



Frequently asked questions For maritime workers

The vessel has been out at sea for at least 14 days, do I still need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when boarding the vessel?

Yes, you still need to wear PPE if you are going on board the vessel. All international vessels entering Western Australia (WA) are considered potentially infectious, regardless of how long they have been at sea. This is because COVID-19 can continue to circulate amongst crew for over 14 days.

Does the vessels crew need to wear PPE?

Yes, the crew need to wear surgical style masks every time WA personnel (non-crew) board the vessel. They also need to wear a mask when performing any duties that may bring them close to non-crew on the dock (eg: checking the ship's draft and securing the vessel). Physical distancing must be practised wherever possible and non-essential crew should not interact with non-crew. Any crew who is unwell must be confined to their cabin and reported to the authorities.

What PPE do I need to wear when boarding the vessel?

This will depend on the role you are performing. A single use, disposable surgical mask is required by all non-crew boarding the vessel. Other PPE may be required for occupational safety and health (OSH) reasons and this PPE must be worn to perform your role safely (e.g.: hard hats, industrial gloves). Disposable gloves are not required (unless they are required for OSH purposes) as they prevent hand hygiene from being performed effectively. Ensure hand hygiene is performed frequently when gloves are not used and after taking off PPE. It is important to avoid touching your face once you have your PPE on.

You should make sure you have enough masks and alcohol-based hand rub for the time you are on board. All PPE must be put on (donned) and taken off (doffed) in the correct order to ensure safety to the wearer. Donning and doffing posters can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

How long can I wear my mask for?

Single use, disposable surgical masks can be worn for up to four hours. After this time, they are less effective due to becoming damp with the wearer's breath. However, they must be changed sooner if they become wet or soiled.

I am performing activities dockside but do not need to have any contact with the crew. Do I need to wear PPE?

If there is no contact with the crew and no boarding of the vessel, PPE is not required for COVID-19 purposes. Ensure hand hygiene is performed after handling anything that may come

off the vessel. An exception to this is when a ship is found to have positive COVID-19 cases on board. In this instance, there will be a controlled area immediately in front of the ship where PPE may be required for dockside duties. Please note that PPE may be required for other reasons such as chemical exposures/use or OSH requirements for the duties being undertaken.

How and when do I perform hand hygiene?

You should perform hand hygiene after touching surfaces on the vessel that have been touched by the crew. Hand hygiene must also be performed during the process of donning and doffing PPE, as outlined above, or after cleaning items. Alcohol-based hand rub should not be used to sanitise gloves. Link on how to perform hand hygiene can be found [here](#).

I need to have a drink whilst onboard. How do I do this safely?

You may need to have a drink to remain hydrated whilst on the vessel in situations where you may be on the vessel for long periods of time and in climates where the temperatures can be high. It is extremely important to remain hydrated as wearing PPE can quickly cause dehydration. Some steps to do this safely are:

- take your own refreshments, hand sanitiser and additional clean PPE on board. These must be kept in a sealed container in a safe place, free from possible contamination.
- do not accept refreshments or PPE from the crew
- you will need to find a safe place to have the drink. You will need space, away from crew, to safely take off your PPE. Hand hygiene will need to be performed after removing each piece of PPE (eg: gloves off, perform hand hygiene, mask off, perform hand hygiene). This is to ensure any contamination on your hands is not put near your face or your drink.
- as PPE is removed, it must be discarded immediately. This is to ensure dirty PPE is not handled again and to ensure dirty PPE does not meet clean PPE
- once PPE is safely removed and disposed of, and hand hygiene has been performed, you can have a drink
- once you have finished, don clean PPE. Ensure hand hygiene is performed before applying new PPE.

What if I need to use my mobile phone?

If you need to use your phone you need to be alone or physically distanced from crew. You must doff and discard your PPE and perform hand hygiene according to the Donning and doffing posters can be found [here](#) and [here](#). You can access your phone. Perform hand hygiene and don clean PPE.

I need to adjust my mask How do I do this?

Ideally, masks should not be touched once they are being worn as they can be contaminated. If a mask does need adjusting, the preferred method is to perform hand hygiene, remove the mask, perform hand hygiene again and replace the mask with a clean one.

However, in some situations, masks cannot be safely changed and adjusting may be the only option. In this instance the following steps must be observed to ensure this is done safely:

- ensure there are no crew in the vicinity
- if wearing gloves, remove them and perform hand hygiene. If not wearing gloves, perform hand hygiene. This is to ensure dirty gloves or dirty hands are not put near your face.
- adjust mask
- perform hand hygiene again. This is to ensure any contamination on your hands from the mask are not spread around to yourself and other areas.

I have been invited by the crew to have lunch with them. Can I accept?

No. This will involve removal of PPE by yourself and the crew which is not recommended. Preferably you should not be eating whilst on board the vessel. If on board the vessel for extended periods of time, the 6 steps for drinking on board a vessel should be followed (see above) which include taking your own food on board, eating away from all ship crew, and safely removing PPE and then replacing it.

The crew have offered me a bottle of water. Can I accept it?

No, you should take your own refreshments on board. In fact, you should not share any items such as phones, pens, food with the crew on board.

I need to undertake work on my laptop. How can I do this safely?

- The laptop will need to be taken on board in a carrier that is cleanable, i.e. no fabric or foam.
- Take your own supply of hand sanitiser, gloves (if needed) and combined cleaning and disinfectant wipes on board. These items will need to be kept in a safe place free from contamination during the exercise.
- At the time the laptop needs to be used, wipe down the surface. If wearing gloves, remove them and perform hand hygiene. If not wearing gloves, perform hand hygiene.
- Set up laptop.
- Perform hand hygiene again.
- Perform duties. During your work you may need to perform hand hygiene again, such as if you are touching equipment on board and then need to touch the laptop again.
- When finished, perform hand hygiene, wipe the laptop and all accessories (including the carrier case) with your combined wipes, perform hand hygiene again.
- Use electronic means of communication/document sharing where possible.
- Once you have disembarked the vessel, perform hand hygiene, repeat cleaning of the laptop and all accessories and perform hand hygiene again.
- Ensure cleaning products are compatible with the equipment to be used.

I must take equipment on board the vessel to do my job. What do I do with it when I disembark?

All items that have been taken on board must be cleaned and disinfected upon leaving the vessel. This includes your phone, hard hat and laptop.

What other measures can I do to keep safe on board a vessel?

- Minimise face to face interaction with crew.
- Minimise the amount of time spent on board a vessel.
- Where possible use electronic communication in lieu of face to face contact.
- Review internal policies and guidelines around work practices when on board a vessel.
- Maintain good personal hygiene and launder work clothing daily.

Last updated 23 December 2020

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

© Department of Health 2020

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.