

Victorian Energy Upgrades Coronavirus (COVID-19) Safe Plan

Guidance to support the safety of Victorian Energy Upgrades program participants and the Victorian community

This is a general guidance document¹ created by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) on coronavirus (COVID-19) safe practices for the Victorian Energy Upgrades (VEU) program. This guidance is directed to accredited providers, to ensure that they take appropriate measures to manage risks associated with coronavirus. These include risks arising from the activities done on their behalf or under contract by their contractors (including lead generators).

The guidance presented here is intended to complement other government advice² and risk assessments done by each business. It will assist VEU program participants prepare their businesses for the reintroduction of VEU activities that have been suspended, as well as put in place measures to slow the spread of coronavirus.

DELWP strongly recommends that all accredited providers do their own risk assessment and planning to address individual circumstances – and ensure that their contractors have also implemented appropriate risk management measures.

A template and advice to prepare your own COVIDSafe plan is available from the National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Coordination Commission: <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/my-business-covidsafe-plan.pdf>

Information for workplaces is also available from Safe Work Australia:
www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces.

The further information section of this document provides useful references on a range of topics. It is recommended that these references are reviewed and considered by program participants when they are conducting their risk assessments.

A coronavirus infection can cause mild to severe respiratory illness. The most common symptoms reported are:

- Fever
- Breathing difficulties and breathlessness
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fatigue or tiredness.

Coronavirus is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- Close contact with an infected person
- Touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated by a person with the infection.

For more information about the transmission and symptoms, visit the [Department of Health and Human Services \(DHHS\) coronavirus website](#).

¹ This document is based upon the WorkSafe Victoria – Managing the risk of COVID-19 exposure: Construction industry. Last Updated – Friday 17 Apr 2020

Available at – <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/managing-risk-covid-19-exposure-construction-industry>

² Refer to 'Further Information' at the end of this document



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Suspension of VEU program activities to manage coronavirus (COVID-19) risks

The Victorian Government has implemented a wide range of measures to protect public health and slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and reduce the risk of transmission. As a result, on 1 April 2020, the Victorian Government temporarily suspended the following activities under the Victorian Energy Upgrades program:

- Incandescent lighting upgrades (Part 21)
- Low-flow shower roses (Part 17)
- Weather sealing (Part 15)
- In-home display units (Part 30).

The government has notified accredited providers that the suspension of activities will be lifted from 24 June 2020.

This guidance document sets out the key steps and considerations for risk identification and management that are expected of all accredited providers, installers and lead generators involved in delivering upgrades under the program.

In addition, all program participants are expected to have done their own risk assessment before recommencing delivery of any of the currently suspended activities.

Risk management responsibility rests with accredited providers and their contractors and agents – and will be of crucial importance for lead generation activities.

General advice for managing coronavirus risks in the Victorian Energy Upgrades program

The VEU program is a Victorian government initiative that provides discounted energy saving products and services to households and businesses through accredited providers who are private businesses not directly contracted by the government. Accredited providers deliver energy efficiency upgrades to large numbers of Victorian households and businesses each year – these are provided at a discounted rate, and free in some circumstances due to the incentives available through the program.

In many cases, accredited providers contract with installers and lead generators to approach households and businesses with upgrade offers and to undertake installations. It is understood that accredited providers use a range of lead generation techniques to contact eligible consumers, including through television, print and online advertising, telemarketing and doorknocking. Household and business participation in program upgrades is entirely voluntary.

To mitigate community concerns, the use of doorknocking as a form of lead generation is not encouraged until Victoria's restrictions have been fully lifted.

Identifying risks at workplace and upgrade sites

Protecting employees

Due to working in proximity to other people and the potential to encounter potentially contaminated surfaces, steps must be taken to reduce the risks of exposure for employees delivering Victorian Energy Upgrades activities.

All employers have a duty to provide and maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees. This includes preventing, and where prevention is not possible, reducing, risks to health and safety associated with potential exposure to coronavirus.

Employers must identify the level of risk to the health of employees from exposure to coronavirus at their workplace(s). This must be done in consultation with health and safety representatives (HSRs), if any, and employees, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety in the workplace and cooperate with their employers about any action they take to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act) or the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (OHS Regulations).

More information about employer and employee obligations is set out below (see Legal duties).

Key issues for consideration

Some activities that may pose a risk of exposure to coronavirus – for both employees and customers – can include:

- Entering household and business premises, including touching surfaces
- Collecting signatures
- Travelling in vehicles
- Work that requires close contact with others
- Using shared tools or equipment
- Sharing facilities such as computers, phones, bathrooms, kitchens and communal break areas.

It is recommended employers complete their own risk assessment and develop tailored COVIDSafe plans for all VEU activities they deliver or participate in.

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Where possible, all upgrade activities should be confirmed before arriving at the premises to enable appropriate screening to be completed, as outlined below in the section on controlling risks.

Planning ahead to ensure protection for households and businesses

Making sure appropriate protections are in place for employees will also help to reduce exposure risks for members of the public at upgrade sites and in the broader community. This will be critical to ensuring community confidence in the VEU program and the work practices of accredited providers and their contractors (including installers and lead generators).

There are specific issues that should be considered as part of risk identification and assessment to ensure protection for households and businesses receiving VEU program upgrades, such as:

- Screening processes that fully consider employees and consumers
- Implementing physical distancing requirements, including isolating work areas if practicable
- Timing activities to reduce exposure risks
- Appropriate hygiene and cleaning practices
- Documentation and record keeping that enables detailed contact tracing.

There is an expectation that accredited providers and their agents will actively consider community safety as part of their risk assessment.

Controlling risks

Employers have a duty to provide and maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees. This includes preventing, and where prevention is not possible, reducing risks to health or safety associated with potential exposure to **coronavirus**.

Employee screening

Employers should implement a screening process to minimise the potential transmission of **coronavirus** through Victorian Energy Upgrades program activities.

For example, by asking employees at the start of their shift if they have travelled, been in contact with any confirmed cases of **coronavirus** or if they have flu-like symptoms.

To ensure person-to-person contact is minimised, screening should be done over the phone or by other non-contact methods.

Workplace mapping

In the event of an employee being confirmed as having **coronavirus**, those who are potentially affected need to be quickly identified.

Employers should implement processes to record the schedule and work locations for all employees (including contractors), that enables tracing of those who have come into contact with the confirmed case.

The record should include:

- The day and time work was done
- The members of teams that worked together
- Specific details on households and businesses interacted with
- Any breaks taken, including time and location
- Details of movement between premises.

It is recommended that all employees have the [COVIDSafe app](#) installed on their phone.

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Consumer Screening

Prior to employees entering a premises to complete an upgrade activity, they should ask if the consumer or anyone at the premises has travelled, been in contact with any confirmed cases of coronavirus, have flu-like symptoms or are self-isolating due to age or vulnerability.

If the consumer answers yes to any of these questions, an upgrade should not take place.

To ensure person-to-person contact is minimised, screening should be done over the phone or by other non-contact methods. If doorknocking occurs, social distance and hygiene measures must be observed.

It is recommended that during this screening, the employee outlines what the upgrade entails and the health and safety measures that will be in place to minimise the need for face to face explanation.

For door-to-door activity

Activity lead generation through doorknocking plays a valuable role in allowing accredited providers to engage with consumers but it must be done in the correct manner, observing social distancing and hygiene measures. Please also monitor Consumer Affairs Victoria's advice for door-to-door sales.³ The use of doorknocking as a form of lead generation is not encouraged until Victoria's restrictions have been fully lifted.

Physical distancing

Physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres should be implemented wherever possible. Employers should consider each work task and whether there is a safe alternative way to do the work with an increased distance between employees and consumers.

- Mark safe distances in work, transit and break areas (e.g. on floors and walls)
- Consider different shift patterns to minimise the number of employees onsite (e.g. AM/PM shifts)
- Stagger start times, breaks and finish times to avoid congestion in high traffic areas and minimise employees coming into contact with each other
- Install temporary physical barriers (e.g. fences, screens) between work areas, where appropriate.

Where it is not possible to do work tasks and maintain physical distancing, other control measures need to be implemented. For example:

- Minimise the number of person-to-person interactions that need to be completed within 1.5 metres
- Minimise the number of individuals involved in activities that need to occur within 1.5 metres of each other
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. gloves, masks, glasses).

More information about the safe use of PPE is set out below.

When scheduling an appointment, it is important to notify the consumer of physical distancing requirements in advance. For example:

- Request all people keep maintain as much distance as possible during the appointment
- Request that where possible, a minimum number of people are at the premises during the appointment

³ CAV 2020, Door-to-door sales: www.consumer.vic.gov.au/products-and-services/business-practices/door-to-door-sales-and-telemarketing/door-to-door-sales

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Hygiene

- Ensure all employees follow good hygiene practices, including washing hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, covering coughs and sneezes, or coughing into their elbow or shoulder and avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth
- Display hygiene information in prominent locations at business and warehouse sites such as break rooms, site offices, toilets, foyers, lifts and site entrances
- Provide hand sanitiser to all off-site employees and contractors, and at business entrances and exits, amenities, vehicles and other high traffic areas of the business. Communicate with staff about hand sanitiser locations and encourage regular use.

Employers must ensure that employees have access to appropriate amenities.

Amenities need to include:

- Hand washing facilities (whether permanent or temporary), such as a wash basin, clean running water, soap and paper towels, placed in strategic locations to ensure employees can access them in a timely manner. Ensure these facilities are well stocked and properly maintained
- Access to hand sanitiser
- Rubbish bins with touch-free lids (e.g. foot pedal bins)
- Thorough and regular cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces
- Appropriate waste management systems
- Provide signage that communicates safe hygiene practices

While completing installations at private premises, employees should attempt to minimise the need to use of on-site amenities. This can be done by:

- Vehicle hand washing facilities (where possible), such as clean water, soap and paper towels
- Always carrying and using hand sanitiser
- Safely removing all rubbish including PPE in enclosed disposable bags for safe disposal off-site.

Personal protective equipment⁴

Employers must provide information, instruction and training on the safe use, decontamination, maintenance and disposal of any PPE provided.

Any PPE provided needs to be practical for the work environment (e.g. allowing the necessary visibility and mobility) and properly decontaminated or disposed of at the end of every shift.

Employers should monitor and encourage correct use of PPE, for example by providing information on posters and digital screens about:

- Washing or sanitising hands before putting PPE on, and putting face protection on before gloves
- Removing gloves before face protection, washing or sanitising hands after removing PPE and decontaminating or disposing of used PPE safely.

⁴ DHHS, Appropriate use of personal protective equipment. Available from – <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/appropriate-use-personal-protective-equipment-coronavirus-covid-19-workplaces-coronavirus-covid-19>

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Shared tools, product and equipment

Avoid the shared use of shared tools, product and equipment wherever possible. For example, phones, device touch screens, stationery, cameras, ladders and lights should not be used by more than one person.

Where it is not possible to eliminate shared use:

- Keep cleaning products with employees for use on tools, products and equipment at all times
- Ensure all employees thoroughly wash or sanitise their hands at appropriate points during an upgrade activity
- Ensure all parts of tools, products and equipment (e.g. including handles, handrails) are wiped down before and after interaction
- Where possible, group employees, tools and equipment (e.g. vehicles) into the same shifts, so the same employees use the same equipment to limit the number of people who interact with each other and items.

The shared use of phones, desks, offices, computers and other devices should also be avoided where possible.

Where this is not possible, these items should be regularly disinfected.

Cleaning⁵

Thorough and regular cleaning needs to be done for all:

- Work areas (including surfaces touched during an upgrade activity at a private premises)
- Transit areas
- Communal and meal break areas
- Shared facilities (e.g. bathrooms and kitchens)
- Shared equipment and vehicles.

Cleaning needs to be conducted in accordance with the [DHHS information on cleaning and disinfecting for businesses and construction sites](#).

Collecting signatures

For each upgrade activity you must collect and maintain a Victorian Energy Efficiency Certificate (VEEC) assignment form completed and signed by the employee (i.e. installer) and consumer. It is recommended that:

- The employee sanitises the pen, pencil, stylus and or touch screen device before and after use
- The employee safely washes or sanitises their hands before and after handling both the form and pen, pencil, stylus or touch screen device
- The employee recommends the consumer uses their own pen or pencil where appropriate
- The employee recommends the consumer safely washes or sanitises their hands before and after handling both the form and pen, pencil, stylus or touch screen device.

⁵ DHHS, Cleaning and disinfecting. Available from – <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/cleaning-and-disinfecting-reduce-covid-19-transmission>

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Example table of risks and controls

What do you need to do?	How will you do this?	When will it happen?	What supplies do you need?
Entering household and business premises, including touching surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Screening • Consumer Screening • Practice safe hygiene • Maintain physical distancing • Clean all surfaces, equipment etc before and after touching • Wear and safely dispose of PPE • Install the COVIDSafe App 	Prior to, during and after completing an activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry sanitiser and cleaning wipes • PPE • COVIDSafe App
Work that requires close contact with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid close contact where possible • Employee Screening • Consumer Screening • Safe cleaning and hygiene practices • Wear and safely dispose of PPE • Workplace mapping • Install the COVIDSafe App • Group employees and stagger shift and break times where possible 	Before, during and after interaction	Ensure employees have access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate PPE including hand sanitiser and cleaning wipes • appropriate amenities • COVIDSafe App
Using shared tools or equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid sharing where possible • Thoroughly wash or sanitise hands • Ensure all parts of tools, products and equipment are wiped down 	Before and after interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand sanitiser and cleaning wipes
Collecting signatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash/sanitise hands prior and after collecting signature • Use own pen etc to collect signature • Sanitise pen etc prior and after collecting signature • Recommend consumer follows steps above • Install the COVIDSafe App 	After completing an activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry sanitiser and cleaning wipes • Personal stationery • PPE • COVIDSafe App
Sharing facilities such as computers, phones, bathrooms, kitchens and communal break areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid sharing where possible • Cleaning in accordance with DHHS guidelines • Ensure that employees have access to appropriate amenities • Workplace Mapping • Install the COVIDSafe App • Workplace signage • Staggered shifts and break times 	Before and after interaction	Appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cleaning supplies • access to amenities, hand sanitiser and cleaning wipes • COVIDSafe App • Signage outlining safe practices in communal areas
Travelling in vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean vehicles before and after use • Maintain physical distancing where possible • Group employees and shifts to vehicles • Practice safe hygiene • Install the COVIDSafe App 	Prior to, during and after travelling in a vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry sanitiser and cleaning wipes • Vehicle hand washing facilities • COVIDSafe App

What do to if an employee has coronavirus (COVID-19)

In the event of a suspected or confirmed coronavirus case DHHS will contact the individual to identify the close contacts and the casual contacts. If the employee has attended their workplace while they were infectious and had close contact with other employees, DHHS will contact the employer and advise what steps need to be taken.

Employers should establish a response plan and procedure for suspected and confirmed cases, which should include:

- Consultation and communication arrangements with employees, contractors and consumers including making sure contact details are up to date, complete and easily accessible
- Maintain workplace mapping information. All details must be up to date, complete and easily accessible
- Identify site locations for cleaning and disinfection
- Implement an appropriate cleaning and disinfection regime, which should be overseen by a competent person, for example, an occupational hygienist
- The competent person should advise that the cleaning and disinfection regime has occurred for re-entry to the affected areas
- Provide employees and contractors with relevant information prior to re-entering the site and resuming work
- Review and revise systems to ensure risks are effectively controlled, in consultation with HSRs and employees.

Ensure employees know what to do

If an employee develops symptoms of coronavirus they should isolate themselves immediately, call the coronavirus information line on [1800 675 398](tel:1800675398) and follow the self-isolation guidance available on the DHHS website.

An employer's duty to eliminate or reduce risks associated with exposure to coronavirus so far as is reasonably practicable includes ensuring that:

- Employees know what to do or who to notify if they feel unwell or suspect they've been infected, according to the information provided by DHHS (see link below)
- Any unwell employee does not attend the workplace, including employees who have been tested for coronavirus or who are confirmed coronavirus cases.

Follow DHHS advice - <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>

Legal duties

Employers have duties under the OHS Act, which include that they must, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- Provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees and independent contractors
- Provide adequate facilities for the welfare of employees and independent contractors
- Provide such information, instruction, training or supervision to employees and independent contractors as is necessary to enable those persons to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risks to health

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- Monitor the health of their employees
- Monitor conditions at any workplace under their management and control
- Provide information concerning health and safety to employees, including (where appropriate) in languages other than English
- Ensure that persons other than their employees are not exposed to risks to their health or safety arising from the conduct of the employer's undertaking
- Consult with employees and HSRs (if any), on matters related to health or safety that directly affect or are likely to directly affect them.

Regardless of whether or not they are an employer for the purposes of the *OHS Act*, a person with management or control of a workplace must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace and the means of entering and leaving it are safe and without risks to health.

Employees also have duties under the *OHS Act*, which includes that they must:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at a workplace
- Co-operate with their employer with respect to any action taken by the employer to comply with a requirement imposed by or under the *OHS Act*

Further information

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>

Department of Health and Human Services - Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce COVID-19 transmission

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/cleaning-and-disinfecting-reduce-covid-19-transmission>

Department of Health and Human Services - How do you define 'close contact'?

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#how-do-you-define-close-contact>

Department of Health and Human Services - How does coronavirus (COVID-19) spread?

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#how-does-coronavirus-covid-19-spread>

Department of Health and Human Services - The appropriate use of personal protective equipment

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/appropriate-use-personal-protective-equipment-coronavirus-covid-19-workplaces-coronavirus-covid-19>

Master Electricians - Code of Practice for the Electrical Industry COVID-19

<https://www.masterelectricians.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Code-of-Practice-for-Electrical-Industry-COVID-19.pdf>

National COVID-19 Coordination Commission COVIDSafe Plan

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/my-business-covidsafe-plan.pdf>

Safe Work Australia COVID-19 Information for workplaces

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces

Worksafe Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information

<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19>