

BULLETIN: 05/2022

EXEMPTIONS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS AND WORKSAFE COVID-19 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Updated Orders

The [Victorian Government has announced](#) more essential workers will be eligible for an exemption from close contact home isolation requirements to attend their workplace.

From 11:59pm, Tuesday 18 January 2022, workers in the following sectors are eligible for an exemption:

- emergency services such as police, fire services and the SES
- prisons and custodial services
- critical utilities such as gas, electricity, water and waste disposal
- freight and transport operators, including at ports and airports
- primary, secondary and early childhood education
- critical care services that support our most vulnerable.

Under the conditions of the exemption, the worker may return to work if it is necessary for continuity of operations and if other options have been exhausted. The exemption will apply to attending work only, not any other settings.

In order to be eligible, the worker must first notify the employer of their status as a contact, and both parties must consent to the worker returning to the workplace. Workers are already required to be fully vaccinated.

Requirements will need to be met to qualify for an exemption – this includes:

- The worker must undertake a daily rapid antigen test (RAT) for five days and return a negative result prior to attending work each day.
- They must wear a face mask at all times, with exceptions in the case of eating or drinking, or safety reasons, and a P2/N95 respirator is preferred.
- The worker cannot enter shared break areas and the employer must try and facilitate solo break time. The employer must also take reasonable steps to deploy the worker in areas where transmission risk is lower.
- If at any time the worker develops symptoms or tests positive on a RAT, the exemption no longer applies. They are then a case, must isolate for seven days, and must notify others including their employer.

The exemption aligns with what has been granted to key food distribution sector workers and is designed to protect the state's essential workforce during the continuing Omicron wave.

An exemption also applies to hospital workers, disability workers, residential aged care facility workers, and ambulance workers. This exemption also currently applies to hospital workers, disability workers, residential aged care facility workers, and ambulance workers, but the use of an N95 mask at the workplace is a requirement, not a preference.

The updated orders are published on the Department of Health website at <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/pandemic-order-register>.

More information on the exemption is available at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts>. 2022. The [*How We Work: Victoria*](#) also provides a summary of current workplace settings.

WorkSafe Reporting Requirements

I am pleased to advise that WorkSafe has changed its reporting requirements for COVID-19 as follows:

- From 14 January 2022, employers and self-employed persons are no longer required to notify WorkSafe if they become aware on or after that date of a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis attending the workplace, even if the attendance was before that date.
- If, before 14 January 2022, they became aware of a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis attending the workplace, please notify WorkSafe by contacting WorkSafe Advisory.
- Employers and self-employed persons must also continue to notify WorkSafe immediately after becoming aware that a notifiable incident has occurred.

More information on reporting notifiable events is available at
<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/report-incident-criteria-notifiable-incidents>