Guideline to support *Permissions for close contact critical workers to return to worksite during quarantine period for COVID-19*

Chief Public Health Officer

Government
of South Australia

SA Health

Introduction

This document outlines the procedure to be followed by nominated agencies to support *Permissions for close contact critical workers to return to worksite during quarantine period for COVID-19*, which is a protocol made under section 7(3)(a) of the *Emergency Management (Exposure Sites, Contacts and Diagnosis Requirements No 3) (COVID-19) Direction 2021.*

The following South Australian government agencies have been nominated to support relevant sectors in terms of decision-making, advice, and compliance with requirements:

Sector	Nominated Agency
Agriculture and veterinary services	Primary Industries and Regions
Airports, freight, logistics, civil construction, critical government infrastructure	Department for Infrastructure and Trade
Courts and tribunals	Attorney General's Department
Defence industries	Defence SA (DPC)
Education and early childhood	Department for Education
Emergency services	SA Health
Energy	Department for Energy and Mining
Food manufacture and distribution	Primary Industries and Regions
Funerals /Crematoria	SA Health
Waste management	Environment Protection Agency
Water Infrastructure	Department for Environment and Water

Role of Nominated Agency

Nominated representatives within each Nominated Agency will work closely with nominated representatives within SA Health. To support relevant sectors the Nominated Agency will do the following:

1. Communicate with sector stakeholders / organisations / businesses to ensure they are aware of the protocol and associated Direction, that it should only be considered when all other options have been exhausted, the importance of business continuity and infection control planning, and the need to balance and mitigate risk in the decision-making process.

2. Provide advice as needed to support organisations / businesses to implement the procedure described in the protocol.

3. Provide advice as needed to organisations / businesses in relation to compliance with the protocol and associated Direction.

4. Implement a process to capture the following information:

    a. Name of organisation / business granting permissions to their workforce, and for the work, activities or services:

    b. Rationale for the granting of permissions, in accordance with the protocol

    c. Numbers of workers granted permissions to return to work

    d. Name, role and brief description of responsibilities of each worker

e. Confirmation that the organisation / business meets the assessment and implementation criteria below (and any other criteria contained in the protocol). A spreadsheet is provided.

5. Assess the information received from each organisation / business to ensure compliance with the protocol and associated Direction, and provide advice to individual businesses / organisations to improve practice if non-compliance is identified.

6. Provide this information to the nominated SA Health contact.

7. Report repeated or serious non-compliance to nominated SA Health contact.

8. Advise organisation / business of requirement to provide written advice to SafeWork SA in relation to the worker permissions granted, within 5 working days of permissions being introduced SWSAAdvisoryCentre@sa.gov.au.

9. Nominated representatives within SA Health will be available to provide advice and guidance on the steps outlined above.

Assessment criteria

This section describes the criteria that must be met before organisations / businesses can proceed with granting permissions for the relevant work, activities or services.

Workplace criteria

> All alternative approaches have been explored and options exhausted e.g.
>   o Shifting staff to alternative positions
>   o Delaying leave
>   o Addressing any other factors such as transport and childcare

> The close contact critical worker is returning to a position where they do not come into direct contact with members of the public.

> The organisation/workplace has a COVID business continuity plan in place which encompasses the relevant work, activities or services and is fully operational and subject to compliance monitoring.

The organisation/workplace has a COVID safe risk mitigation plan in place, which encompasses the relevant work, activities or services and is subject to compliance monitoring, with comprehensive hierarchy of controls including:

  o QR check-in, vaccination (including boosters) of workers

  o PPE (surgical face masks as a minimum)

  o appropriate well-ventilated spaces (outdoor preferred) for staggered meal/other breaks

  o physical distancing of workers

  o daily Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)

  o diligence with cleaning and hygiene particularly of shared equipment etc

Worker criteria

> The potential close contact critical worker is separated from the person who is positive with COVID (the 7-day quarantine period must commence at the date of last exposure with the COVID case). e.g. If the positive case is a household member, is the close contact able to be moved to a different residence for the 7 day period, or effectively separated within the house.

> The close contact critical worker is fully vaccinated (including a third dose if eligible).

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> The potential close contact critical worker is completely free of all COVID-symptoms (including headache, sore throat, running nose, muscle aches and pains, fever/chills, cough, vomiting/diarrhoea, loss of taste or loss of smell).

Implementation criteria

Once worker permissions are introduced, the organisation / business must do the following:

provide written approval for each close contact critical worker to return to work during the quarantine period, and outline their responsibilities under the Permissions for close contact critical workers to return to work during quarantine period for COVID-19

> maintain comprehensive records regarding which close contact critical worker/s have been granted work permissions, including ensuring adequate documentation is in place to support such decisions

monitor requirements of the close contact critical worker in accordance with the protocol, including that the worker must:

o be separated from the person who is positive with COVID and the 7-day quarantine period commences at the date of last contact with the COVID case.

o be fully vaccinated (including a third dose if eligible)

o be completely free of all COVID-symptoms

o have undertaken a PCR test prior to returning to work (can return whilst awaiting PCR result as long as that day's RAT (Rapid Antigen Test) is negative and may continue if PCR negative).

o maintain quarantine at all times when not performing work

o complete a daily RAT for days 1-7 since last contact with a case. All RATs must be negative.

o not attend work if any symptoms develop, and obtain a PCR test immediately (work permissions will be suspended until the PCR returns negative)

o not use public transport or other forms of shared transport to travel to work

o wear a surgical mask at all times at work (an N95 mask will be required if working in a setting with vulnerable people)

o take meal and any other breaks alone and preferably in an outside space

o only undertake critical work functions when at work.

provide RATs, appropriate PPE (surgical masks as a minimum), training in infection prevention and control (including use and disposal of PPE) in keeping with its COVID Safe risk mitigation plan

> ensure that all elements of safe return to work are in place, including the safety of the worker and the safety of other workers in the facility.

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FAQs

Are there business continuity plan templates available?

No. Each organisation / business will need to develop a plan relevant to their particular operations, work, activities or services and other work health and safety documentation. Safework Australia has advice on how businesses can conduct a risk assessment specific to their operations to help inform business continuity planning.
https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workers/health-and-wellbeing/infectious-diseases/coronavirus-covid-

Guidance on business continuity measures to consider implementing in food manufacture and distribution is available on the Food SA Website at https://www.foodsouthaustralia.com.au/covid-19/covid-19-and-your-workplace/

Are Nominated Agencies required to sight business continuity plans or infection control plans as part of this process?

Nominated Agencies should satisfy themselves that the particular organisations / businesses have measures in place to ensure as far as is practicable that risks to the business operations, work, activities or services have been identified and mitigated and that the need to return close contact workers is essential. They should also ensure that there are infection control measures in place to ensure close contact workers are kept separate from other non-close contact workers and that all workers at the operation are protected from further transmission of COVID-19.

Does the Nominated Agency need to approve the use of the protocol for individual businesses?

No. It is highly encouraged that organisations / businesses advise the Nominated Agency as soon as possible that the protocol will be employed.   There is no requirement for a formal approval process for use of the protocol but there may be penalties if a business initiates the protocol unnecessarily or recommences activities without ensuring compliance with the protocol.

How should compliance be monitored?

It is important for any organisation / business looking to employ the protocol to understand that there is a risk to their other workers. On that basis, the protocol should only be used where there are no other options to continue operations and the business/organisation must ensure that the protocol is strictly adhered to. Further cases notified at a particular business/organisation may lead to a necessary suspension of operations, work, activities or services which is the situation the protocol seeks to avoid.

Nominated Agencies may wish to follow up with a business/organisation to check on how the protocol is operating. SA Health may also contact an agency if issues are identified either through cases or complaints from other staff at the particular organisation / business undertaking the work, activities or services.

Safework SA should be notified where the protocol has been employed as they will require awareness for any enquiries or investigations that may arise.
https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workers/health-and-wellbeing/infectious-diseases/coronavirus-covid-19

When should an agency consult with SA Health?

The nominated SA Health staff are available to discuss any concerns the Nominated Agency might have with a proposal to use the protocol. Nominated Agencies are best placed to determine the need for the protocol to be deployed however health related information such as infection control advice may be obtained from the SA Health contact. SA Health contacts noted below

SA Health contact	Sector
Phillip Champion, Executive Director, State Control Centre Health Phillip.Champion@sa.gov.au 0429 323 904	Defence industries
	Airports, freight, logistics, civil construction, critical government infrastructure
	Energy
Fay Jenkins, Executive Director, CDCB Fay.Jenkins@sa.gov.au 0401 125 948	Emergency Services
Chris Lease, Deputy Chief Public Health Officer Chris.Lease@sa.gov.au 0428 641 905	Agriculture and veterinary services
	Food manufacture and distribution
	Funerals /Crematoria
	Waste management
	Water
Caroline Miller, Executive Director Public Health Integration Caroline.Miller@sa.gov.au 0418 811 354	Courts and tribunals
	Education and early childhood

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