

Industry Restart Guidelines Religion and Ceremonies

November 2020

Victoria's roadmap: Religion and Ceremonies

On 6 September 2020, the Victorian Government announced Victoria's roadmap for reopening which outlines considered and gradual steps to ensure that places of religion and worship can open safely and effectively.

As many Victorian places of worship reopen, the priority is the health and safety of faith leaders and people observing religious practices and ceremonies.

The industry roadmap includes four steps to easing restrictions and reopening businesses. Progress along these steps is subject to the advice of the public health team based on their assessment of the current epidemiological conditions.

The below [Religion and Ceremonies roadmap](#) is intended to assist places of worship 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 churches, meeting houses, mosques, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras and other places of worship.

		Metro Melbourne	Regional Victoria
First Step	Metropolitan Melbourne: First Step commenced from 11.59pm on 13 September 2020	Closed.	Closed.
Second Step	<p>Metropolitan Melbourne: Moved to the Second Step from 11:59pm on 27 September 2020. Further easing of restrictions from 11:59pm on 18 October 2020.</p> <p>Regional Victoria: Moved to the Second Step from 11.59pm on 13 September 2020</p>	<p>Heavily Restricted. Outdoor religious gatherings and ceremonies of up to five people, plus one faith leader are allowed. Broadcast of ceremonies allowed with a maximum of 5 support people. The <u>25km limit</u> applies.</p>	<p>Heavily Restricted. Outdoor religious gatherings and ceremonies of up to five people, plus one faith leader are allowed.</p>
Third Step	<p>Metropolitan Melbourne: Moved to the Third Step from 11.59pm on 27 October 2020. Further easing of restrictions from 11:59pm on 8 November 2020.</p> <p>Regional Victoria: Moved to Third Step from 11.59pm on 16 September 2020. Further easing of restrictions from 11:59pm on 27 October 2020.</p>	<p>Heavily Restricted. Outdoor and indoor religious gatherings allowed with restrictions. Only one on-site gathering at a time either indoors or outdoors.</p>	<p>Heavily Restricted. Outdoor and indoor religious gatherings allowed with restrictions. Only one on-site gathering at a time either indoors or outdoors.</p>
Last Step	Regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne: Moved to the Last Step from 11:59pm 22 November 2020.	<p>Restricted. Outdoor and indoor gatherings permitted subject to limits. Density quotient applies. Only one on-site gathering at a time either indoors or outdoors.</p>	
COVIDSafe Summer	Regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne: Move to COVIDSafe Summer subject to public health assessment of epidemiological conditions.	<p>Open with a COVIDSafe Plan. Outdoor and indoor gatherings permitted subject to limits. Density quotient applies.</p>	

 Status as at 11.59pm on 22 November 2020

Current restrictions on religion and ceremonies

All businesses need to know their obligations and ensure they understand the current restrictions in place throughout Victoria.

Under directions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*, all places of religion and worship in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria must abide by the following restrictions, **effective from 11.59pm 22 November 2020**.

These restrictions apply to all places of religion and worship, such as: churches, meeting houses, mosques, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras and other places of worship.

Metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria	
RESTRICTED	
Restrictions in places of worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one indoor or one outdoor gathering can occur at one time. Sharing of food, drink or other items by participants is not permitted before, during or after religious gatherings or ceremonies, with the exception of where food or drink ('consumables') are essential to the act of worship. The use of communal vessels and utensils, such as spoons, are not permitted. Ceremonies and services can be broadcast live from the place of worship for viewing online. Those who are necessary to broadcast a service can attend for these purposes. Facilities also open for hosting an essential public support service or essential support group (e.g. for alcohol and drugs, family violence, and parenting).
Indoor gatherings and ceremonies	Indoor religious gatherings and ceremonies permitted, subject to the following restrictions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum of 150 people* subject to density quotient of one person per four square metres (whichever is lesser). No group limits apply.
Outdoor gatherings and ceremonies	Outdoor religious gatherings and ceremonies permitted, subject to the following caps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum of 300 people*, subject to density quotient of one person per four square metres (whichever is lesser). No group limits apply.
Weddings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed with up to 150 people (including couple and two witnesses but not including the celebrant or photographer) subject to density quotient (one person per four metres squared) If the wedding is held at a private residence, the private gathering restrictions apply. Weddings cannot occur at the same time as other gatherings inside or outside places of worship.
Funerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restricted to 150 mourners inside and outside subject to density quotient (one person per four square metres) Funerals cannot occur at the same time as other gatherings inside or outside places of worship.

* Faith leaders are excluded from the cap. Infants under 12 months of age are also excluded from the cap. All other ceremonial participants are included in the cap.

Last updated: 22 November 2020

Current restrictions on religion and ceremonies (continued)

Metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria	
RESTRICTED	
Face mask requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People attending gatherings or ceremonies must wear face masks (unless an exemption applies), unless the ceremony is outdoors and people can maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres (from non-household members). Face masks must be carried at all times. • People who are leading services or events in a place of worship, and those who assist them (for instance by reading, or leading prayer) do not need to wear a face mask, when doing that particular activity (leading the service, reading leading prayer, etc.). • Participants may take their mask off briefly for consumables, when at least 1.5 metres from another person.
Cleaning requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared spaces and spaces open to members of the public at place of religion or worship must be cleaned regularly, including twice a day for frequently touched surfaces (for example, pews, chairs, minbar). Areas, particularly seating used by participants, must be cleaned between services. • Reusable and communal resources such as prayer mats, service sheets, religious texts, etc. may be used but must be cleaned between uses. It is recommended that single use printouts are used, or people are encouraged to bring their own items of significance. • Devotional items may be left in place but must be venerated in ways that do not involve touching or kissing them (such as by bowing or other faith appropriate action). • Attendees are encouraged to bring their own items such as prayer mats, shoe bags and service books.
Record keeping requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep records of faith leaders, volunteers and people attending a gathering or ceremony for contact tracing, where person attends a place of religion or worship for longer than 15 minutes. This needs to be done in a way that preserves individual confidentiality (such as electronically).
Physical distancing requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People should be at least five metres away from the faith leader, reader, or prayer leader who has their mask off.
Signage requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display signage at each public entry to each indoor and outdoor space, indicating maximum capacity and COVIDSafe hygiene and physical distancing requirements. • Include directional signage and encourage entry and exit points to be different to reduce traffic cross flow across each space. • Provide clear signage in car parks indicating traffic and pedestrian flow, and monitor to avoid congestion.
Workforce bubbles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People leading religious gatherings, activities or ceremonies and volunteers should not work across multiple places of worship, where possible. A system to manage this must be implemented (for example, a roster).

Last updated: 22 November 2020

Six COVIDSafe Principles

All places of worship **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 places of worship. Display COVIDSafe signage in appropriate, high visibility locations.

1. Ensure physical distancing



All people in places of worship should be at least 1.5 metres apart and there should be no overcrowded areas. This means:

- Workers must work from home if they can
- Ensure workers and customers are 1.5 metres apart at all times. Where this is not possible, the duration of the close contact should be minimised
- Ensure the workplace abides by the relevant density quotient
- Limit the total number of workers and customers in an enclosed area
- Avoid carpooling between faith leaders or between people observing religious practices and ceremonies, unless there is no alternative mode of transport to work

2. Wear a face mask



All people in places of worship must always wear a face mask indoors unless an exception applies, and wear a face mask outdoors unless physical distancing of 1.5 metres from others can be maintained. This means:

- Provide face masks to workers throughout the shift
- Ensure all workers wear face masks while working [when required by the restrictions](#)
- Use full personal protective equipment (PPE) for high-risk settings

3. Practise good hygiene



Faith leaders must ensure the regular cleaning of high touch-surfaces and encourage good hygiene practices by participants. This means:

- Schedule regular cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces (including all surfaces and handrails) and make gloves available for this purpose
- Encourage regular handwashing by workers and customers, and make soap and hand sanitiser available for all workers and customers throughout places of worship.

4. Keep records and act quickly if faith leaders or participants become unwell



Have a strict policy that faith leaders and participants who are unwell must stay at home. This means:

- Encourage participants to stay home and get tested even if they only have mild symptoms.
- Have a plan in place to immediately close down for cleaning and contact tracing if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Keep records of faith leader and participant details for contact tracing
- Recommend asking faith leaders to complete a pre-shift declaration

5. Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces



Most activities are to be held in outside areas where practical, which don't have a roof or ceiling. This includes:

- Meetings
- Lunch breaks
- Customer registration

6. Create workforce bubbles



Limit the number of people that faith leaders and participants have prolonged close contact with. This means:

- Keep pools of faith leaders rostered on the same shifts
- Avoid overlap in shift changes
- Where possible, limit the number of faith leaders working across multiple worksites.



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 environments.

Faith leaders should implement physical distancing measures to create a COVIDSafe premises. This means keeping a minimum distance of 1.5 metres between all people participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities where possible.

Ensuring physical distancing between participants

Implement virtual forms of worship

Where possible, services, prayers and other forms of worship should be held virtually or in outdoor areas that allow for appropriate physical distancing between participants. Ceremonies and services can still be recorded or broadcast live from the place of worship for viewing online.

Minimise contact

Remove excess chairs from communal areas to encourage all people participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities to stay a minimum 1.5 metres from one another. Participants should avoid sharing items such as prayer mats and service books. Veneration of devotional objects should be done without touching or kissing them (for example, by bowing). Faith leaders should frequently remind participants to avoid physical contact.

Greetings and goodbyes

Replace handshakes and hugs with friendly words, a bow or other sign language to minimise contact and maintain at least 1.5 metres physical distance.

Breaks

Spread out faith leader break times to reduce the number of people using communal facilities at the same time. Encourage all people participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities to take breaks outdoors.

Singing

Singing and chanting has been shown to spread the virus in religious settings. Singing or chanting should be avoided inside places of worship. Singing and chanting may occur in outside gatherings.

Discourage carpooling

Faith leaders and participants should avoid carpooling where possible. Faith leaders should discourage people planning to attend religious gatherings and ceremonies from carpooling.

Minimise gathering proximity

Use physical barriers or floor markings to provide minimum physical distancing guides and direct one-way flow where possible. Minimise the congregation of people in outdoor spaces where people are participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities. Where possible, stagger arrival times to minimise queues or crowds and ensure physical distancing at hand sanitiser stations. For carparks, consider directing customers to park in every other spot. Attendees are not to gather before or after services and are to leave promptly at the completion of services.

Food and drink

Where food or drink ('consumables') are essential to the act of worship, they can be used, however the sharing of food should be avoided. The use of communal vessels and utensils, such as spoons, is not permitted.

If it is necessary to handle consumables as a part of a faith practice, those giving food items and those receiving the food items should sanitise or wash their hands immediately prior to this act. The person distributing the consumable should release it, into the hand only, in such a way to avoid any contact between them and those receiving it.



2. Wear a face mask



Faith leaders and participants **must** wear a face mask when participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities, unless they have a lawful reason for not doing so.

Faith leaders **must** ensure participants wear a face mask while participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities indoors (unless an [exception applies](#)), and outdoors unless physical distancing of 1.5 metres from others can be maintained. Face masks must be carried at all times.

A face mask must be fitted and cover 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. For the purposes of minimising environmental impact, reusable masks should be used instead of disposal alternatives where possible. Stay informed about the latest public health advice on washing your reusable masks.

Faith leaders who are leading services or events in a place of worship, and those who assist them (for instance by reading, or leading prayer) do not need to wear a face mask, when doing that particular activity (leading the service, reading leading prayer etc), but must wear face mask at other times. Faith leaders must wear masks when in proximity to participants, such as for distribution of consumables.

Faith leaders should encourage all people to bring their own face mask where possible, however there is an obligation for a person managing religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities to provide a face mask if a participant does not have one. Where the activity requires the use of specific types of face masks at religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities, these must be provided by the person managing the event. Where a participant or faith leader seeks to provide and use their own face mask at a religious gathering or ceremony, the person managing the event must ensure that it is meeting its obligations under the current Public Health Directions and the OHS legislative framework.

The person managing the religious gathering, ceremony or activity has a responsibility to identify whether there is a risk to the health of participants from exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) at the event.

Many places of religion and worship are also workplaces and should therefore be aware of their legal duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. See [WorkSafe Victoria](#) for information about minimising health risks in your place of worship.

Wearing a face mask for outdoor religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities

Responsibility for wearing a face mask

Responsibility for wearing a face mask rests with the individual. The person managing the religious gathering, ceremony or activity must take reasonable steps to ensure participants wear a face mask at all times when participating in an event, unless a lawful exception applies.

How should individuals change their face mask?

It is recommended that individuals carry a spare face mask in a plastic zip pocket and to change their face mask when required. A place of worship could also consider displaying signage that highlights the importance of washing hands before and after changing a face mask.

Provide training/guidance on how to use personal protective equipment (PPE)

Provide all faith leaders with training/guidance on how to use personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. masks) while participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities.



3. Practise good hygiene

Additional hygiene measures are a priority. People managing places of religion and worship 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 faith leaders, people responsible for places of worship 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 staff should be familiar with the Australian Standards as they relate to their premises and businesses.

Cleaning and disinfecting places of worship

Undertake initial pre-opening deep cleaning and implement an environmental cleaning schedule to ensure frequent cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces.

Further advice about cleaning can be found at [DHHS cleaning and disinfecting information](#).

Cleaning and disinfecting schedule

Ensure surfaces are cleaned regularly, and high-touch surfaces cleaned at least twice on each given day. Seating and other objects touched by participants are to be cleaned between services.

Reduction of high-touch points

Reduce touch points where possible. Reusable and communal resources such as prayer mats, service sheets, religious texts should be removed from use. Devotional items may be left in place but must be venerated in ways that do not involve touching or kissing them (such as by bowing). Attendees are encouraged to bring their own items such as prayer mats, shoe bags and service books.

Educate participants of religious gatherings, ceremonies or activities

Display posters on good hygiene and handwashing practises in prominent places and establish hygiene stations (with hand sanitiser) to encourage hand hygiene of people participating in religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities. Encourage participants to bring their own materials where necessary (e.g. prayer mats, shoe bags, service books).

Free infection control training

Free, short, accredited training is available to help staff identify and manage the ongoing risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) infections.

[Free infection control training](#) will help people responsible for places of worship prepare to safely reopen, conduct outdoor gatherings and ensure their communities of faith are protected.

Accessible cleaning products and disinfectants

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

Promotion of hygiene tips for faith leaders

- 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.

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



4. Keep records and act quickly if faith leaders or participants become unwell

All people managing places of worship **must** keep records of every person who attends an event 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

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 for a period of more than 15 minutes. This is applicable to places of worship for any person who is onsite for more than 15 minutes.

Record keeping of people observing religious practices and ceremonies is required and should be done in a way that preserves confidentiality (such as electronically).

If a religious practitioner or participant tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), a current and accurate 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 any person who is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) attended while 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 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, providing it with your attendance registers.
- Consult with DHHS on whether the place of worship 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 place of worship were visited, used, or impacted by the persons 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 place of worship should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before it can be re-opened and people 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 faith leaders or participants become unwell (continued)

All people managing places of worship **must** keep records of every person who attends 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 place of worship](#) while infectious with coronavirus (COVID-19). DHHS may request information to assist with contact tracing. DHHS may also [assist](#) with contact tracing. DHHS will contact anyone who is identified as a contact of the case.

Actions for places of worship

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

Provide DHHS with a list of the faith leaders, participants and other visitors (for example contractors, delivery workers) who maybe close or casual contacts. Employers must keep a record of all people who attend the place of worship for longer than 15 minutes over the past 28 days.

Any faith leader 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 the policy of the places of worship.

Close contacts

Faith leaders 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.

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 faith leader is quarantining, check in on their wellbeing regularly and monitor their mental health.

Additional resources

Faith leaders 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 \$1,500 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](#)



5. Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces

In Victoria, employers have OHS duties and obligations to do what is reasonably practical to provide a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of workers or customers.

As part of creating a safe working environment that addresses risks associated with potential exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19), people managing places of religion and worship should have a plan in place to minimise the amount of interactions 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 organisation can take

Outdoor worship

The number of people who are able to gather outdoors is limited to:

- up to 300 people, subject to the density quotient of one person per four square metres, not including faith leader

Indoor and outdoor ceremonies cannot occur at the same time.

Adapting to outdoor practices

Where possible, adapt religious practices or ceremonies to reduce the risk of congestion or contact.

An example is conducting a service outside in a marquee with the sides rolled up.

Move meetings and functions outside

Consider which religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities can move to an outdoor area.

Considerations should be made for how to manage those waiting in outdoor areas for religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities to begin, including the introduction of socially distanced queuing systems.

Ensure signage and passages of movement are clear and promote one way traffic only, use separate entry and exit points.



6. Create workforce bubbles

Having 'workforce bubbles' can help minimise the risk of infection and support contact tracing initiatives.

In the context of religious and ceremonial gatherings, a 'workforce bubble' is a group of faith leaders and participant groups who limit their in-person interactions to other faith leaders and participant groups. This strategy focuses on reducing the number of individuals a person comes into contact with, rather than the number of interactions. Should a participant or faith leader 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 all people who have attended the place of worship to undergo quarantine.

To minimise possible exposure and contact, places of worship should:

Limit

the number of people that faith leaders and participant groups have prolonged close contact with

Modify

processes to minimise interactions between faith leaders and participant groups during breaks, religious gatherings or ceremonies.

Consult

with faith leaders, volunteers and support staff whose work is not essential to the physical operation of the place of worship to determine if working from home or remotely is reasonably practicable

Review

shift arrangements for faith leaders, volunteers and support staff to create smaller teams.

Actions your place of worship can take

Time between services

There should be at least one hour between services to ensure that people attending different services do not mix. People attending services should be encouraged to arrive on time and leave promptly at the end of the service without gathering.

Places of worship should also consider introducing a booking system for indoor and outdoor gatherings to help facilitate this. People responsible for places of worship may consider how prioritisation could be given to participants with specific needs or requirements.

Limit faith leader movement between places of religion and worship

Limit faith leader movements to one place of religion or worship and the area surrounding it, unless it is not reasonable and practical.

Keep contact records

Places of worship must keep a record of all faith leaders and people who attend religious gatherings, ceremonies and activities for longer than 15 minutes in the past 28 days.



Creating a COVIDSafe Plan

Every place of worship is required to complete a COVIDSafe Plan in order to reopen.

All places of worship **must** have a completed [COVIDSafe Plan](#) for each site to continue operating.

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

If a place of worship has an existing COVIDSafe Plan, you must conduct regular reviews to ensure it meets up-to-date requirements (e.g. on face masks). It is the obligation of the places of worship to ensure plans are up to date.

Your COVIDSafe Plan must set out

- ✓ Your actions to help prevent the introduction of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your place of worship
- ✓ 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 place of worship
- ✓ How you will meet all of the requirements set out by the Victorian Government. Some higher-risk industries or workplaces have additional requirements of employers and staff.

Places of worship 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.

Places of worship should also note that the workplace 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.

The screenshot shows the cover page of the COVIDSafe Plan document. It features the title 'COVIDSafe Plan' and the Victorian State Government logo. Below the title is a section titled 'About the COVIDSafe Plan' which explains the purpose of the plan and lists key requirements. A 'How to develop your COVIDSafe Plan' section follows, detailing the steps for creating the plan. The document is presented in a clean, professional layout with a blue and white color scheme.

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

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

Each place of worship has an obligation to ensure that their place of worship 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.

Places of worship may consider nominating a faith leader to be the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Officer (or similar) to oversee the implementation of the COVIDSafe plan, ensuring that correct processes are being followed, any relevant documentation is complete, other faith leaders 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 a place of worship?

Multicultural Affairs is ready to support businesses and answer questions about preparing for a safe reopening. Multicultural Affairs can be contacted on 0467 093 065 during business hours, or at multicultural.covid.taskforce@dpc.vic.gov.au

For information on health and safety requirements under the OHS Act, refer to [WorkSafe Victoria's website](#) or contact its advisory service on 1800 136 089.

If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450.

How will you enforce compliance? Who will enforce it?

Victoria Police, and other authorities involved in the regulation of businesses and workplaces 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.

Reopening my place of worship



Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that apply from 11:59pm on 22 November 2020.

Checklist for people responsible for a place of worship

Prepare your COVIDSafe Plan

Every place of worship is required to have a [COVIDSafe Plan](#) that is regularly updated in order to reopen their place of worship.

Ensure place of worship is set up to adhere to density quotient

- See table in the section **Current restrictions on Places of Worship and Faith Gatherings** for density quotient limits.
- A density quotient of one person per four square metres of the space accessible to the public.
- All seating is spaced so that people are at least 1.5 metres apart if/when seated, with seating cleaned between uses.

Prepare a cleaning schedule

- Places of worship should conduct a comprehensive clean of the premise.
- Establish new processes and schedules for cleaning and disinfecting to maintain good hygiene, including frequent cleaning of high touch points (see our [Cleaning and Sanitising Fact Sheet](#)).

Signage requirements

- Displays signage for faith leaders and participants in appropriate, high visibility locations, to include:
 - At entrance to advise of the maximum number of customers 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 places of worship, and their surrounding grounds, confirming faith leaders and participants have reviewed the guidelines and evidence that at least one faith leader has completed the recommended training.
- Promote physical distancing, including between faith leaders and participants, with floor or wall markings or signs. Use physical barriers where appropriate (e.g., installation of physical barriers for those entering an area surrounding a places of worship).

Establish your record keeping

- Record the contact details of any person who attends on site for longer than 15 minutes (this includes contractors and delivery workers), to include: first name and a contact phone number to support contact tracing. Retain for at least 28 days following the visit.
- Set up a roster so faith leaders do not work across multiple sites, or for multiple employers, where possible.

Checklist for people responsible for a place of worship cont.

Faith leader and management policies, practices and training

- Ensure a person responsible for a place of worship understands their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and have reviewed the coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance from WorkSafe Victoria available [here](#).
- Encourage faith leaders to complete [free infection control training](#) and download the COVIDSafe App. It is the Government's expectation that:
 - at least one faith leader at every place of worship will have completed the training
 - faith leaders should make themselves familiar with these guidelines
- Consider appointing faith leader or other trusted person to be your coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Officer to ensure policies and practices are being followed, workers are trained, and records are kept.



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 covering in workplaces](#)
- DHHS: [Preventing infection in the workplace](#)
- DHHS: [Preparing for a case of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in your workplace](#)
- DHHS: [Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce COVID-19 transmission](#)
- WorkSafe: [Other relevant industry specific guidance](#)
- Interpreting Service: [TIS National](#) or 131 450.

Returning to work



Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that apply from 11:59pm on 22 November 2020.

Checklist for faith leaders



Avoid carpooling



Wear a face mask when indoors (unless an exception applies). Wear a face mask outdoors unless you can maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres from others



Practise good hygiene

- Be rigorous in maintaining the new cleaning and disinfecting schedule (e.g. touch points such as chairs and devotional material need to be cleaned and disinfected before and after use).

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at the very minimum:

- On arrival at areas surrounding places of worship
- After handling money
- Before and after changing your face mask
- After blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the toilet.



Stay home if unwell

- If you have symptoms, get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19). Stay in isolation at home until you get the result and it is negative for coronavirus (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.



Please note that the checklists below outline the restrictions and requirements that apply from 11:59pm on 22 November 2020.

Checklist for workers



Complete free infection control training

All current workers are encouraged to complete [free infection control training](#). Any new workers being engaged are also encouraged to complete this training.



Avoid carpooling with people outside of your household



Wear a face mask when indoors. When outdoors, wear a face mask unless it is possible to maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres from others



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 place of worship
- After handling money
- Before and after changing your face mask
- Before leaving place of worship
- After blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the toilet.



Avoid interacting with others in enclosed spaces where possible



Avoid working across multiple work sites where possible



Stay home if unwell

- If you have symptoms, get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19). Stay in isolation 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 37.5C or greater), or if you have any symptoms.

Staff health questionnaire



STAFF* CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

*also for use in places of worship

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 37.5C) 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.