

COVID MARSHALS

Roles & Responsibilities



The COVID Marshal is a new and key role helping to keep important workplaces and their workers COVIDSafe.

The principal purpose of COVID Marshals in the Directions is to monitor rather than to ensure the implementation of High Risk COVIDSafe Plans.

This is a key role to educate and coach co-workers to comply with the High Risk COVIDSafe Plan and encourage workers to help improve it.

The COVID Marshal will also provide prompt feedback to employers and HSRs on compliance with the High Risk COVIDSafe Plan as well as guidance to workers on safe working practices.

COVID Marshals are mandatory for:

- Abattoirs
- Meat processing facilities
- Poultry processing facilities
- Seafood processing facilities
- Supermarket distribution centres (within greater Melbourne)
- Distribution centres for temperature-controlled perishable food products (within greater Melbourne)

COVID Marshals are recommended for Supermarket distribution centres and Distribution centres for temperature-controlled perishable food products across regional Victoria as well as other high-risk industries:

- Construction
- Medical supply, pharmaceutical supply and personal protective equipment supply
- Distribution centres
- Warehousing
- Manufacturing facilities
- Wholesale facilities
- Retail facilities
- Horticulture operations using seasonal workers for seasonal horticultural work
- Care facilities.
- The employer holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring that Workplace (Additional Industry Obligations) Directions, including the High Risk COVIDSafe Plan, are met.

The obligations of the employer cannot be transferred to the COVID Marshal (and the COVID Marshal cannot be held responsible for the failures of the employer).

COVID Marshals should not be discriminated against or have any adverse action taken against them for discharge of their duties.

What do the Directions provide in relation to COVID Marshals?

Abattoirs, meat processing facilities, poultry processing facilities and seafood processing facilities across Victoria and supermarket distribution facilities and chilled distribution facilities for perishable food products in the Restricted Area (greater Melbourne) must:

- designate one or more workers as a COVID Marshal to monitor compliance with the Workplace (Additional Industry Obligations) Directions, which includes the work premises' High Risk COVIDSafe Plan
- ensure the COVID Marshals successfully completes training provided by the employer that is in accordance with guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- have a COVID Marshal(s) at the work premises whenever workers are on site
- keep records of duty rosters for COVID Marshals

The workers whose role primarily relates to assurance activities in relation to the employer meeting their obligations are not counted as part of the workforce quotas that apply in some high-risk industries. This exemption from the workforce cap does not apply to a worker performing their normal duties as well as the COVID Marshal role.

COVID Marshals are recommended, but not compulsory for other high-risk industries such as general and pharmaceutical warehousing, manufacturing, construction, wholesale trade and seasonal horticulture.

Who appoints COVID Marshals?

Employers are responsible for appointing COVID Marshals and ensuring they are supported to meet the requirements of the role. However, appointments must be made in consultation with the Health and Safety Representatives and employees.

The employer decides who undertakes the role, but ideally COVID Marshals should be workers who have the trust and respect of the broader workforce. This may also be a supervisor or a person who undertakes another relevant assurance role such as that related to OHS, HACCP or quality control.

The number and composition of the COVID Marshals depends on the structure, demographics, and layout of the workplace. Those appointed should also reflect the diversity of the workforce.

In workforces with a particularly dominant culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) grouping it is important to appoint someone from that group as a COVID Marshal.

In workforces with both permanent workers and labour hire, employers should consider appointing one or more COVID Marshals from each group.

A COVID Marshal must be on each shift or each designated bubble. If there are small numbers of workers or separate bubbles are needed, a worker can combine the COVID Marshal role with their normal duties.

The employer must keep a record of COVID Marshals appointed and rostered on each shift. Records should also include information about

- (a) the instruction and training each COVID Marshal have received that is relevant to the role, and
- (b) any consultation with HSRs and workers that has taken place in relation to the appointment and ongoing effectiveness of the role.

Is it a full-time role?

There must be a COVID Marshal at the work premises whenever workers are on site (excluding the retail premises of a supermarket). If there are small numbers on a shift, then a worker simply needs to be appointed as COVID Marshal while performing their normal duties.

Employers need to give sufficient time across the workplace for the COVID Marshal functions to be completed. Each workplace needs to assess how this will work, considering layout, bubbles, and workforce demographics. As a guide it is recommended that in:

- **Small workplaces** of fewer than 40 workers - the COVID Marshal completes these duties alongside their normal duties
- **Medium sized workplaces** of 40-100 workers - at least one COVID Marshal is dedicated to COVID Marshal functions at least 50% of the time
- **Large workplaces**, where more than 100 workers are on site at any time - the equivalent of at least one full-time equivalent be dedicated to the COVID Marshal role so key elements of the High Risk COVID Safe Plan are checked and monitored throughout shifts.

Employers may need to appoint multiple COVID Marshals or train extra people as 'deputies' who are available to fill the role during an absence. This will be especially important where there are distinct work areas and job roles, as well as to cover absences.

Employers should consider the unique needs of their business and their employees to ensure the number of marshals and time available for marshal duties is adequate. For example, employers will take account of maintaining the integrity of workplace bubbles and may consider implementing a system similar to the fire-warden structure (a chief warden who has time dedicated to the role and then sub-wardens who perform the role while performing their usual duties).

What functions does the role perform?

COVID Marshals should be role models for the workforce. COVID Marshals can be off-the-floor workers as well as supervisors and support workers in roles such as OHS, HACCP or quality control.

COVID Marshals must monitor that there is effective implementation of High Risk COVID Safe Plans, including that physical distancing is maintained and that infection control practices are observed. Monitoring must occur while workers are working, during breaks and entering or exiting the workplace

COVID Marshals are **expected to** exercise the following functions in accordance with the requirements specified in a workplace's High Risk COVID Safe Plan:

- Promote a positive culture and encourage COVID Safe practices across the workforce
- Monitor that workers are apply physical distancing measures, that congestion is minimised and that shared areas are used safely
- Monitor that workers are applying hygiene measures (as per Infection Control Awareness Training)
- Monitor that workers are wearing PPE and understand how to fit it
- Monitor the entry screening processes and that car park behaviour is safe
- Monitor whether rostered bubbles are being observed in practice, including that shifts and work teams remain separate and that bubble separation is maintained during breaks
- Monitor that regular cleaning is occurring and being recorded
- Monitor that ventilation and airflow is maximised
- Monitor that accurate record keeping is occurring in accordance with the High Risk COVID Safe Plan
- Consult with HSRs and the OHS Committee (if it exists) about COVID related issues and measures
- Notify management and, where appropriate, HSRs as soon as practicable about systemic behaviours or workplace practices that are not compliant with the High Risk COVID-Safe Plan and Additional Industry Obligations

If a COVID Marshal is full-time they would be expected to carry out most of these functions. It is acknowledged that those who combine the COVID Marshal role with their usual duties will have less time to complete every function.

The COVID Marshal should:

- Wear clothing/vest that makes their role clear to colleagues and/or an identifying badge
- Verbally address toolbox meeting and training sessions
- Inform updates to High Risk COVIDSafe Plans and actively encouraging HSRs and workers to be part of that continual improvement process
- Encourage management to put COVIDSafe practices at the forefront of work practices and systems and link these to OHS procedures and plans
- Coordinate activities with other COVID Marshals and engage in learning to improve understanding of COVID Safe risk mitigation measures

The COVID Marshal should not represent themselves to be:

- An expert on OHS or systems of work unless they have appropriate qualifications and experience. If they identify a problem, they should report it immediately to management and also alert the HSRs in the workplace. The job of advising on technical issues and OHS systems, or improving weaknesses in systems of work, is the responsibility of OHS professionals and management.
- A Health and Safety Representative. The HSRs elected under the OHS Act are representing and advocating for a designated work group. The role of the COVID Marshal should not be confused with this legislated role (even where an elected HSR is also appointed as a COVID Marshal).
- Exercising a disciplinary or punitive role, as this may undermine worker trust. COVID Marshal/s need to focus on educating and encouraging co-workers to follow the High Risk COVIDSafe Plan. Non-compliance needs to be dealt with by management in the usual way.

Required training

The employer must ensure that each COVID Marshal receives training as soon as practical after appointment including:

- Formal instruction in each element of site/company High Risk COVIDSafe Plan
- Successful completion of a basic infection control awareness training course. You can find examples of this this training at health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training or skills.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway/Explore/Pages/infection-control-training.aspx
- Until specific COVID Marshal training can be introduced these two elements will form the basis of training for COVID Marshals. COVID Marshals appointed before introduction of a COVID Marshal specific training package will not be needed to undertake the training again.