

Managing mining operations during COVID-19

As we move forward and restrictions continue to ease, we must adapt and continually manage the risk of COVID-19 at mining operations. Under the NSW work health and safety laws, mine operators must have measures in place to eliminate or minimise the risk of COVID-19. Mine operators must do all that is reasonably practicable to eliminate, and if that's not possible, to minimise the risk to all workers and visitors at a mine.

Public Health Orders

The NSW Government's Public Health Orders are frequently updated based on the evolving situation in NSW. Employers are strongly encouraged to review the orders on a regular basis as they are updated on the NSW Health website – [Public Health Orders and restrictions](#).

In the event of a positive COVID-19 case on site

There have now been several recent instances where workers, while at their workplace, have received advice of a positive COVID-19 test result. Key lessons from these incidents are detailed below.

Workers who are notified of a positive test result, whether on site or not, should report the notification to their employer as soon as possible upon receipt of the result.

In each incident, it was highlighted that employers should have procedures developed and implemented to effectively address the following:

- the ability to quickly and safely isolate the worker and their close contacts to prevent potential further spreading of the virus
- arrangements to effectively control entry and exit to site while parts of the mine or groups of workers are subject to temporary isolation

Other considerations to assist in managing COVID-19 incidents

Effective and timely communication will be imperative in dealing with an incident on site. Communication protocols are required to facilitate the provision of concise and timely information to workers, their families and the local community about the mine's response to a COVID-19 incident.

Employers should have arrangements in place with a cleaning contractor or maintain adequate stocks of appropriate cleaning supplies and PPE on site to complete any deep cleaning that is required and ensure that staff who undertake this cleaning are appropriately trained to undertake the task.

Employers should consider ongoing requirements to maintain a safe working environment for all workers on the site during a COVID-19 related incident, including any inspections that may be needed.

Employers should consider the provision of meaningful support services to assist directly affected workers and their families.