



Procurement of personal protective equipment for workplaces in the coronavirus (COVID-19) environment

Frequently asked questions

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This document provides guidance on best practice for slowing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) within the work environment for services outside of the health system (health and aged care services), including the process for procuring personal protective equipment (also known as PPE) where it is required. This document should be read in conjunction with the advice on the appropriate use of personal protective equipment.

Departments and agencies are encouraged to review this guidance and implement appropriate measures in their workplaces. This guidance is based on the most current advice of the World Health Organisation and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, and will be reviewed and updated if international advice changes. Please ensure you are viewing the most up to date version – available on [Department of Health and Human Services – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) <www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>

Context

A number of directions have been made by the Victorian Chief Health Officer and the Victorian Government to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). These directions intend to keep all Victorians healthy and safe.

Restrictions of activities and venues across the state do not currently prevent some industries from continuing to operate. For further advice and the latest information, please refer to [Department of Health and Human Services – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) <www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>

The importance of preserving personal protective equipment

It is important all workforces are able to undertake their duties in a safe manner during this time and minimise the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Due to the global demand for personal protective equipment, it is vitally important this equipment is used in the appropriate circumstances to maintain adequate supply of key items for our frontline healthcare workers.

The use of personal protective equipment items by workforces who do not require them in their daily duties is impacting the availability of these items for our health care workers, who need them in order to care for people with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Departments and agencies are asked to use this guidance to work with their services on the appropriate use of personal protective equipment. If equipment is required for certain circumstances, this document provides guidance on the procurement of these supplies.

Frequently asked questions – purchasing personal protective equipment

Some services within our portfolio(s) cannot be delivered remotely. Do those workforces require personal protective equipment to continue operating?

It depends. If preventative measures such as physical distancing, frequent hand washing and cleaning of high touch surfaces are effectively undertaken, the use of any additional personal protective equipment (such as face masks or single use gloves) by staff is not required.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions on the appropriate and rational use of personal protective equipment within the work environment for services outside the health system.

A number of services within our portfolio(s) are requesting personal protective equipment supplies – how can the department support them?

Firstly, it's important that your workforce(s) understand the range of effective prevention measures against coronavirus (COVID-19), including the potential use of personal protective equipment, by sharing the relevant advice with them. As a reminder, the most effective prevention measures are:

- washing your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- if you cannot access hand washing facilities, using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60 per cent alcohol
- avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- practicing respiratory hygiene by coughing or sneezing into your elbow or upper sleeve, or tissue and then immediately disposing of the tissue
- maintaining physical distance of at least 1.5 metres between yourself and others
- cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces regularly, including phones, keyboards, door handles, light switches, bench tops etc.

Secondly, please ensure your workforce(s) are implementing all possible measures to enable physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres between people at all times. This may include implementing changes to existing practices to:

- enable remote working arrangements or support staff and clients to be spaced at least 1.5 metres apart at all times
- remove the need for in-person meetings or training sessions in enclosed spaces if the rule of no more than one person per four square metres of floor space cannot be adhered to
- use technology to support the delivery of key tasks, such as video conferencing.

Thirdly, if there are any instances where these preventative measures or changes to work practices cannot be applied completely, work with your service(s) to determine what additional precautions they can take and whether any personal protective equipment is required. **It is advisable to consult with your service's Workplace Health**

and Safety Committees or HSRs when determining these precautions. These measures will **not** replace the need for workers to implement the above listed hygiene and physical distancing practices as much as possible during each shift.

If a service does require some personal protective equipment, after completing the steps above, please ensure the service(s) is using their existing procurement processes and contracts to purchase any items, as per usual business requirements.

A service within our portfolio(s) is unable to access the personal protective equipment they require from their regular supplier – how can the department support them to access supplies?

Due to the global demand for personal protective equipment, some suppliers are having trouble keeping up with demand. However, suppliers should still be honouring existing purchase contracts where supplies exist.

If a supplier is unable to provide the service with the personal protective equipment they require due to limited stocks or a disruption in the supply chain, the service should determine how long their existing stocks of personal protective equipment will last for, presuming with appropriate usage. If existing supplies will last until the disruption in the supply chain is expected to be resolved, services should continue to work with their existing supplier to organise a future order.

If a service's existing supplies are not expected to last until the usual supplier can restock or deliver additional items, the service should notify their portfolio department and advise how many items are required and when existing stocks will be exhausted. The service should still seek to place a future order with their regular supplier for delivery when items are back in stock or the supply chain is restored.

The department should then consider if there are any un-needed supplies of the items required currently in stock across other services within the portfolio(s). If there are supplies of an item that would otherwise be un-used, these should be made available to the service in need.

If there are no alternative supplies available, the department can reach out to the Combined Agency Operations Group (CAOG) through the State Control Centre for assistance to access the personal protective equipment items that are required for the period that supplies cannot be accessed. Please send through requests by [email to COAG <sccvic.caog@scc.vic.gov.au>](mailto:sccvic.caog@scc.vic.gov.au).

CAOG is identifying alternative suppliers and operating a centralised process to support services who are continuing to operate during the coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency.

Any requests to CAOG will be assessed against the guidelines for the rational use of personal protective equipment, to ensure that supplies of personal protective equipment are made available to the workforces that most critically require the items to continue service delivery.

In instances where available supplies of certain items are limited, CAOG may only be able to partially fulfil a department's request. Departments are encouraged to work with their services to ensure the appropriate use of available supplies.

If supplies of personal protective equipment are available for allocation to the requesting service, your department will be invoiced with seven-day terms for the cost of the supplies and the cost of delivery.

Your department will be required to assure that any PPE supplies allocated to your services are securely stored and transported.

CAOG has issued supplies to a service in my department's portfolio(s). How should those supplies be stored?

Your department will be required to assure CAOG that any supplies of personal protective equipment distributed to a service are securely stored for use by the relevant workforce only. This may include keeping a register of use of the items provided.

Any items that are stolen or misplaced after delivery may not be able to be replaced due to limited supplies and other competing services requiring these items.

Services within our portfolio(s) have ordered, or already have on hand, additional personal protective equipment items that they do not require – can these be reallocated to the health sector?

Yes. If you have identified available stocks of PPE items, such as P2/N95 face masks, that are not required for your services, these can be purchased from your department by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Please send through details of the stock on hand to by [email to COAG](mailto:sccvic.caog@scc.vic.gov.au) <sccvic.caog@scc.vic.gov.au>.

To receive this publication in an accessible format [email Emergency Management](mailto:Emergency.Management@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <COVID-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

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