## Victoria’s roadmap: Real estate

On 6 September, the Victorian Government announced Victoria’s roadmap for reopening which outlines considered and gradual steps to ensure that businesses can open safely and effectively.

As many Victorian businesses reopen, the priority will be the health and safety of workers and clients.

The industry roadmap includes four steps to easing restrictions and reopening businesses. These steps will be subject to trigger points determined by our public health team and will be based on case numbers, testing numbers and other factors.

- The trigger points mean that metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria will take steps (and move to associated restriction levels) at different times.
- Each industry will also have a different restriction level depending on which step metropolitan Melbourne or Regional Victoria is in.

The below Real Estate Roadmap is intended to assist real estate businesses to prepare to safely operate in accordance with the easing of restrictions, while also ensuring the public feels confident that their health and safety is being protected. This includes properties such as: property marketing, sales and rental offices, auctions and on-site property properties, e.g. viewings, repairs and maintenance.

The current restriction levels for metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria are highlighted in the below roadmap.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Metropolitan Melbourne</th>
<th>Regional Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Step</td>
<td>Metropolitan Melbourne - First Step commenced from 11.59pm on 13 September</td>
<td>Heavily restricted. For permitted purposes only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Step</td>
<td>Metropolitan Melbourne – Move to the Second Step from 11:59pm on 27 September 2020</td>
<td>Heavily restricted. For permitted purposes only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Victoria – moved to Second Step from 11.59pm on 13 September 2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Step</td>
<td>Metropolitan Melbourne: Move to the Third Step following a minimum of three weeks and when it:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reaches &lt;5 new cases (state-wide average over last 14 days) and &lt;5 cases with unknown source (state-wide total last 14 days), and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Aligns with public health advice</td>
<td>Restricted. Limited group sizes. Density quotient applies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Victoria: Moved to Third Step from 11.59pm on 16 September 2020</td>
<td>Restricted. Limited group sizes. Density quotient applies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Step</td>
<td>Regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne: Move to the last step following a minimum of three weeks and when:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Victoria reaches no new cases for 14 days (state-wide), and</td>
<td>Open with a COVIDSafe Plan. Record keeping requirements. No density quotient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It aligns with public health advice</td>
<td>Open with a COVIDSafe Plan. Record keeping requirements. No density quotient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID Normal</td>
<td>Regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne: Move to COVID Normal if we reach no new cases for 28 days (state-wide), no active cases (state-wide) and no outbreaks of concern in other states or territories.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

= Status as at 11.59pm on 27 September

**Current restrictions on Real Estate**

All businesses need to know their obligations and ensure they have an understanding of the current restrictions in place throughout Victoria.

Under directions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*, operators in the real estate industry must abide by the following restrictions in both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria respectively, effective from 11.59pm 27 September.

These restrictions apply to all real estate businesses, including property sales and marketing and property management businesses. It applies to activities such as: property marketing, sales and rental offices, auctions and on-site property properties, e.g. viewings, repairs and maintenance.

To comply with directions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*, real estate activities carried out in metropolitan Melbourne must adhere to restrictions outlined in the **Heavily Restricted** column below, while activities carried out in regional Victoria must adhere to those outlined in the **Restricted** column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Melbourne – second step</th>
<th>Regional Victoria – third step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEAVILY RESTRICTED</strong></td>
<td><strong>RESTRICTED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offices</strong></td>
<td><strong>Offices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All property offices closed, except for essential matters (such as emergency maintenance)</td>
<td>• All property offices closed, except for essential matters (such as emergency maintenance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-site property inspections and viewings</strong></td>
<td><strong>On-site inspections to be private appointment only</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• On-site property viewings permitted by private appointment for one agent and one prospective buyer/tenant, who may be accompanied by one other person from an existing household or an intimate partner and the prospective buyer or tenant’s children under 18 years old if there are no appropriate alternative care arrangements available.</td>
<td>• Short term accommodation rental activities permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Short term accommodation rental activities only on care, compassionate or emergency grounds</td>
<td>• Marketing, sales and rental activities are permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Property marketing, sales and rental activities that cannot be done remotely are permitted, limited to one agent and one service provider (e.g. document exchange, cash handling, condition reports, photo shoots in consultation with residents)</td>
<td>• Marketing, sales and rental activities are permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The agent must make sanitiser available at all inspections and require its use prior to entry into the property</td>
<td>• Property management activities are permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The property should be well ventilated and include the opening of all internal and external doors at all times during inspections</td>
<td>• Facilities management services (e.g. for occupied properties, multi-dwelling residential properties) are permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Minimise the touching of surfaces within the property by, turning on lights and opening all cupboards, drawers, windows and doors</td>
<td>• Facilities management services (e.g. for occupied properties and multi-dwelling residential properties) permitted only to ensure health and safety of users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The occupier(s) of a property for sale or lease are required to leave during an inspection for one of the permitted reasons under the Stay at Home Directions</td>
<td>• The agent keeps records of all inspections or marketing activity undertaken, including necessary contact details of attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The agent contacts the occupier of a property to arrange a suitable time and ensure the occupier and attendee are not symptomatic, self-isolating or under quarantine before attending</td>
<td>• Agents must ensure any surfaces touched during an inspection are disinfected by the agent at the completion of the inspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A person can leave their home for a maximum of two hours to attend a pre-arranged private inspection of a property, though is not permitted to travel to regional Victoria to attend an inspection</td>
<td>• The agent keeps records of all inspections or marketing activity undertaken, including necessary contact details of attendees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last updated: 27 September 2020

### Current restrictions on Real Estate – continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Melbourne – Second step</th>
<th>Regional Victoria – Third step</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEAVILY RESTRICTED</strong></td>
<td><strong>RESTRICTED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client limits</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No groups – private appointments only</td>
<td>• Private appointment only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attendees at private property inspections are limited to one agent and one prospective purchaser or tenant, who may be accompanied by one other person from an existing household or an intimate partner and the prospective buyer or tenant’s children under 18 years old if there are no appropriate alternative care arrangements available.</td>
<td>• A maximum of 10 people per inspection, unless all from the same household. One agent only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Any necessary marketing services (e.g. photography, videography, and stylists and rental furniture providers) are limited to one agent and one service provider</td>
<td>• Auctions limited to 10 people, plus the minimum number of staff required to conduct the auction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Photo / video shoots must only use one photographer / videographer</td>
<td>• Density quotient (maximum of one person per four square metres) applies for auctions and inspections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Density quotient (maximum of one person per four square metres) applies</td>
<td>• Staff and clients should maintain a minimum distance of 1.5m apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inspections are pre-arranged, at a set time and will be limited to 15 minutes</td>
<td>• Cannot travel to metropolitan Melbourne for the purpose of attending an inspection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cannot travel to regional Victoria for the purpose of attending an inspection or an auction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Face covering requirements**       |                               |
| • All workers and clients must wear face coverings (exemptions apply) | • All workers and clients must wear face coverings (exemptions apply) |

| **Cleaning requirements**            |                               |
| • Surfaces touched during an inspection (e.g. for a viewing or inspection) must be disinfected after the event and between groups | • Surfaces touched during an inspection (e.g. for a viewing or inspection) must be disinfected after the event and between groups |

| **Record keeping requirements**      |                               |
| • Real estate businesses must keep records of staff and client details for contact tracing | • Real estate businesses must keep records of staff and client details for contact tracing |

| **Signage requirements**             |                               |
| • Display signage at each public entry to each space indicating maximum capacity and COVIDSafe hygiene and physical distancing requirements | • Display signage at each public entry to each space indicating maximum capacity and COVIDSafe hygiene and physical distancing requirements |

| **Workforce bubbles**               |                               |
| • To the degree possible, limit staff to defined teams and properties. The system to minimise this must be demonstrated (e.g. rosters) | • To the degree possible, limit staff to defined teams and properties. The system to minimise this must be demonstrated (e.g. rosters) |
| • Where a staff member is working for different employers across multiple properties, they must provide a written declaration to employers, which employers must record | • Where a staff member is working for different employers across multiple properties, they must provide a written declaration to employers, which employers must record |

Last updated: 27 September 2020

Six COVIDSafe Principles

All work premises 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) in the workplace. Display COVIDSafe signage in appropriate, high visibility locations.

1. Ensure physical distancing
All people in the property should be at least 1.5 metres apart and there should be no overcrowded areas. This means:
- Staff should work from home if possible
- Ensure staff and clients are 1.5 metres apart at all times. Where this is not possible, the duration of the close contact should be minimised
- Ensure the property abides by the four square metre rule density quotient
- Limit the total number of staff and clients in an enclosed area
- No carpooling between staff unless there is no alternative mode of transport to work

2. Wear a face covering
Staff and clients must always wear a face covering except when health or other exemptions apply. This means:
- Provide face coverings to employees
- Ensure all staff wear face coverings while working
- Do not take face coverings off when talking on the phone or with others
- Use full PPE for high-risk settings

3. Practise good hygiene
Operators must regularly clean high touch-surfaces and encourage good hygiene practices by staff and clients. This means:
- Clean and disinfect properties after inspections (including all surfaces) and make gloves available for this purpose
- Encourage regular handwashing by staff and clients and make soap and hand sanitiser available for all staff and clients throughout the property

4. Keep records and act quickly if staff become unwell
Have a strict policy that any staff who feel unwell must stay at home. This means:
- Support staff to stay home and get tested even if they only have mild symptoms.
- Have a plan to immediately close down for cleaning and contact tracing if there is a coronavirus (COVID-19) case
- Keep records of staff and client details for contact tracing

5. Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces
All activities are to be held in outside areas where practical. This includes:
- Client registration and briefings
- Rental activities (e.g. exchange of documents or keys)
- Auctions

6. Create workforce bubbles
Limit the number of people staff have prolonged close contact with. This means:
- Keep pools of staff rostered in the same team
- Avoid overlap in teams
- Reduce staff working across multiple properties
Creating a COVIDSafe workplace: Real Estate

All real estate businesses must ensure they apply the six COVIDSafe Principles to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace.

Real estate activities included: On-site property inspections and viewings, auctions.

Restricted (regional Victoria): Examples of applying the six COVIDSafe Principles at an auction are shown below.

Heavily restricted (metropolitan Melbourne): auctions are not allowed.

**RESTRICTED** (regional): Prearranged attendees only, with a maximum of 10 people, plus one agent (inspection) and minimum number of staff required to conduct the auction

**HEAVILY RESTRICTED** (metro): Inspections are pre-arranged, at a set time and will be limited to 15 minutes

- Clients and staff to wear face coverings at all times
- Hand sanitiser made available in all spaces
- Record keeping at entrance for clients to complete
- Clean surfaces: Encourage clients not to touch surfaces, and disinfect any surfaces that have been touched after each inspection
- Density quotient of one person per four square metres applies at all times
- Implement contactless inspections and auctions where possible: Where possible, implement contactless inspections to avoid contamination (e.g. pre-open doors and cupboards). Encourage clients to use gloves.

Clients and staff to wear face coverings at all times

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.

Employers should implement physical distancing measures to create a COVIDSafe workplace. This means keeping a minimum distance of 1.5m between staff and clients.

**Heavily Restricted** (metropolitan Melbourne, second step): If your real estate business is located in metropolitan Melbourne, inspections are by private appointment and limited to one agent and one prospective buyer or tenant, who may be accompanied by one other person from an existing household or an intimate partner and the prospective buyer or tenant’s children under 18 years old if there are no appropriate alternative care arrangements available. Where contact is required (e.g. for rental activities), clients and staff should adhere to physical distancing requirements. Only one photographer / videographer is permitted.

**Restricted** (regional Victoria, third step): If your real estate business is located in regional Victoria, the following physical distancing requirements apply:

- A maximum of 10 people per inspection, unless all from the same household (infants under 12 months of age are not included in the limit). One agent only.
- Auctions limited to 10 people, plus the minimum of staff required to conduct the auction.

The density quotient (maximum one person per four square metres) applies for all auctions and inspections in regional Victoria.

## Ensuring physical distancing between staff

**Minimise contact**

Ensure staff stay 1.5m apart while setting up properties. Space out equipment (e.g. chairs).

**Implement virtual meetings**

Staff meetings and trainings should be held virtually. Under **Heavily Restricted** and **Restricted**, offices are to remain closed.

## Ensuring physical distancing between clients

**Organisation of inspections and viewings**

For the Third Step, consider organising inspections and viewings so that clients are allocated part of the property to inspect at the time (i.e. control the number of people within the group who are viewing rooms at any one time). Minimise opportunities for clients to crossover during an inspection or viewing event.

**Maintain physical distancing**

Provide physical barriers or floor markings to ensure physical distancing is maintained at auctions and within properties; consider allocating separate entry and exit points if practical to minimise client movement.

**Discourage carpooling**

Staff should avoid carpooling to work unless there are no alternative options. Employers should discourage carpooling, and assist staff to find alternate transport options

**Minimise congregation**

Consider staggered arrival times for inspections and viewings to minimise opportunities for client crossover. Do not permit congregation during inspection events.

**Control the number of clients**

Implement a booking service to ensure inspections and auctions comply with capacity restrictions. Do not allow walk-ins.
2. Wear a face covering

You and your staff **must** wear a face covering at work, and to and from work, unless you have a lawful reason for not doing so.

Employers **must** ensure employees wear a face covering while at work, unless an exemption applies.

A face covering includes a fitted face mask that covers 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.

Employers should encourage their workers to bring their own face covering where possible, however there is an obligation for employers to provide a face covering if a worker does not have one. Where the work or task requires the use of specific types of face coverings in the workplace, these must be provided by the employer. Where a worker seeks to provide and use their own face covering at work, an employer must ensure that it is meeting its obligations under the current Public Health Directions and the OHS legislative framework.

Employers have a responsibility to identify whether there is a risk to the health of employees from exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) at their workplace.

Employers and workers have legal duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. See WorkSafe Victoria for information about minimising health risks in your workplace.

**Wearing a face covering in real estate properties**

**Responsibility for wearing a face covering**

Responsibility for wearing a face covering rests with the individual. Businesses must take reasonable steps to ensure their worker and clients wear a face covering at all times when at the premises, unless clients are in private rooms, or when a lawful exception applies.

**Can patrons take their face covering off while in private areas?**

Clients must wear a face covering at all times while on the property, unless a lawful exemption applies. This means the face covering must be worn by the client when they are viewing the property, participating in an auction or conducting other rental activities (e.g. picking up keys).

**Type of face coverings required by real estate industry**

Real estate businesses can use any type of face covering such as cloth masks or single use surgical mask, that covers the nose and mouth to provide the wearer protection against infection.

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**Refusing service of clients not wearing a face covering**

For the safety of residents and other clients, an agent can refuse service to clients not wearing a face covering.

**How should individuals change their face covering?**

It is recommended that staff and clients carry spare disposable face masks in a plastic zip pocket to change their face coverings regularly. A property could also consider displaying signage that highlights the importance of washing hands before and after changing a face covering.

**When is a face covering required by clients within their own property?**

Clients do not need to wear face mask when within their own property. However it is suggested that occupants wear masks when contractors are attending the property to conduct repairs and maintenance, or when any other ongoing rental activities are conducted within the property. In this instance, clients should avoid contact where possible.
3. Practise good hygiene

Additional hygiene measures are a priority. Operators should review these guidelines to maintain good hygiene in their premises, and document hygiene practises in their COVIDSafe plan.

Health and hygiene go hand in hand. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of your staff, business owners are encouraged to refer to WorkSafe Victoria, ‘How employers 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 businesses registered under the Act. Proprietors and workers should be familiar with the Australian Standards as they relate to their premises and businesses.

Cleaning and disinfecting schedule

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.

Accessible cleaning products and disinfectants

Make cleaning products available near commonly used surfaces where possible (for example, placing hand sanitiser near the property entrance, on tables and chairs, and in bathrooms).

Reduce high touch-points

Reduce touch points where possible, such as using contact-less registration and implementing contact-less inspections and auctions (e.g. opening all doors and cupboards).

Educate clients and staff

Display posters on good hygiene and handwashing practices in prominent places and establish hygiene stations (with hand sanitiser) at entrances and throughout the property to encourage hand hygiene of staff and clients.

Free infection control training

Free, short accredited training is available to help workers identify and manage the ongoing risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) infections in the workplace. Free infection control training will help businesses prepare to safely reopen and ensure their customers and workforce are protected.

Promotion of hygiene tips for workers

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wash or disinfect hands after making or receiving deliveries.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- 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.

Real estate businesses should regularly check that their properties are compliant with current directions and advice provided by health authorities.
4. Keep records and act quickly if staff or customers become unwell

All businesses must keep records of every person who attends the workplace or property and should have a response plan, as part of their COVIDSafe plan, ready for the possibility of a person with coronavirus (COVID-19) at their premises.

Keeping records

Workplace attendance register

Under current public health advice, all Victorian workplaces are required to establish and maintain a ‘workplace attendance register’ of every person who attends the workplace or attends a property for inspection or auction. This includes all workers (including subcontractors) and any customers or visitors permitted in the workplace (including workplace inspectors).

If a staff member or customer tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), a current and accurate workplace attendance register will allow the employer 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, visit DHHS.

If a customer or employee who is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) has attended your business 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 guidance for managing suspected and confirmed cases (including risk assessment template).

- **Contact DHHS and WorkSafe**
  
  - Notify DHHS of the case as per the Employer obligations in the Workplace Directions.
  
  - Consult with DHHS on whether the business 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 of the property were visited, used, or impacted by the person 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
  
  - The workplace should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before it can be re-opened and workers can return to work.

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 staff or clients become unwell – continued

All businesses must keep records of every person who attends the workplace or property and should have a response plan, as part of their COVIDSafe plan, ready for the possibility of a person with coronavirus (COVID-19) at their premises.

Next steps: Slowing the spread

**DHHS actions**

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

**Contingency plans**

If multiple staff are directed to be quarantined and this affects operational capacity, the business will need to consider its own contingency plans for disposing of raw materials (especially fresh ingredients), any work in progress, or short shelf-life stock to ensure food safety is maintained.

**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 staff member is quarantining, check in on their wellbeing regularly and monitor their mental health.

**Additional resources**

Staff 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. Staff 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 During Coronavirus

**Actions for residents and agents**

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

Provide DHHS with a list of the clients, staff, and other visitors (for example, contractors, delivery workers) who may be close or casual contacts. Residents or agents must keep a record of all workers and visitors who attend the workplace for longer than 15 minutes over the past 28 days.

Any resident or agent who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) should remain in home quarantine until they have been notified by DHHS that they are no longer required to quarantine and have met its criteria for release. The staff member should follow DHHS guidance and their employer’s policy.

**Close contacts**

Staff who are determined as close contacts of a person with coronavirus (COVID-19) must quarantine and should not come to work for 14 days after their last close contact with the confirmed case. They should watch for symptoms and seek medical assessment and testing if they become symptomatic.
5. Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces

In Victoria, employers 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), businesses should have a plan in place to minimise the amount of interactions conducted in enclosed spaces 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 as practicable to ensure maximum ventilation.

**Actions your business can take**

**Air quality and ventilation**
Open windows and outside doors where possible to maximise ventilation. Use air conditioning to enhance the flow of air, however ensure that you are not using the ‘recirculate’ mode.

**Move meetings and functions outside**
Where possible, move meetings, client registration and inspection discussions outdoors. Encourage agents to take breaks or conduct meetings outdoors.

**Interactions between staff and clients**
Limit interactions between staff and clients, such as using automatic check-in procedures and physical barriers.

**Outdoor auctions**
Under **Restricted**, all auctions must be conducted outdoors.

**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.
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 workers who limit their in-person interactions to other members of the group. This strategy focuses on reducing the number of individuals a worker comes into contact with, rather than the number of interactions. Should a worker test positive or have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), it will contain the spread to a minimum number of people within the bubble, rather than requiring the whole business to undergo quarantine.

To minimise possible exposure and contact, businesses should:

**Limit**
the number of people that staff have prolonged close contact with

**Modify**
processes to minimise interactions between staff members during breaks or when transitioning into or out of work periods where possible

**Consult**
with staff whose work is not essential to the physical operation of the business to determine if working from home or remotely is reasonably practicable

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

**Actions your business can take**

**Set up small teams**
Review working arrangements to create smaller teams of agents and have each team work independently (known as cohorting). Avoid mixing agents across teams where possible.

**Limit staff movement between work zones**
Limit staff or contractor movements to a limited geographic zone or set of properties, unless it is not reasonable and practical (e.g. where agents must work across a number of spread-out properties).
Where a staff member is working for different employers across multiple premises, they must provide a written declaration to employers. Employers must ensure declarations are collected and recorded.

**Keep contact records**
Keep records that will help businesses enforce workforce bubbles, such as knowing which staff are in different pools, start and end times of shifts etc. Employers must keep a record of all staff and visitors who attend the property for longer than 15 minutes in the past 28 days.
Creating a COVIDSafe Plan

Every business is required to complete a COVIDSafe Plan in order to reopen their workplace.

All businesses must have a completed COVIDSafe Plan for each property to continue operating in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

As part of a spot check by Victoria Police or other authorities, businesses must be able to demonstrate that they have an adequate COVIDSafe Plan (see next page).

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 coverings).

Your COVIDSafe Plan must set out

- Your actions to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace
- The level of face-covering or personal protective equipment (PPE) required for your workforce
- How you will prepare for, and respond to, a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace
- How you will meet all of the requirements set out by the Victorian Government. Some higher-risk industries or properties have additional requirements of employers and staff.

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

Occupational Health and Safety Act

A COVIDSafe Plan forms part of the development of a safe system of work.

properties should also note that the property 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.

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

For further information on your obligations under the OHS Act, please visit the WorkSafe website.

For more information about creating a COVIDSafe workplace, 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

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

Each business has an obligation to ensure that their workplace 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 may consider nominating a staff member to be the COVID-19 Response Officer (or similar) to oversee the implementation of the workplace’s COVIDSafe plan, ensuring that correct processes are being followed, any relevant documentation is complete, staff are trained, and procedures are kept 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 businesses 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?

Business Victoria is ready to support businesses 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, businesses 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 businesses 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, businesses 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 businesses 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 extended through the Magistrates’ Court to a maximum of $20,000 for individuals and $100,000 for businesses.

WorkSafe may take a range of compliance and enforcement action against an employer which fails to comply with its duties under the OHS Act.
More FAQs that apply to all businesses are available at the Business Victoria website.

What constitutes an emergency or safety reason for repairs?
Emergency repairs are urgent repairs and maintenance which must be undertaken to ensure safe and secure use and occupancy of properties and work premises, prevent individuals (including workers) from injury, to prevent property damage or damage to goods, or for urgent repair to an essential service (for example for example fixing a roof or restoring an electricity connection).

Can I engage contractors to conduct maintenance, repairs or removal activities?
Yes. A real estate business can engage third party contractors (e.g. a tradesperson) to conduct maintenance, repairs and removalist activities. Businesses should ensure that contractors are aware of the COVIDSafe principles, including the use of face coverings and physical distancing, and that physical contact is minimised by paying with contactless payment or another non-cash method.

How often should properties be cleaned?
Properties should be cleaned before and after each inspection and auction. High-touch surfaces (e.g. door handles) must be cleaned after each inspection, even where clients used gloves. See Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission - tips for business and construction sites

Can I prepare marketing material for a lease or sale advertisement?
Yes. Photo shoots and condition reports are permitted in consultation with residents. Any necessary marketing services (e.g. photography, videography, and stylists and rental furniture providers) are limited to one agent and one service provider.

Agents should not accompany the service provider unless necessary for access.

How many people are permitted to attend an on-site property inspection?
Under Heavily Restricted only one agent and one client are permitted to attend an inspection arranged by appointment, who may be accompanied by one other person from an existing household or an intimate partner and the client’s children under 18 years old if there are no appropriate alternative care arrangements available.

Under Restricted, one agent and up to 10 clients are permitted to attend an inspection, unless all clients are from the same household. Inspections must be arranged by appointment. Any contact with surfaces within the property should be minimised, by opening doors, cupboards and wardrobes prior to the inspection.

Can a property be rented for short-term accommodation?
Under Restricted, short-term rental accommodation (under six months) is allowed. Under Heavily Restricted, short-term rental accommodation can only be used for care, compassionate or emergency grounds. Circumstances such as these may include refuge from domestic and family violence, providing care to dependents, or if a house is made unliveable through natural disaster.

What restrictions apply to properties regularly used for short term accommodation?
Businesses managing hotels, hostels and other properties regularly used for short term or tourism-related purposes should refer to the Accommodation (Tourism) Guidelines.

FAQs
Can a property be leased?
Yes, properties available for rent can be marketed and leased.

Does my real estate office need to close?
In metropolitan Melbourne under the Second Step, while real estate services are permitted but **Heavily Restricted**, their offices must remain **Closed** in line with ‘Offices and Professional Services’ restrictions.

In Regional Victoria under the Third Step, the offices are **Restricted**, meaning if staff can work from home, they must work from home.

Employers that require their staff to attend their offices (such as for emergency maintenance or to collect equipment so that the business can operate remotely) must issue a Permitted Worker Permit to their employees – this is the employer’s responsibility.

Do all transactions need to be cashless?
Cash can still be accepted as a form of payment, but it is strongly recommended that all businesses use contactless payments.

Can owners attend a property (e.g. for final inspections, or to sign a contract?)
In Regional Victoria under the Third Step (**Restricted**), this is permitted.
In Metropolitan Melbourne (**Heavily Restricted**) homeowners seeking to conduct an inspection of the site should do so virtually where possible. If the homeowner must attend the site to complete a final inspection prior to settlement, then they can attend the site by private appointment while the current residents must leave the property for one of the reasons to leave the home under the Stay at Home Directions. Physical distancing must be maintained, and face coverings must be worn.

Does an auctioneer or agent need to wear a face covering?
Yes, all clients and agents must wear face coverings when on the premises of a property. However where clear communication is required, an agent or auctioneer may choose to wear a clear Perspex shield. In this instance, staff should ensure that the face shield fully covers the face (i.e. is pulled down) and that they reduce the risk of transmission by standing away from the crowd.
Reopening my business

Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that apply from 11:59pm on 27 September 2020.

Checklist for business owners/managers

- **Prepare your COVIDSafe plan**
  Every business is required to have a COVIDSafe Plan that is regularly updated in order to reopen their workplace.

- **Ensure property is set up to adhere to customer limits**
  - a density quotient of one member of the public per four square metres of the space accessible to the public
  - all seating is spaced so that members of the public are at least 1.5 metres apart if/when seated

- **Prepare a cleaning schedule**
  - Businesses should conduct a comprehensive clean of the premise.
  - 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 staff and customers in appropriate, high visibility locations, to include:
    - At property entrance to advise of the maximum number of clients allowed
    - Information about the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the need to stay home when unwell
    - Hygiene and physical distancing practices.
  - Display a poster at the property confirming staff have reviewed the guidelines and evidence that at least one staff member has completed the recommended training.
  - Promote physical distancing, including between staff and customers, 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 client who attends your property for longer than 15 minutes (this includes contractors and delivery staff), to include: first name and a contact phone number to support contact tracing. Retain for at least 28 days following the visit.
  - Maintain Staff Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Questionnaires to be completed at the start of each shift, inspection, etc..
  - Set up a roster to ensure staff do not work across multiple sites, or for multiple employers unless an exemption applies.

- **Consult with staff**
  Employers must, so far as is reasonably practical, consult with staff and HSRs (if any), on matters related to health or safety that directly affect, or are likely to directly affect them.
Reopening my business

Checklist for business owners/managers cont.

- Staff and management 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 staff to complete free infection control training and download the COVIDSafe App.
  - Consider appointing a staff member to be your coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Officer to ensure policies and practices are being followed, staff are trained, and records are kept.

- Ensure private property inspections operate in a ‘contactless’ way with the following protocols:
  - Inspections are pre-arranged, at a set time and will be limited to 15 minutes.
  - The agent contacts the occupier of a property to arrange a suitable time and ensures the occupier and attendee are not symptomatic, self-isolating or under quarantine before attending.
  - Occupiers of the property are required to leave for one of the permitted reasons under the Stay at Home Directions, during an inspection.
  - Attendees at private property inspections:
    - are limited to one agent and one prospective purchaser or tenant who may be accompanied by one other person from an existing household or an intimate partner and the prospective purchaser or tenant’s children under 18 years old if there are no appropriate alternative care arrangements available, and
    - any necessary marketing services (e.g. photography, videography, and stylists) are limited to one agent and one service provider
    - The agent keeps records of all inspections or marketing activity undertaken, including necessary contact details of attendees.
    - Minimise the touching of surfaces within the property by, turning on lights and opening all cupboards, drawers, windows and doors.
  - The agent must make sanitiser available at all inspections and require its use prior to entry into the property.
  - The property should be well ventilated and include the opening of all internal and external doors at all times during inspections.
  - Face masks must be worn at all times by all attendees and social distancing to be maintained.
  - Agents must ensure any surfaces touched during an inspection are disinfected by the agent at the completion of the inspection.

Additional resources

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

- WorkSafe: [Industry obligations](#)
- WorkSafe: [Managing COVID-19 risks – face coverings in properties](#)
- DHHS: [Preventing infection in the property](#)
- DHHS: [Preparing for a case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your property](#)
- DHHS: [Planning and responding to cases of coronavirus (COVID-19)](#)
- DHHS: [Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce COVID-19 transmission](#)
- WorkSafe: [Other relevant industry specific guidance](#)
If you are working in the real estate industry, consider using the checklist below:

Checklist for staff

- **Complete free infection control training**
  All current staff should complete [Free infection control training](#). Any new staff being engaged also need to complete this training.

- **Do not carpool with other colleagues unless they are from the same household**

- **Wear a face covering at work, and to and from work unless you have a lawful reason not to do so**

- **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 customers).

- **Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at the very minimum:**
  - On arrival at work
  - 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.

- **Stay home if unwell**
  - If you have symptoms, get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19). Quarantine 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 37.5°C or greater), or if you have any symptoms.
Staff health questionnaire

STAFF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

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

Staff 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 37.5°C) □ 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 you should leave your workplace, if already there). Tell your employer, go home, and get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19).

If you answered NO to all the above questions, you can enter your workplace.

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