

'It's No Accident' is the OHS newsletter of the AMWU. Feedback and story ideas to amwu@amwu.org.au

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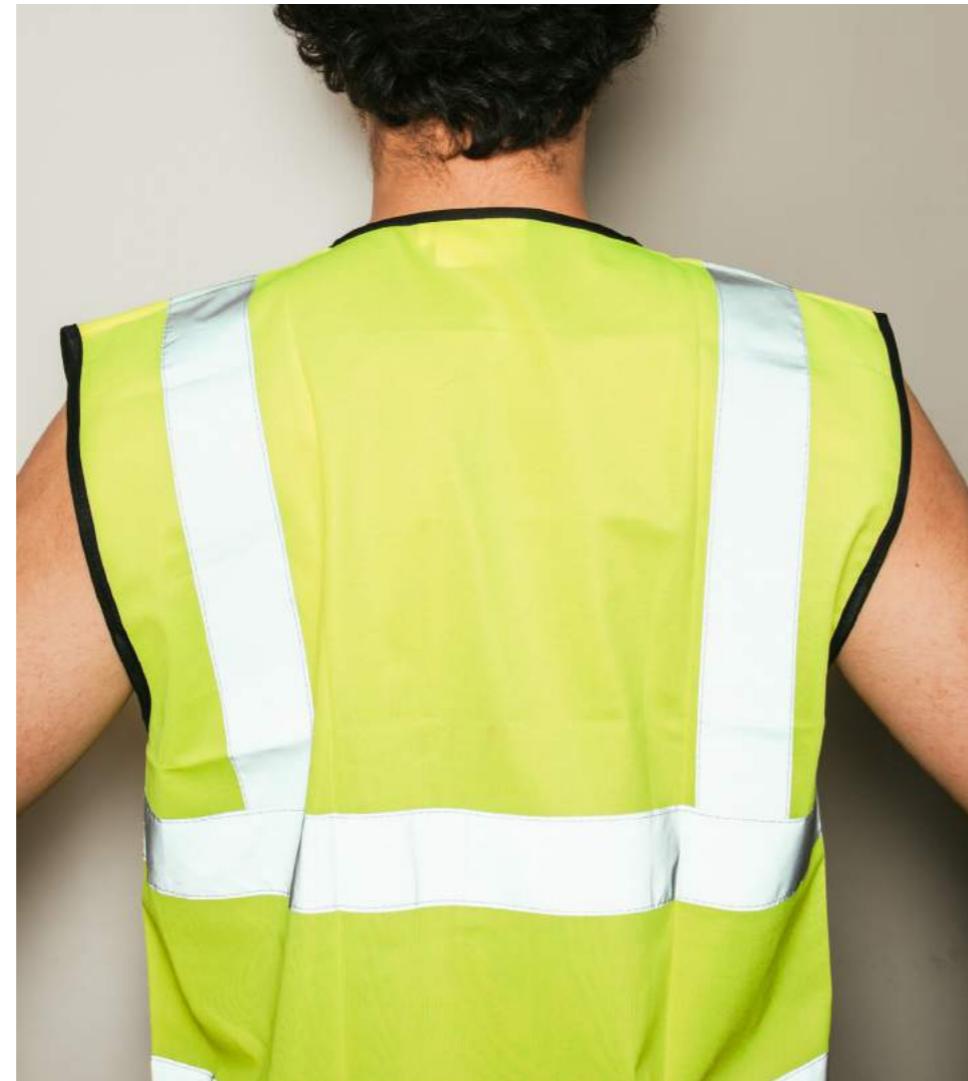
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PPE should protect, not harm.

Last year a case of burns from retro-reflective tape was recorded by a Perth doctor. The worker presented to the hospital complaining of a painful rash across his back after working outside in PPE with retro-reflective tape.

While this is the first case officially recorded, workers have been raising concerns about the reflective tape worn on PPE for many years. When exposed to direct sunlight the reflective tape can absorb heat and become extremely hot.

Under Australian Work Health and Safety laws employers are required to provide high-visibility PPE if needed, depending on the work environment following consultation with workers and their HSRs. As regulators and employers have so far ignored workers concerns about the heat hazards caused by reflective tape, it's vital that HSRs are aware of these potential hazards and review all the PPE provided in their workplaces.

Ask these questions before using PPE. Is it fit for purpose? Does it create a risk? Could higher controls be introduced removing the need for PPE? Have workers been trained in the use of the PPE? •

IT'S NO ACCIDENT

AMWU Health and Safety News



June 2020

COVID-19 is no excuse.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not an excuse for your employer to ignore their obligations to workers' health and safety. While COVID-19 has caused a lot of changes in our workplaces and communities, enlightened employers will still recognise the benefits of working with their workers and their representatives in delivering the best health and safety outcomes.

Health and safety laws require employers to take every step they reasonably can to eliminate or minimise the risk of workers contracting COVID-19 and workers and unions must be genuinely consulted on these measures. This requires employers to have a COVID-19 workplan containing a range of control measures, depending on the type of work you do. The workplan must give workers clear direction and guidance about what is expected of them, in particular:

- Workers should know when to stay away from the workplace
- What action to take if they become unwell, and
- What symptoms to be concerned about



The most effective action employers can take is to ask workers to identify their potential exposure to COVID-19 and to financially support them to self-isolate with paid special leave. Financial disadvantage presents a serious barrier to self-reporting and self-isolating, particularly for casuals and low-paid workers. No worker should be forced to choose between their health, and the health of others, and their paycheque.

Elected Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) have a key role to play. As the spread of COVID-19 is a health and safety risk, employers are legally required to:

- Consult with workers and any HSRs prior to making any decision in relation to health and safety
- Provide a work environment without risk to health and safety
- Have in place safe systems of work, including a plan to manage risks and protect workers

- Provide adequate facilities for the welfare of workers and ensure access to those facilities
- Provide any information, training or instruction that is necessary to protect workers, and
- Monitor the effectiveness of systems developed to protect workers and the health of workers

Where workers/HSRs have concerns regarding the employer's systems for managing risks to health and safety, they are empowered to initiate the issue resolution per their respective health and safety legislation and are entitled to have union representation at such meetings.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many changes in the workplace and the community, one thing that hasn't changed are the rights of HSRs in the workplace. Don't hesitate to use your powers to keep everyone safe at work.

If you need help, contact the union. •

FOR WORKPLACE NOTICEBOARD



COVID - 19 safe at work checklist.

Actions/Controls	Risk Management	Compliant	Non-compliant	Not applicable
	A site-based COVID-19 specific Health and Safety Risk Assessment is undertaken			
	Documented risk assessment for each task that identifies:			
	• Points of interaction/potential exposure			
	• What the controls are in place to limit interaction/exposure			
	Health and Safety Management Plan updated and reviewed by suitably experienced person following consultation			
	Regular communication is in place with all staff (on-site and those working remotely) to ensure workers can identify exposure risk without fear of repercussion			
	Social Distancing. All steps should be taken to eliminate where possible, or minimise, physical interactions amongst people			
	Physical contact (e.g. handshakes) between workers is avoided and discouraged			
	Signage is in place to support physical distancing and guiding the distance where people may sit / stand (reception, lunchroom etc.)			
	No unnecessary contact between workgroups			
	The distance between workstations is at least 1.5m and workers are not facing each other. Visual indicators such as markings on the floor should be used as a guide to show the distance			
	Where workers are required to deal with third parties, physical barriers (such as plastic screen) are installed			
	Meetings to occur virtually or by phone. If on-site outdoor open spaces should be used			
	Pre-starts are held outside (where practical) and everyone is at least 1.5m apart			
	Shift rotation has been reviewed and where possible staggered meal breaks and flexible working arrangements implemented			
	Changes made to start and finish times of shifts to ensure that there is no crossover of workers.			
	Lunchrooms have been assessed and clear signage which limits the number of people and furniture arranged to reduce seating capacity to support social distancing			
	Limiting physical interaction with suppliers / delivery and courier drivers. If suppliers are required on-site a pre-determined plan on how social distancing will be put in place			
	Reduce non-essential visitors and non-essential contractors and consultants on site			
	Site inductions include all COVID-19 health and hygiene and social distancing requirements			
	Workers allowed to refuse to service sites that are not complying with hygiene and social distancing protocols			
	Vehicle and Machinery Hygiene			
	Checks are in place to ensure all vehicles and machinery are cleaned between operators (this must be undertaken at every instance when an operator both enters and leaves a cab or workstation after a period of operating)			
	Hand sanitiser and cleaning materials are readily available for all operators			
	Controls are in place for physical distancing within vehicles and plant (such as 1 person per vehicle)			
	Processes are in place to avoid the need for hot seating mobile plants. Where hot seating occurs, appropriate cleaning of the cabin and access points are undertaken between use by each operator			
	Communications between operators are via 2-way radio or similar			
	Carpooling when travelling to and from work is avoided and staff travel in a single vehicle			
	Health and Hygiene			
	Ensure appropriate health, hygiene and safety measures are in place and cleaning is regular to minimise risk			
	Additional washing facilities, change rooms and dining facilities provided. There is increased availability of hygiene controls such as hand sanitiser and disinfectant wipes at all work locations, vehicles and the supply is regularly checked.			
	Checks and protocols are in place daily to identify any worker or supplier that is on-site who displays any COVID-19 symptoms and immediately isolate/remove them			
	Checks are in place to assess those who may have been exposed (or at higher risk) such as those returning from overseas or who have been in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 to remove themselves from site and follow self-isolation protocols in line with government requirements			
	Instructions have been issued to all staff requiring any person displaying flu-like symptoms or feeling unwell to stay at home and away from work and to inform their manager and seek appropriate advice/treatment			
	Special paid leave is available for any worker who is required to self-isolate			
	A record is kept of meetings, communication and direction and guidance provided to workers on what is expected. Workers know:			
	• When to stay away from the workplace			
	• What action to take if they become unwell at work			
	• What symptoms to be concerned about			
	• How to practice basic hygiene and cleaning			
	• Social distancing requirements			
	• That they will be paid if required to self-isolate			
	• Not share personal items, PPE, food or drink			
	Training provided to workers in hand washing and disinfection of surfaces e.g. mobile phones, keyboards, UHF radios, steering wheels etc			
	An increased cleaning schedule is in place and maintained for:			
	• All physical spaces, especially between workers coming into contact e.g. bathrooms, meal rooms, shared facilities			
	• Items such as monitors, desks, tools, keyboards, to ensure items are thoroughly cleaned between use by individuals			
	• High touch point areas - such as turnstiles, door handles, counters and light switches			
	Consideration has been given to determine if specialised cleaning crews are needed			
	The flu vaccine is being made available to staff			
	The First Aid Officer(s) has been trained in COVID-19 risks and management and appropriate PPE is available			
	There are plans in place for supporting workers' mental health and providing access to support i.e. AMWUCare			
	Record that workers have been provided training/information on COVID-19 procedures and requirements			