

# Temporary exemption from close contact quarantine for critical workers

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Workplaces, identified as essential for the supply of critical goods and services to the community, are able to register for essential staff to be exempt from the quarantine requirement for close contacts if the staff are identified as a critical worker.

This is a contingency framework only. It only applies to businesses and workers within identified sectors. Staff are only eligible for an exemption once there is a critical staff shortage due to the quarantine requirement for close contacts.

## Eligible workplace sectors

Identified sectors which may apply for this exemption for workers include:

- Emergency services, including Tasmania Fire Service, Tasmania Police and State Emergency Services;
- Day centre procedures that fall within the meaning of the Health Services Act;
- Essential service workers at prisons, detention centres or correctional facilities;
- Power, utilities and essential infrastructure services;
- Government run and contracted public transport services;
- Commercial laundry and cleaning services (note - not in residential premises);

- Manufacturing, freight, logistics, warehousing and distribution services, relating to the supply, storage and provision of essential goods and services. This includes the packaging and stocking of supermarkets and grocery stores, butchers, bakeries, greengrocers, chemists and pharmacies;
- Workers in the freight, logistics, distribution and warehousing of mail and post, including courier and distribution services; and
- Agriculture and aquaculture services, including but not limited to services relating to biosecurity and food safety, food and fisheries production.

## Information for workplaces – before registering

Before registering an eligible workplace must:

- Have and implement a COVID Safety Plan and outbreak management plans
- Conduct a risk assessment and seek alternative solutions for staff shortages such as short-term recruitment or staggered shifts for other workers
- Know the minimum number of staff required to provide services and be able to justify that the close contact retuning to work is necessary. There must be no other reasonable alternative available.
- Implement transmission risk mitigations such as all staff wearing surgical masks, using physical distancing and the close contact taking solo breaks
- Consult with affected co-workers on the steps being taken for the close contacts return to the workplace
- Establish a review process to ensure that once the critical worker shortage has passed the close contact will return to completing their quarantine period
- Ensure that the close contact meets the requirements to register for an exemption

## Standards for the close contact workers

A close contact will only be eligible for an exemption if they work in one of the identified settings, and;

- They do not have COVID-19 (if an exempt close contact tests positive at any time the exemption is immediately revoked and that person must comply with requirements for confirmed cases, including isolation)
- They are fully vaccinated (with a TGA approved vaccine)
- They are tested for COVID-19 (via rapid antigen test) and receive a negative test result every day before they come into the workplace
- They do not have symptoms of COVID-19 (cold or flu symptoms) at any time when they are at work or before arriving at work - if so, the worker must isolate immediately and seek a test
- Their presence in the workplace is critical to the ongoing operations of the workplace/business and they cannot perform the role remotely
- They are supportive of returning to work during their quarantine period and have agreed to the conditions of exemption

## Workplaces/employers - how to register

To be granted an exemption the employer must:

- Register the worker's attendance at the workplace through WorkSafe Tasmania before the staff member arrives at work - [coronavirus.tas.gov.au/criticalworkers](https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au/criticalworkers)
- Confirm, each day that the worker intends to come to the workplace, that the worker has returned a negative COVID-19 test before they arrive at the workplace, and
- Continuously review COVID-19 safe practices and risk assessments to manage the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.

## Daily requirements for the close contact workers

Close contact workers must meet the following conditions of their exemption each day they attend work:

- Remain in quarantine when not at work.
- Transit directly to and from the workplace using private transport.
- Wear a surgical mask continuously when outside home, including outdoors and at the workplace.
- Meet daily testing requirements with a negative result before arriving at the workplace.
- Not attend work if symptomatic. If symptoms develop at work, leave immediately and have a COVID-19 test. Symptomatic workers will no longer be exempt from quarantine.

Once these requirements are met, the worker may return to the workplace. WorkSafe Tasmania will be conducting compliance check and inspections of workplaces where exemptions are in place. Penalties apply for non-compliance.

The exemption applies for a maximum of 7 days, which is the quarantine duration of a close contact. If a worker is to become a close contact again, the business must begin a new registration.

For more information visit:

[coronavirus.tas.gov.au/criticalworkers](https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au/criticalworkers)

Business Tasmania can be contacted on 1800 440 026 or email [ask@business.tas.gov.au](mailto:ask@business.tas.gov.au) for questions.