



Preventing the spread of COVID-19 on remote industrial sites

Background

Remote industrial sites with accommodation are high risk environments for transmission of infections that are spread via coughing and sneezing, given that workers live and work in close quarters and there is regular turnover of workforce.

In addition, remote industrial sites have limited access to medical services and there are often challenges in transporting people to a health facility if they require medical support beyond what can be provided on-site.

Remote industrial sites will need to plan for management of:

- a suspected case of COVID-19
- a confirmed case of COVID-19
- contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The following guidance is provided to assist with preventing and managing cases of COVID-19 on remote industrial sites and preventing the further spread of infection.

Workplace entry recommendations

In order to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 on remote industrial sites, the following people should NOT enter a remote industrial site. They should not board a flight or other form of transport to take them to a remote industrial site.

- those who have entered Australia from overseas within the previous 14 days. When the quarantine period has been completed (14 days since entering Australia) and the person remains well, they may return to work on a remote industrial site.
- those who have been identified as a 'close contact' with a confirmed case of COVID-19 by public health officials in the previous 14 days.

Remote industrial sites could consider asking all passengers to confirm that they are not in either of the groups above prior to boarding transport to the remote site.

In order to further reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections, remote industrial sites should also consider advising people not to visit remote industrial sites if they have any respiratory symptoms.

Management of people who develop symptoms of a respiratory infection after arriving at a remote industrial site

People who develop symptoms of a respiratory infection, e.g. fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath after arriving at a remote site need to do the following until symptoms have resolved:

1. If COVID-19 is suspected by the industrial site's health service, according to the case definition for COVID-19¹, droplet and contact precautions should be used, and a surgical mask should be used by the worker (suspect case) during assessment.

¹ <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-novel-coronavirus.htm>

2. In some instances, it may be possible to collect swab specimens² for testing for COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses on site, or at a nearby town medical facility, provided this can be done using appropriate precautions and there is a mechanism to transport specimens to Perth, in a reasonably timely way.
3. If COVID-19 is suspected, the local Public Health Unit (PHU)³ will be able to provide further advice on management of a suspected case.

If the person is assessed as being medically well enough to remain on-site, the following is recommended for the person while they are symptomatic and/or awaiting test results for COVID-19 and/or other viruses:

1. Self-quarantine by eating and sleeping alone in their own bedroom or donga, and not sharing bathroom facilities.
2. Avoid being with other people indoors, e.g. office, meeting room or dining room, or any other enclosed spaces, e.g. motor vehicle. If this is necessary, the ill person should wear a surgical mask. They should maintain a distance of at least 1.5 m from other people if it is unavoidable that they be in the same room/outdoor area as others.
3. Take extra care to practise good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene.
4. Environmental cleaning and disinfection should be undertaken of rooms used by the person as per national recommendations.⁴

Further information on self-isolation for people undergoing testing is available from WA Health⁵.

Management of a confirmed case of COVID-19

Remote industrial sites will need to have a plan for whether COVID-19 cases could remain on-site, if there is the required support to do so, or whether they will be repatriated off-site. If a confirmed COVID-19 case has mild respiratory symptoms and the site can provide them with the support and facilities to isolate them from other people, they could remain on site until their infection has cleared.

Local PHUs will follow-up COVID-19 cases and work with remote industrial sites to determine close contacts of cases and provide advice on the management of close contacts. Close contacts will be required to self-isolate as described above.

Remote industrial sites will need to plan for the possibility that cases or contacts may need to remain on-site beyond a planned time period, or liaise with PHUs for advice on maintaining appropriate infection control during transport.

Management of people with suspected COVID-19 who require transfer to a medical facility

Repatriation should be in accordance with any existing remote site's occupational health and safety policies.

All emergency services need to be informed of the potential risk of COVID-19 prior to attending the site.

Adherence to mass gathering and social distancing advice

Remote industrial sites may have a large on-site population, of over 100 people. For sites with more than 100 people, measures must be taken to ensure that the Australian Government advice regarding social distancing measures are adhered to during non-work time for the on-site population. This may include implementation of measures such as staggering meal times so that common dining rooms do not contain greater than 100 people and limiting the number of people (to less than 100) in common facilities for recreation.

² <http://pathwest.health.wa.gov.au/COVID-19/Documents/V2%2020200313%20Collection%20of%20specimens%20from%20suspected%20cases%20of%20COVID-19%20in%20community%20settings%20SINGLE%20SWAB.pdf>

³ https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Contact-details-for-population-public-health-units

⁴ <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19>

⁵ https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus

For further information: <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates>.

Websites where you can find more information

health.wa.gov.au/coronavirus

healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/coronavirus-covid-19>

www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources%Ev>

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