the COVIDSafe app

The COVIDSafe app has been developed by the Australia Government and aims to speed up contact tracing of known cases.

You can download it from the [App Store](#) for iPhones or [Google Play](#) for all other smartphones.

Keep records

To further assist contact tracers, in the event of a COVID-19 case being linked to your workplace, keep records of:

- up-to-date contact details of all employees, sub-contractors and other staff members (ie cleaners)
 - copies of rosters and job records – including customer details
 - any visitors to your office/workshop/warehouse – including workplace inspectors or anyone else who visits for longer than 15 minutes and should include their name and a phone number.
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Before going to site

Communicating with customers

Communicate with your customers about the steps you and your team are taking to ensure their safety. Do this before you attend site to ensure they are aware of the steps they need to take to assist.

During this call/email, it is also prudent to ask the following questions:

- Has anyone at the property been diagnosed with COVID-19/Coronavirus?
- Is anyone at the property awaiting the results of a COVID-19/Coronavirus test?

If the customer answers yes to either of these two questions, reschedule the visit.

- Has anyone at the property been in contact with a known case of COVID-19/Coronavirus?
- Has anyone at the property been ordered into isolation by the Department of Health or another relevant agency?
- Is anyone at the property feeling unwell and showing symptoms of COVID-19/Coronavirus?
Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath.

You can check your symptoms using the [Coronavirus Symptom Checker](#).

If the customer answers yes to any of these questions, re-consider attending site. Implement additional safety measures for your team like:

- face masks – this requirement is mandatory in Victoria and recommended in other states. Homeowners should also be wearing a facemask when interacting with you. For more information visit [Worksafe Victoria's website](#).
- avoid face-to-face contact with the customer or anyone at the property
- avoid using the bathroom/entering the building at all.

Documentation

This information will feed into your SWMS and JSA. COVID-19 should be identified as a hazard. The customer's responses to the above questions outlines the likelihood of infection and will dictate the mitigation strategies you take.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Include some extra items in your gear to ensure you can appropriately manage the risks on site:

- face masks – are now mandatory in Victoria and recommended in most other states. Worksafe Victoria have produced some guidelines for workplaces [here](#).
 - soap and water to wash your hands
 - alcohol-based hand sanitiser
 - alcohol-based wipes
 - paper towel or enough clean rags to dry your hands
 - surgical gloves
 - tissues
 - bins or bags to place used paper towels, wipes, gloves and any single use face masks.
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On site

When you arrive, rather than knocking on the front door, give your customer a call to let them know you have arrived. If you do enter the house for any reason, keep a list of where you have been (i.e. hallway, bathroom etc.) if there is a case of COVID-19 at the property, this may assist contact tracers.

Practice good hygiene

On your person

Avoid touching your face as much as possible. Wash your hands with soap or disinfect them using an alcohol-based solution:

- before attending site
- after using the bathroom
- before and after eating
- after leaving site
- if your hands look visibly dirty.

Notes on handwashing:

- Take your time. The [World Health Organisation recommends taking 20-30 seconds](#). Time it a few times to get it right.
- Bring along something to dry your hands on. Chuck it in the wash at the end of each job or use something disposable.

Use of surgical gloves

When working on parts of the job that may have been touched by unknown persons (i.e. fuse boxes, garage doors, handling documentation or cash) wear disposable gloves. Surgical gloves come in a range of sizes and are designed not to hinder dexterity. However, they are designed for one wear only. Do not put the same gloves back on once you have taken them off and dispose of them safely.

Remember before and after touching a surface:

- wipe down the surface with alcohol-based disinfectant wipes and
- wash or disinfect your hands.

Maintain social distance

When attending the site, this means:

- avoiding physical contact with your customer and their pets
- keeping 1.5m between you and anyone on site
- if you sneeze or cough, cover your nose and mouth with your elbow or a tissue and dispose of it immediately.

If you are feeling unwell, stay home and seek medical advice.

Finishing a job

Handling paperwork and handover

Wherever possible, avoid meeting the customer face to face.

Video call or email videos to explain the handover rather than explaining on site in person.

Provide electronic copies of paperwork to sign and return via email as much as possible.

If this is not possible, wash your hands or wear gloves when handling paperwork or pens that may be passed onto the customer.

If you are collecting signatures using a touch screen, wipe it with alcohol-based wipes between users or use a clean stylus. Remember to keep 1.5m between people on site always.

Cleaning up

Once the job is done, wipe down any areas that anyone from the property may touch with alcohol-based wipes or household disinfectant.

Also clean your gear and vehicle. Wash your hands and wipe down surfaces that you've touched during the job with detergent/soap and water followed by alcohol-based wipes or household disinfectant. Ideally surfaces should remain wet for at least ten minutes, unless otherwise specified by the product direction for use.

Note: alcohol-based wipes, hand sanitiser and household disinfectant should be at least 70% alcohol.

The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services has put together a range of cleaning advice documents including:

- for [non-healthcare settings](#)
- for [the construction industry](#)
- for [after a COVID-19 case has been detected in the workplace](#)