WEBINAR
Navigating a new normal
30 July 2020
10.00-11.00 AEST
Housekeeping

Session
Will go for 60 minutes

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Questions and comments
• Are moderated
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Welcome and introduction

Sue Weston
CEO, Comcare
Today’s Comcare speakers

Justin Napier  
General Manager, Regulatory Operations Group

Natalie Bekis  
General Manager, Strategic Partnerships and Engagement Group

Andrew Crane  
Assistant Director, Education and Engagement
Comcare’s regulatory approach
Key points:

- The Commonwealth WHS Laws still apply
- Duties of PCBUs, Officers and workers remain unchanged
- PCBUs need to provide and maintain a work environment that is without risk to health and safety
- PCBUs need to assess the risks in consultation with HSRs and workers
Comcare’s regulatory approach

Key points:

• Comcare’s approach is outlined in the ‘National Statement of Regulatory Intent’
• Business as usual for serious incidents and fatalities
• Employers in the Comcare scheme should notify Comcare of all confirmed cases that are work-related and arise from the business of undertaking of the employer
• Comcare’s LMS – ‘Managing WHS Risks COVID-19 eGuidance’
Key points:

- Employers must identify and control risks to workers and others in the workplace.
- Exposure to COVID-19 risks must be assessed and control measures implemented to manage risks.
- Organisations must also assess risks to any vulnerable workers.
When should I complete a risk assessment?

When there has been:

• Changes to work practices, procedures or the environment
• Recommences or increases of operations following a shutdown
• Workers introduced back into the workplace following WFH or stand-down arrangements
• An incident and the workplace is responding
• Concerns raised by workers, HSRs, or others at the workplace
Risk management and COVID-19

Is consultation required?

• Yes
• Employers must consult with workers and HSRs at each step of the risk management process
• Consultation will help employers identify and understand the hazards and risk associated with workers’ tasks
• Consultation will assist you to choose control measures that are practical and effective
Hazards and risks

Physical risks when working from home

A worker’s home workplace should meet the same WHS requirements as they would in the physical workplace

- Pre-existing injuries
- Workstation setup
- Sedentary work
- Working environment
- Home hygiene
- Electrical safety
- Increased screen time
When working from home

- Comcare and the APSC created the ‘Working from home checklist’
- Outlines WHS obligations for workers and employers
- Make sure workers have a safe working environment while at home

Hazards and risks

Other guidance material

working from home – a guide for employees

Many Australians are working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. What does that look like for you? It could range from an established home office to making do with a temporary setup in limited space.

Whatever your situation, there are simple steps you can take to make working from home a productive and healthy experience.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Establish your space

working from home – a guide for employers

There are a range of ways managers can help employees overcome the challenges associated with working from home. You can set your team up for success by providing structure, clear expectations and a work environment that is safe and digitally connected.

Create a communication structure

- 1:1 daily check-in – provides a routine for each team member providing a forum to consult with you and raise any concerns. The check-in can be delivered by email, SMS or instant messaging.
- Daily team meetings – will foster team collaboration. Morning meetings can assist home-based employees to transition from ‘at home’ mode to ‘at work’ mode. It is important to consider team members individual requirements—co-located responsibilities and part-time arrangements.

Hazards and risks

Workers’ health and safety obligations when working from home

- Taking reasonable care for their own health and safety
- Following procedures about how work is performed
- Maintaining a safe work environment
- Managing their own in-house safety
- Notifying the employer about risks or potential risks and hazards
- Reporting any changes that may affect their health and safety while WFH
- Notifying their manager of any work-related incidents which occur in the home, as soon as possible
Hazards and risks

Psychosocial risks

• Increase in work demand
• Low job demand
• Lack of communication
• Low support and isolated work
• Poor organisational change management
• Restructures or redeployment
• Lack of consultation
Hazards and risks

Non-work related psychosocial risks

- Financial stress
- Fatigue
- Balancing of work and caring responsibilities
- Belonging to the vulnerable worker category
- Concerns for vulnerable family or friends
- Exposure to domestic abuse and violence
Hazards and risks

Factsheets and guidance available

THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL HEALTH

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

SUPPORTING OTHERS IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

5 important ways managers are talking with teams

RESPONDING TO UNCERTAINTY

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): Practical Guide for Call Centres

Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan

Aims

Monitor and predict
Reach people in community
Provide clear pathways of care

Participation | Partnership and collaboration | Integrated social and emotional wellbeing | Balanced community-based approaches | Best practice care | Flexible Solutions | Equity and Equality

https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au
Hazards and risks

Working in the physical workplace

- Client aggression and occupational violence
- Discrimination, racism or stigma
- Environmental hazards – exposure to COVID-19
- Poor management of WHS risks
- Poor workplace relationships
Hazards and risks

Sources of guidance and information

Australian Government
Comcare

Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission

Australian Government
Department of Health

Safe Work Australia

National COVID-19 Coordination Commission

Fair Work

Australian Government
OMBUDSMAN
Returning to the physical workplace
Transition plans

• Safe Work Australia’s website has information relevant to all industries
• The plan should focus on continued delivery of critical functions in a safe working environment
• When you have geographically dispersed workers, considerations need to be made for state public health measures in place
Transition plan considerations

- There is no single approach to transition plans
- Each organisation’s plan will need to be tailored to their particular circumstance
- Will need to include all geographical locations and the different public health directions issued

- This may mean multiple plans are created
- Plans need to be agile enough to respond to outbreaks and changes in circumstances quickly
Returning to the physical workplace

What should I be discussing with workers?

- Consultation with HSRs and workers is a must
- Which workers have a greater need to be in the workplace over others
- Personal circumstances of workers
- Arrangements for caring responsibilities
- State and Territory public health directions
- Modification to workplace attendance arrangements
- Risk assessments
Returning to the physical workplace

Can workers be directed to return to the office or stay working from home?

- Not one answer – each organisation is in a different circumstance
- Review State and Territory public health directions
- For information on pay and leave entitlements, seek advice from the Fair Work Ombudsman
Returning to the physical workplace

What considerations do workplaces need to have when workers are in the physical workplace?

• Consider the lessons learnt responding to COVID-19 so far
• How have flexible working arrangements worked?
• How is working in the office conducted?
• How will team meetings and catch ups will occur?
• What new risks are present?
• What policies and procedures need to be updated?
Importance of communication and consultation

- Change and uncertainty can be a significant stressor
- Communication with workers can help with stress and uncertainty they may be experiencing
- Employers have a duty to consult
- Consultation improves decision-making about health and safety matters and can assist in reducing workplace harm
Other considerations

WHS should be the first consideration in our actions and transition plans

• Employers and workers need to work together
• Consultation with HSRs and workers
• Need to be sustainable, have readiness and the ability to respond
• Regular reporting flow
• Records of consultation, procedures, work instructions and training
• Cleaning regime in place
Your questions
What to do now?

• Complete survey

Comcare.gov.au/coronavirus

general.enquiries@comcare.gov.au
whs.help@comcare.gov.au

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