

Best practice for COVID-19 safety at small to medium events

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Events are an important part of our community. They contribute to our culture, economy and connectedness.

From 21 May 2022, only events with over 5,000 patrons and music festivals with more than 2,000 patrons are required to submit and have a COVID-19 Event Safety Plan assessed and approved by Public Health. Small to medium events with less than 5,000 patrons can now occur without assessment and approval by Public Health.

However, with COVID-19 transmission occurring across the community, it is important that all event organisers continue to consider measures they can put in place to reduce the chances of COVID-19 spreading at an event.

Minimising risk is important for the safety and confidence of patrons, staff and the community.

The following best practice information will help organisers of small to medium events manage COVID-19 safety.

Best practice for COVID-19 safe events is to:

- Stay home if unwell, consider a ticket refund policy to encourage this
- Keep a distance of 1.5 metres from other people or other social groups where practicable
- Wear a facemask if needed
- Wash and sanitise hands often
- Clean and disinfect often
- Have a designated responsible person for COVID-19 safety.

Event organisers are encouraged to understand and implement these measures and make the health and safety of staff and patrons the priority.

Measures to protect patrons, workers and the Tasmanian community at events have been in place since late 2020. During that time, we have all gained experience and understanding about COVID-19 safety at events.

Key learnings are:

- The importance of planning.
- That free moving of people in close proximity for long periods of time is one of the main contributors to increased COVID-19 spread.
- Many small to medium size events previously required to submit a COVID-19 Safety Checklist have been monitored and achieved a good level of compliance. This indicates that event organisers are proactive and that many events can be run safely without the need for public health oversight or assessment.

These learnings have informed the guidance for COVID-19 safe event planning provided below.

Further support and information

The Public Health COVID-19 Safe Events Team can provide free COVID-19 safety advice and assistance specific to your event. Team members can share learnings from other events and offer suggestions to assist with event planning.

Contact the COVID-19 Safe Events Team by email at covidsafeevents@health.tas.gov.au.

Communication and messaging

KEY ACTIONS	WAYS TO REDUCE RISK
COVID-19 safe messages	<p>Messages for patrons are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay home if you are unwell or are required to isolate.• If you become unwell at the event, please put on a face mask and leave the event immediately.• Keep a distance of 1.5 metres from other people or social groups where practicable.• Wash and sanitise your hands regularly.• Wear a facemask if you develop symptoms during the event, when you cannot keep distance from others and if you are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
Communication before the event	<p>Provide information to patrons before the event about the COVID-19 safe behaviours you expect patrons to follow. For example, add information to your website, social media pages, advertisements and/or tickets.</p> <p>For more information visit Keep it COVID safe resources on the coronavirus website.</p>
Communication during the event	<p>Positive and regular messaging during the event can help patrons to follow COVID-19 safe behaviours. Messages can be targeted to an audience and may be pre-scripted, pre-recorded or reactive to situations as needed.</p> <p>What works well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signage that is clear, large in size (A3 or larger), waterproof and displayed in prominent locations such as the entry, food, bar and focal areas.• Signage that begins in the car park - that helps to set the expectations from the start.• Active, friendly event staff or volunteers who can interact with patrons at entry points or where queuing is likely.• Reminders over your sound system by your MC or another person; performers are often influential in delivering safety messages.• Large screens located where most patrons can view them, this is particularly useful at sport stadiums and music concerts.

Managing patrons

KEY ACTIONS	WAYS TO REDUCE RISK
Use of facemasks	<p>Facemasks should be encouraged in situations where patrons cannot physically distance and by any person that develops symptoms during the event. Encouraging use of face masks is also a reminder to patrons that the event organiser takes COVID-19 safety seriously.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a supply of face masks available should patrons require them. • Consider facemask policies for staff, particularly those in customer-facing roles and for those that are likely to be interacting with vulnerable members of the community. • Promote and support use of facemaks in pre-event messaging.
High risk activities	<p>Understand and manage activities that may impact on a person's ability to keep physical distance. Dancing and alcohol consumption are key risk factors. Consider reducing the duration of the event or serve alcohol for shorter periods of time.</p> <p>Camping at events increases COVID-19 risk as patrons are likely to share living, food preparation and sanitary facilities for extended periods of time. Event camping works well where there is space to spread out. Providing security or designated staff to monitor and encourage COVID-19 safe practices is also helpful. For more information refer to the Guidance Note for COVID-19 safe camping at events.</p>
Maintaining physical distance	<p>The more space between people, the harder it is for viruses to spread. However, the denser a crowd, the harder it is for people to maintain a physical distance from each other.</p> <p>It is highly recommended to maintain a distance of at least 1.5 metres from other people or social groups.</p> <p>Ways to help people maintain physical distance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use clear visual markings such as posters, ground markings or barriers to guide people where to stand and what direction to travel in. • Consider the layout of entry and exit points, walkways, toilets, food and drink and bag checking areas. • Provide verbal reminders over the sound system. • Use visual reminders displayed on big screens or posters. • Have staff or volunteers designated to monitor patron COVID-19 safe behaviour.
Queuing and congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use multiple entry lanes and exit points. • Provide space for queuing so that walkways are not blocked. • Install temporary fencing or crowd control barriers to enable a snake-like formation. • Install directional signage or ground markers such as arrows on the ground or other areas. • Stagger entry and/or departure times. • Add additional stallholders or vendors to encourage people to spread out across the grounds. • Have staff or volunteers designated to monitor patron COVID-19 safe behaviour. <p>Examples of activities where queuing and congestion are more likely and may need to be managed differently include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • popular children activities such as face painting and competitions • food, drink and merchandise vendors • time-limited and scheduled displays and events such as competitions, races, fireworks and woodchopping • sideshow carnivals and other interactive activities • races that draw crowds to a trackside or focus area • bonfires, stages and dance party tents.

Managing patrons (cont)

KEY ACTIONS	WAYS TO REDUCE RISK
<p>Reduce over-crowding</p>	<p>Ensure there is adequate space within a venue to provide patrons with choices about where to go to maintain physical distance.</p> <p>Local council requirements for capacity of outdoor areas and indoor building occupancy limits may also apply to the venue.</p> <p>Ways to minimise the potential for large numbers of people in the one space at a time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a ticketing system so you know how many patrons will attend. • Use patron counting apps or manual clickers. • Use zones to reduce mixing. • Provide session times or 'one-in one-out' attendance management. • Install signage stating the maximum number of people that can be in an area; this helps patrons self-regulate and works well in small areas where it is easy to do a head count. • Encourage patrons to be seated; remind patrons to bring their own chair or rug, or provide seating. • Remind patrons to stay within allocated seats or spaces. • Move the event outdoors or partly outdoors. • For grandstand bleacher style seating, plan to have no more than two people per linear metre ie 50 centimetres per seat base. • Designate areas for smoking - ensure these comply with tobacco control requirements and do not cross over with toilet and food vendor areas. • Designate areas for dancing to ensure there is sufficient space or have a cap on the number of people in a dancing area. • Have a VIP section in front of the stage; these areas generally provide patrons with space to spread out and may minimise crowding near a stage. • Have staff or volunteers designated to monitor patron COVID-19 safe behaviour.

Cleaning and hygiene

KEY ACTIONS	WAYS TO REDUCE RISK
<p>Hand hygiene</p>	<p>A strong defence against viruses is for people to wash or sanitise their hands regularly and to cover their mouth and nose when coughing and/or sneezing.</p> <p>Ways to support staff, volunteers and patrons to maintain good personal hygiene:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide hygiene stations with alcohol-based hand sanitiser around the event site and at entrances. • Ensure toilets are working and bathrooms have running water for hand basins, liquid soap, disposable hand towels or dryers. • Ensure hygiene stations and bathrooms/toilets are checked regularly and restocked routinely at a frequency that is appropriate for the crowd size. • Factor patron usage and alcohol consumption into the number, location and cleaning of bathrooms, toilets and hand washing facilities. Local councils can provide further information on the number of facilities needed. • Display signs or posters in prominent locations that show good hygiene and hand washing practices. • Encourage cashless events.
<p>Venue cleaning</p>	<p>Appropriate and regular cleaning to remove viruses from surfaces is important to prevent disease transmission.</p> <p>Ways to ensure venue hygiene:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have cleaning measures in place before, during and after the event. • Focus on high touch surfaces such as door handles, chairs, tables, food and drink facilities, EFTPOS machines, rubbish bin lids and bathrooms. • Use products approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. • Ensure cleaners are trained or suitably qualified to carry out cleaning and disinfection tasks. • Have a cleaning schedule that details cleaning and disinfection methods, areas to clean, the frequency and responsible person/s. • Consider using a professional or contracted cleaner or dedicated staff. • If you have multiple session times at the event, ensure there is sufficient time between sessions for appropriate cleaning to occur. <p>Cleaning tips for workplaces can be found at Safe Work Australia: Cleaning Safe Work Australia (swa.gov.au)</p>

Workers and volunteers

KEY ACTIONS	WAYS TO REDUCE RISK
Responsible person	Designate a person to be responsible for COVID-19 safety before, during and after the event and to be a contact person if any issues arise.
COVID-19 Marshal	<p>The role of a COVID-19 Marshal is to support event organisers to implement COVID-19 safety at an event.</p> <p>The person does not need to be referred to as a marshal, this is just a term that is commonly known to the public.</p> <p>A marshal should be visible, easily identifiable, appropriately trained and over the age of 18 years.</p> <p>The types of things a marshal can help with include monitoring for unwell people, the availability and use of hand sanitiser and/or soap, cleaning logs, physical distancing, overcrowding and high risk activities.</p>
Training	<p>Staff, volunteers and COVID-19 marshals that are briefed on how COVID-19 safety will be managed at the event will be more likely to deliver it effectively.</p> <p>Have contingency plans in place if a key person becomes unwell or if there is a staff shortage.</p> <p>Ensure staff and volunteers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know what to do if patrons are non-compliant or who to report issues to, such as the responsible person or event organiser. • are made aware if other event staff, contractors, performers, or vendors become COVID-19 cases before, during or after the event.

Managing COVID-19

KEY ACTIONS	WAYS TO REDUCE RISK
Managing unwell people	<p>Be aware of staff and patrons with cold and flu like symptoms such as coughing, fatigue or signs of fever. This can be difficult to do but noticing and acting on signs of illness may make a difference to the spread of disease at the event.</p> <p>Have a plan in case a person becomes unwell or receives a positive test result during the event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all staff and volunteers know who they must report an unwell person to, such as the responsible person or event organiser.• Have a supply of rapid antigen tests (RATs) for use by staff, volunteers, performers, or patrons who develop symptoms.• Direct an unwell person to wear a facemask if they are not already doing so, remain at least 1.5 metres from any other person and to leave the venue and travel home or to their accommodation, preferably by private transport.
Managing an outbreak	<p>Public Health has worked in partnership with many event organisers to manage the impacts of an outbreak at or linked to events and can be contacted for assistance.</p> <p>If you do have an outbreak at or linked to your event, follow your normal cleaning schedule. There is no automatic need to close the entire venue while cleaning and disinfection is underway.</p>

Helpful hints

- Develop a site map to visualise the space available, areas of congestion, the flow of patrons and where to put signage and hygiene stations.
- Keep up to date with current information visit coronavirus.tas.gov.au.