



Protocol for Domestic Border Controls – Freight Movements

The movement of domestic freight via heavy vehicles and freight trains is critical to ensuring supply chains continue to operate smoothly and individuals, businesses and service providers can access the goods they need. Any movement of freight-related workers across the country or through communities needs to be balanced with the safety of both the workforce and broader community.

States and territories may introduce additional restrictions or differential advice (e.g. on travel from a particular area) in relation to areas affected by COVID-19. Additional measures to limit the potential transmission of COVID-19 should be introduced to manage any movement in or through areas with an outbreak, and it is critical that operators ensure any employees are trained appropriately to support implementation of COVIDsafe workplans. Outside of areas affected by COVID-19, ongoing attention to health directions, hygiene measures and physical distancing is required to ensure freight does not become a vector for transmission.

Land freight routes carry substantial volumes by road and rail, with large numbers of heavy vehicles and train journeys every day. While restrictions in movements of people are important to manage the potential spread of COVID-19, disruptions to supply chains have substantial implications for the wider community. This includes ensuring delivery to regional and remote communities as well as maintaining high volumes and efficient timeframes for major urban centres.

Unanticipated delays at the border can have implications for safety on the roads and the health of critical freight workers. Heavy vehicle drivers are required by law to take regular breaks at set intervals to manage fatigue. Long delays at borders can result in either freight not meeting critical timeframes, or drivers breaching their mandated fatigue requirements, which can result in road/rail accidents or mental health and other health impacts on workers. Requiring quarantine or self-isolation of freight workers who travel for their work could have a dramatic impact on freight movement through key corridors.

Greater consistency in border management of supply chains will assist industry to comply. Where any variations exist between jurisdictions, these need to be clearly communicated to the freight and logistics industry, border control authorities and national regulators.

Operators need to ensure that all workers are familiar with their COVIDsafe workplan, public health orders in all jurisdictions in which they will work, practice good hygiene and have appropriate training to manage any risks. Workers also need to take personal responsibility for minimizing their risk of becoming a vector for transmission, both in the workplace and when not working.

This code applies to freight workers that are crossing state and territory borders for their work, including:

- drivers of any heavy vehicles over 4.5 GVM;
- rail crew; and
- support workers essential to the supply chain but not travelling in a heavy vehicle or train. This includes those workers carrying out repairs or repositioning empty trailers and prime movers to carry freight, and rail track workers.

This protocol will be regularly reviewed to take into account any emerging developments.

The following applies to state and territory governments where border controls are used:

Managing risks of freight disruption to the community and economy

- Border controls applying to heavy vehicle drivers, support workers and rail workers should be streamlined, standardised and recognised across jurisdictions wherever possible to ensure minimal disruption.
- At road border check points, a dedicated freight lane, wave through of freight or prioritised entry should be provided where road conditions and infrastructure allows to minimise delays for heavy vehicles.
- Where permits are required, the duration and conditions (including display) should be standardized and recognized across jurisdictions. Pre-approval processes and timeframes should enable companies to plan and schedule transport operations.
- A clearly identified program of targeted checks based on assessed intelligence as well as random checks should be conducted at a level that does not unreasonably delay freight.
- Permits for support workers where required should be expedited to ensure essential work, including heavy vehicle or train breakdowns, can be conducted without delay.
- Heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers should not be required to quarantine or self-isolate for 14 days following a border crossing in relevant jurisdictions, unless they develop symptoms of COVID-19, test positive to COVID-19, have been a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, or as directed by health authorities.
- COVID-19 tests should be available at no cost to heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers whether or not symptoms are present if required by this protocol.

Managing risks to the health and wellbeing of freight workers

- Heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers should continue to observe their requirements under relevant heavy vehicle or rail regulations respectively, in particular fatigue requirements.
- The National Cabinet decision in relation to rest stops will continue to apply and can be accessed at: www.infrastructure.gov.au/vehicles/vehicle_regulation/files/non-essential-services-exemption-rest-stop-facilities.pdf
- Assistance on how to locate heavy vehicle rest places and heavy vehicle COVID-19 testing locations can be found at: www.nhvr.gov.au/road-access/route-planner
- Arrangements should be made to allow heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers to change over at, or close to, a state border to enable workers to stay within a state where practical. This should be facilitated by utilising rest stop facilities where possible.

Managing risks of community transmissions from workers moving across state borders

- Any heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers with any COVID-19 symptoms present, should seek immediate COVID-19 testing and medical advice. If symptoms are present, freight workers should follow the relevant health advice regarding testing and isolation.
- Routine COVID-19 testing of heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers should be required for those who are planning on entering or leaving affected areas, or if directed by medical or health agency advice.
- Heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers must comply with relevant health orders to assist contact tracing, such as mandatory use of QR codes or keeping a record of close contacts if a QR code is not available.

- Heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers should be required to have minimal or no close person to person contact at any border check locations, truck rest stops and roadhouses, and any accommodation facilities used on a journey, where practical.
- All businesses should have a COVIDsafe workplan and ensure all staff are familiar with the plan and trained appropriately.
- State and territory government agencies should consult with other relevant governments, regulators and with industry in relation to border controls at shared borders to ensure that requirements are communicated and understood.
- State and territory governments will mutually recognise COVIDsafe workplans developed by the relevant operator.
- Prior to implementing directions pertinent to supply chains, state and territory governments should consult with industry to understand the effects and impacts of potential changes ahead of any new directions being put in place and to ensure that industry can implement any new requirements quickly and achieve strong compliance.
- State and territory governments should ensure regular training is available to industry on the development of COVIDsafe workplans, and the use of PPE.
- State and territory governments will implement appropriate compliance mechanisms or controls to ensure COVIDsafe workplans are being adhered to and implemented appropriately.

In addition to the COVIDsafe workplans that freight companies have in place, the following protocols will also apply to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers must observe the following:

- No passengers will be allowed to travel in trucks or trains unless they are freight workers, for example authorised two up teams.
- Only exit the vehicle to access rest stop facilities, refuelling, accommodation, activities directly related to the delivery or loading of freight or to meet required regulated activities, e.g. work health and safety or fatigue management.
- Follow all COVID-19 related instructions from employees at any premises accessed.
- Employ or introduce non-contact receipt and collection processes for freight when possible.
- Wash or sanitise hands at all appropriate times, but especially at entry to a premises, and prior to leaving.
- Maintain appropriate social distancing while in any premises.
- During freight journeys, heavy vehicle drivers, rail crew and support workers should avoid large venues/restaurants and use roadhouse facilities wherever possible.
- Overnight stays at accommodation should occur only when necessary to fulfil fatigue requirements. Accommodation providers must apply COVIDsafe protocols and cleaning procedures to minimise risk. Truck drivers are not permitted to use common areas in accommodation premises and will adhere to physical distancing and limit contacts.
- Appropriate PPE (such as face masks) should be used whenever physical distancing is not possible, where directed by a state or territory government, the Department of Health or Safe Work Australia, or when indicated by COVIDsafe workplans.
- If displaying symptoms of illness such as a fever, cough or sore throat do not enter a premises, advise your employer, seek medical assistance, self-isolate until you seek medical assistance and do not continue your journey.

SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The following applies to state and territory governments

- States and territories will implement a consistent approach to testing, and testing facilities for freight workers will be stood up commensurate with the testing regime.
- Test results conducted in other jurisdictions will be recognised.
- State and territory governments will offer pop-up testing facilities at areas that protect the safety of the worker and will not impact on fatigue requirements or add undue time to the journey.
- Once an outbreak has been identified, state and territory governments will consult across jurisdictions to ensure that workers are being tested in accordance with the Code. The testing requirements outlined in the Code are as follows:
 - Freight workers crossing state/territory borders are required to have a negative COVID-19 test result in a rolling 7-day period.

The following applies to heavy vehicle workers, rail crew and support workers

Freight workers should:

- Minimise all interactions on route (e.g. not attend public venues except for essential visits, such as resupply and refuelling)
- Check in at all venues and document all interactions by registering applicable QR codes or filling supplementary work diary record sheets where no electronic means of tracking is available.
- Undertake daily symptom screening
- Access education and training to recognise COVID-19 symptoms and follow relevant protocols if symptoms occur
- Access daily risk communication related to declared Commonwealth hotspots, jurisdictional lockdowns and required control measures
- For all interactions, wear masks, minimise time taken for loading and unloading and all interactions (industry to review touch points to reduce risk)
- For all interactions, comply with prevailing health orders of the jurisdiction they are in.

Advice from the Department of Health on avoiding infection, including guidance on hand hygiene, cough etiquette and social distancing is available here: www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19#protect-yourself-and-others

For general information concerning the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) please refer to the Department of Health website: www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov)

For information on work health and safety requirements please refer to the Safe Work Australia website: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces

August 2021