

Tuesday 25 January 2022

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update #68

Heat and working in PPE

High temperatures are presenting challenges for members working in PPE, particularly those in mobile and fixed testing locations which are often outdoors and there is a requirement to wear tier 3 PPE.

ANMF members are reminded that your employer has obligations to provide a safe workplace and should follow the Victorian Department of Health's guidance titled '*Controlling heat stress in health and human services (COVID-19): guidance for employers and their staff*' via <https://bit.ly/3EFqwGr>

The department's guidance requires employers and workers to take steps to reduce the risks associated with working in heat.

Importantly, this guidance is **not** limited to only COVID-19 testing sites and is equally applicable to other members who may be exposed to the conditions, including hospital in the home. It assists employers to undertake risk assessments, in advance of the conditions occurring (e.g. based on predicted conditions in the coming days) and provides advice around controls that may be implemented to reduce the risks, including potentially postponing non-urgent work outdoors.

In addition to the above guidance, the Department of Health has issued 'Fixed testing - heat management guidance' via <https://bit.ly/3G0yZVb> and 'Retail testing – heat management safe operating procedure (SOP)' via <https://bit.ly/3fSABFJ>

The guideline and the SOP provide recommendations and responsibilities to testing providers to ensure a safe working environment is provided by minimising risks associated with working during periods of prolonged and extreme temperatures. ANMF recommends all members, working in testing sites, review the documents to ensure that your employer is doing all that is expected of them in providing you with a safe workplace.

The guidance should be read in conjunction with:

1. the ANMF (Vic Branch) policy 'Guidelines for working in heat' via <https://bit.ly/2LMFYel>
2. WorkSafe Victoria's 'Working in heat' guidance via <http://bit.ly/2XXmKVK>

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3. WorkSafe Victoria's 'Prevention and protection from heat illness' guidance, which provides clear explanation of the employer obligations to prevent issues related to heat, via <http://bit.ly/2M40XsQ>

To be clear, employers have an obligation to provide a workplace that is safe and without risk to health, so far as is practicable, and this includes in relation to heat. Employers are required to implement controls to either eliminate, or reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.

What steps should I take to ensure that my employer is providing a safe workplace in relation to working in heat?

1. Request the heat management plan from your employer, so that you are able to review it and check whether there are clear, proactive risk assessments being undertaken by your employer consistent with the guidance referenced above.
2. Report using VHIMS/RiskMan/incident reporting systems where inadequate controls have been identified to be put in place, in advance of days of significant heat.
3. Raise the issue with your HSR in the event you have one. Remember HSRs have the power to issue Provisional Improvement Notices requiring the employer to implement controls, where there is no/an inadequate heat policy in place, which clearly identifies controls to be implemented, and the triggers for these controls. ANMF strongly recommends that members working in sites with **no** duly elected HSR, consult their designated working group (usually geographical but check with your HR department) and elect a HSR. In areas where we have HSRs we see better OHS outcomes.
4. Contact the ANMF via our Member Assistance inquiry form via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance> so that we can assist.

What do I do if it is over 30 degrees and I believe that the risk of working in heat is not controlled adequately?

1. When there is a predicted day over 30 degrees or extended sun exposure or humidity (as noted in the department's guidance), report using VHIMS/RiskMan/ incident reporting systems if no/inadequate controls have been implemented by your employer.
2. Contact the ANMF via our Member Assistance inquiry form via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance> so that we can assist. ANMF will raise your concerns directly with your employer and refer the matter to WorkSafe Victoria.
3. Remember, anyone has the right to contact WorkSafe Victoria to report issues around health and safety in workplaces – this can be done via the Advisory Service on 1800 136 089 or via advisory_service@worksafe.vic.gov.au
4. Where there is a serious and immediate risk to health and safety due to heat, raise this with your HSR and manager. HSRs are able to issue a cease work, after consulting the employer, where there is an imminent risk to health and safety, and inadequate controls in place, if management refuse or fail to implement appropriate controls.

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Important COVID-19 links for nurses, midwives and personal care workers

ANMF continues to collate the important links all in one place, so you don't have to go looking. Please bookmark and check this page regularly – <https://anmfvic.asn.au/COVID-19>

Latest COVID-19 statistics

Victorian COVID-19 data dashboard <https://bit.ly/3j5vJwC>

Victorian Chief Health Officer daily update <https://bit.ly/34Et8Ug>

Victorian Chief Health Officer daily media release <https://bit.ly/2EDiQLb>

Victorian Government's vaccination data dashboard <https://bit.ly/319HzPg>

Federal Government national COVID-19 data <https://bit.ly/3spz67F>

Federal Government's national and aged care vaccination data <https://bit.ly/3spRSM5>

Don't bring it home: guide to minimise the risk of infection

A reminder that ANMF (Vic Branch) has developed a guide to assist you in relation to returning home from work after a shift.

Job Reps and HSRs are encouraged to print the poster which is part of this PDF newsflash. You can also download the 'Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection' A4 poster via bit.ly/COVID19-DBIH

ANMF Job Reps and Health and Safety Reps are encouraged to display this newsflash on their workplace noticeboard.

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Protocols for entering your home and minimising the risk of infection.

-  **1** On entry, remove your shoes and place in a plastic box.
-  **2** Leave your bag, wallet, mobile, keys, etc in a box near the entry.
-  **3** Change out of your clothes immediately and wash them. Use the hottest possible machine wash setting and dryer if you can.
-  **4** Have a shower.
-  **5** Clean items you've brought in and surfaces you've touched.

Remember to wash your hands regularly.

Cleaning tips

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- Hot soapy wash, wipe or disinfectant spray (depending on surface) phone cases, keys, ID, lanyard, glasses, etc.**

Consider changing in and out of your uniform/scrubs at work.