



COVID-19 Safety Guidance: Events

Introduction

The WA Government has implemented a staged lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

According to the current [COVID-19 WA Roadmap](#), there is no timeline to indicate when events and mass gatherings will be permitted in WA, or the type and scale of events that will be permitted.

Decisions related to events commencing will hinge on the position of the Federal and State Government, National Cabinet and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), and the evolving risk of COVID-19 in WA.

Despite this uncertainty, it is understood that many event organisers are planning rescheduled and new events, due to the timeframes involved in the planning process.

The following advice is intended to assist organisers in taking a risk-based, measured approach to the planning of events and implementation of prevention strategies likely to be required as restrictions are eased.

Please note, it is anticipated that formal COVID Safety Guidelines related to events and mass gatherings will be provided by the WA Government in due course. It will be important for event organisers to refer to this resource when it becomes available on the WA Government website (www.wa.gov.au) to ensure they meet all mandatory requirements.

COVID Safety Plan

It is anticipated that a [COVID Safety Plan](#) may need to be developed for each event, to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 in line with the best available health advice. This information will be provided by the WA Government. Event organisers can refer to the [current resource](#) available for guidance on the WA Government website (www.wa.gov.au) to ensure they meet all requirements. COVID Safety Plans should be developed in partnership with all stakeholders involved with the event.

About COVID-19

COVID-19 is spread from person-to-person through close contact and droplets including:

- direct contact with infected people
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching contaminated objects or surfaces (like doorknobs or tables), and then touching your mouth or face.

It is important to put in place prevention strategies that will minimise this risk. The most effective measures are physical distancing, good hygiene practices, additional sanitisation regimes and keeping away from others if unwell.

1. Physical distancing

[Evidence demonstrates](#) that mass gatherings facilitate the spread of [infectious diseases](#). Physical distancing is one of the most effective methods of reducing the spread of viruses. The more space between patrons, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

If a person at an event is found to be positive for COVID-19, the risk of transmission to the rest of the patrons, staff and volunteers is minimised if people have been practising physical distancing.

Good practice physical distancing principles are to:

- maintain 1.5 metre separation between people who are not from the same household; and
- maintain a minimum of 2 square metres (2 sqm) per person.

Managing physical distancing between patrons

To promote physical distancing between patrons at events, organisers may wish to consider the following:

- reduce the number of patrons
- ensure a minimum of 2 sqm per person is available at the venue
- leave spaces between same household groups or individuals in seated areas and amusement rides
- adequately space queues by clearly indicating 1.5m distances
- increase frequency of public transport or chartered vehicles related to the event, to prevent unnecessary crowds/queues
- stagger the arrival and departure of patrons
- divert departures through a separate, dedicated exit
- minimise congregations at sanitary stations, toilets, food and water distribution areas by increasing availability.

Managing physical distancing between event staff

It will also be important to manage physical distancing between staff, through the following:

- review shift arrangements to reduce interaction between staff
- stagger breaks to ensure physical distancing occurs during break times
- maintain physical distancing in break room facilities by adequately spacing chairs etc
- remind volunteers and staff not to attend if they are unwell or have been in contact with a positive COVID-19 patient
- register all volunteers and staff to assist with contact tracing, should an affected person be later found to have attended the event
- staff should consider getting the annual flu shot.

When staff and volunteers are not working, such as meal breaks, toilet breaks, arrival at work and leaving work are often when interaction could lead to increased risk of transmission. Staff and volunteers should be vigilant about maintaining physical distancing during work-related transition periods or activities as well as outside of work, including when socialising with each other.

2. Hygiene and sanitation regimes

Entrance to the event

The following hygiene and sanitation measures can be put in place at event entrances:

- Provide alcohol-based sanitiser and request all patrons, staff and volunteers apply it on entry.
- Place appropriate signage at all entrance points to remind attendees of physical distancing and hygiene requirements.
- Ensure one-way traffic flows, with dedicated entrances and exits, to minimise congestion.

Increased cleaning and sanitation regime

Presence of the virus in the environment can be a source of infection. This risk can be reduced through the following measures:

- Increase the frequency of cleaning in all areas.
- Establish a thorough and regular cleaning regime of common contact surfaces, 'high touch' items and shared amenities, such as handles, taps, break rooms, EFTPOS keypads, counter tops and toilets.
- Keep a cleaning log to ensure the cleaning regime is strictly adhered to.
- Provide adequate hand washing/sanitiser stations, and encourage all patrons, staff and volunteers to use the facilities regularly.
- Provide hands-free basins, with liquid soap and paper towels, in toilet facilities.
- Promote cashless payments where possible.

If you think a surface may be contaminated, clean it with a common household disinfectant to kill the virus. Cleaning products should be chosen that are approved for the surface to be cleaned. In general, combined detergent/disinfectant solutions or wipes are acceptable for hard surfaces. Some products such as bleach can damage fabrics, stainless steel and other surfaces. It will be important to continue to comply with any requirements regarding use of chemicals, including the use of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for chemicals utilised.

For most general cleaning tasks, a neutral detergent with pH between 6 and 8 should be used. The use of combined detergent / disinfectant wipes is acceptable, or solutions can be prepared fresh each day. If using a bleach solution look for products which give you a 1000ppm (0.1%) bleach solution either neat or when diluted with water. Always follow the manufacturer instructions if any detergent or disinfectant products require mixing with water or dissolving prior to use. Remember to never mix different cleaning products as in some instances toxic gases can be generated. Refer to the [Environmental cleaning in the workplace](#) factsheet for further advice.

3. Training and education

It is anticipated that COVID Safety Guidelines for events and mass gatherings will be provided by the WA Government in due course. This is likely to provide further information on required training for event organisers, staff and volunteers.

The Federal Department of Health provides a [free 30-minute online infection control training module](#) which covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19.

It may also be helpful to display health promotion material (e.g. posters) at the event to remind patrons, staff and volunteers of the need to practice physical distancing, good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Event planning considerations

Event approval by local government

All events may continue to be assessed by the relevant local government authority in accordance with the requirements of the *Health (Public Buildings) Regulations 1992*, however event organisers must understand that approval by local government does not guarantee that the event will proceed.

Local governments can process event applications, granting conditional approval in anticipation of the relevant restrictions being lifted by the time the event is due to take place.

Example condition:

The EVENT NAME to be held at LOCATION on the DATE(S) is approved subject to conditions (to be specified by local government).

Please note, whilst a conditional approval has been granted, this approval is also subject to the relevant State Emergency Management COVID-19 Directions applicable at the time of the Event, which may restrict the type, scale or conditions under which the Event can proceed. It is the responsibility of the event organiser to ensure they are aware of any relevant changes.

Approvals will be granted on the basis that the level of COVID-19 activity in the community, and relevant restrictions in place at the time of the event, support the event proceeding without compromising public health. Event organisers must ensure that the event complies with the current Directions released by WA Government.

Should COVID-19 activity increase in the community, relevant Directions may change, potentially requiring the cancellation/postponement of events at very short notice. It will be the event organiser's responsibility to ensure they are aware of any relevant changes, discuss the implications of cancellation of an event due to COVID-19 with their insurer, and address all actions relating to cancellation/delay in their Risk and Emergency Management Plans.

Compliance with COVID-19 Directions

Authorised officers (the WA Police), under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*, have the power to close an event that they consider to be in breach of the current Directions or that puts the community at risk.

Local government environmental health officers are not authorised under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*, and therefore will not play a role in enforcing adherence to the Directions. They remain responsible for enforcing the *Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1911* and public building legislation.

Risk assessment

The term 'event' covers a broad array of activities. Events are indoor or outdoor assembly spaces in which a number of people gather for social, theatrical, political, religious or civil purposes, for a defined period of time.

The decision to proceed with, restrict, modify, postpone, or cancel an event should be based on compliance with current COVID-19 related [Directions](#) (*Emergency Management Act 2005*), and the undertaking of a detailed risk assessment. Risk assessments should be conducted in partnership with local, state, and possibly national authorities, as well as mass gatherings experts.

The risk assessment process should also include consulting the [WA Health daily update](#) as well as the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) updated technical guidance](#) regarding COVID-19, ensuring that there is an up-to-date evaluation of the local situation in line with state-led advice. As this is an evolving situation, this advice may change over time.

In addition to the normal risk assessment conducted as part of an events approval process, the following public health principles related to COVID-19 will also need to be considered. It should be noted that the principles and considerations summarised in the table below will be relevant well beyond Phase 4 of the WA Roadmap, as the risk of COVID-19 is likely to remain for some time.

| Consideration | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Status of COVID-19 activity in WA | <ul style="list-style-type: none">An increase in COVID-19 activity may result in events being cancelled or postponed. |
| Current Directions at the time of event | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Events must adhere to State department advice and legal Directions current at time of event. |
| Prevailing position of Federal /State Govt, AHPPC, National Cabinet | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Position will dictate the timeline, type and nature of events permitted in WA. |
| Anticipated crowd size | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Larger crowd sizes may increase the size of a potential outbreak, should a person at the event test positive for COVID-19.Larger crowd sizes have implications for risk mitigation strategies. |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowd sizes must not exceed patron limit specified in the Directions that are in place at the time of the event. |
| Nature and duration of contact between patrons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The longer individuals are in contact, and the closer the contact is, the greater the risk of transmission of COVID-19. |
| Ability to maintain physical distancing between patrons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distancing reduces the risk of transmission of COVID-19. |
| Event venue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor venues are lower risk for transmission of COVID-19 than indoor venues, provided physical distancing is practised. |
| Ability to trace patrons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered events will ensure individuals can be contacted if a person attending the event tests positive for COVID-19. |
| Alcohol / Drugs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to alcohol and/or drugs may result in difficulties managing physical distancing and other risk mitigation strategies. |
| Health and age of patrons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrons who are older and those with co-morbidities are at greater risk of more serious illness with COVID-19. |

It is logical that low risk events will be able to proceed before complex, high-risk events are permitted to. To accurately make this assessment, it will be important to consider the above public health considerations relevant to individual applications. Basing approval solely on the 'type' of event being proposed may result in low-risk events being cancelled and high-risk events being approved. The following examples demonstrate varying degrees of risk among the same 'type' of events:

- a concert is often regarded as high-risk, but intimate, well managed, outdoor concerts are likely to present a low risk.
- a non-contact sporting event without spectators has a lower risk than a high-profile event with contact and spectators.

The following risk assessment of a number of different types of events is provided as a guide only. It will be up to each local government to consider individual applications in their approval process.

| Risk level | Risk factors | Examples |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Low risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <200 participants • Minimal contact between participants • Registration process likely • Outdoors • No alcohol or drug use • No sharing of equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain bike racing • Triathlons • Swimming or sailing events • Trail running • Outdoor movie screening |

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| Medium risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 – 1,000 participants • Some close contact between participants • Minimal alcohol or drug use likely • Minimal shared equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer's markets • Obstacle courses • Fun runs • Exhibitions |
| High risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000+ participants • Close contact between participants likely • Registration process unlikely • Alcohol or drug use likely • Shared equipment common | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large concerts/music festivals • Spectator sporting events • Agricultural fairs • Circuses • Food and wine festivals |

Stakeholder engagement

Event organisers must continue to establish direct links, and communicate regularly, with local and state public health authorities, including the local provider of first aid for the event and the local government environmental health officer (EHO) within the relevant jurisdiction. It will also be important to integrate any event planning, with state emergency and response plans, and determine triggers that will indicate the need to reconsider or revise the plans. It may also be useful to establish command and control arrangements, to facilitate rapid communication of information, as well as efficient situation analyses and decision-making during the event.

Access to local or tertiary health services and PPE, if appropriate, may still be impacted by an increase in demand related to COVID-19, particularly if resources have not yet been replenished. First aid staff availability may be limited, as individuals often also work in healthcare facilities.

Registering events

As restrictions are eased, previously cancelled events will look to be rescheduled, whilst new events will be organised. The Department of Health recommends registering all events through the [WA Health website](#), to ensure local emergency and health resources are made aware of events that may impact on their resources. Alternatively, event details can be emailed to:

- Public.Events@health.wa.gov.au

All events will be added to the 'events calendar', which is distributed monthly. If you would like to receive the monthly calendar, please also email the above address.

Increasing community confidence

Appropriate risk communication is an integral role in the planning and running successful events. It will also be important in restoring community confidence in event participation as restrictions are eased. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Develop a good relationship with the media to assist communication efforts related to:
 - local risk assessment.
 - actions being undertaken to limit risk and maintain patron safety during event.
- Establish a single point of communication. Public confidence will increase if messaging remains consistent and reassuring.
- Encourage staff and attendees to download the COVIDSafe app for contact tracing.

- Increase public health messaging before and during events, provide reminders to:
 - stay home if unwell or have recently been in contact with a positive COVID-19 patient
 - practice hand hygiene, physical distancing and respiratory etiquette
 - leave/seek assistance if symptoms develop while at an event.

Managing unwell patrons/staff at events

All efforts must be made to remind patrons, staff and volunteers not to attend if they feel unwell. However, it will be important to establish a protocol for identifying and managing unwell patrons that present during an event. This must be communicated clearly to all staff and volunteers prior to the event.

In developing a protocol, consider the following:

- Any staff or volunteer identifying an unwell patron should report the incident to their team leader, who will escalate as appropriate.
- Adequately train all relevant first aid staff in how to safely attend to a symptomatic patient.
- Establish an area to isolate/assess unwell patrons/staff.
- Provide symptomatic patrons/staff with a mask to help contain respiratory droplets generated from coughing and sneezing.
- Ensure all staff attending symptomatic patients wear gloves and a mask, and dispose of them immediately/appropriately after contact, followed immediately by hand hygiene.
- Equip all first aid posts/isolation areas with hand washing facilities and hand sanitisers.
- Establish a plan to remove potentially symptomatic patrons from the event as soon as possible, in a safe and appropriate manner.

Post event

Event organisers must hold a debriefing session with all stakeholders, including health authorities, to evaluate the implemented strategies. As always, it will be important for the review process to identify lessons that can be learnt and improvements that can be made, to help future event organisers.

If public health authorities suspect that transmission of COVID-19 has occurred, it will be important for organisers and participants to support the response of authorities. Organisers must liaise with public health authorities and facilitate the sharing of any relevant information, including details related to any symptomatic participants.

Looking forward

It is acknowledged that some of these measures will be costly to event organisers in the short term. Over time, however, the industry will transition to the return of regular mainstream services and activities. This should gradually result in the revitalisation of the industry and ongoing community development. Organisers should consider that community confidence in participating in crowded places may remain low for some time and that this confidence will take time to build back up.

For more information

For more information about organising an event, contact the relevant local government Environmental Health Service where the event is to be located.

- Refer to the [online local government directory](#) for contact details.

For events organised in Kings Park, Rottnest Island, or locations not within a local government district, contact the Environmental Health Directorate on:

- Email: Public.Events@health.wa.gov.au
- Phone: (08) 9222 2000

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