

# State Health Emergency Operations Centre (SHEOC) Summer Preparedness and Planning

COVID-19 pop-up and drive-through clinics



## Overview

NSW Health SHEOC COVID-19 Clinics team have assisted with coordinating operations of pop-up and drive-through COVID-19 clinics since March 2020.

SHEOC COVID-19 Clinics Team have worked in conjunction with the Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Specialty Health Networks (SHNs) to produce 3 operational documents to assist in managing COVID-19 Clinics:

- April 2020: Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of COVID-19 Assessment Clinics (H20/43292)
  - COVID-19 Assessment Clinics were the first type of COVID-19 clinics established at the start of the pandemic to decrease patient presentations to Emergency Departments and minimise the risk of spread of disease in hospitals. They are generally co-located with a hospital and conducted COVID-19 symptom screening, assessment and +/- testing
- June 2020: [Guideline for COVID-19 screening clinics \(drive-through, pop-up and mobile vans\)](#) (H20/63265)
  - COVID-19 screening clinics are the other types of clinics established to promote testing within the community and increase local testing capacity with the aim of maintaining a daily testing rate of  $\geq 100$  people per 100,000 population. These clinics are in the community and conduct COVID-19 symptom screening and testing.
- September 2020: [COVID-19 Clinics Rapid Deployment Plan](#) (H20/95019)
  - This document was created to support the rapid deployment of resources (staffing and equipment) to areas of concern within 24 hours or less to conduct rapid COVID-19 screening and testing of NSW residence

There are over 300 COVID-19 testing locations across NSW, with more opening every day. A full list of COVID-19 testing locations can be found here: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/clinics.aspx>

## Purpose

There are currently over 40 NSW Health managed drive-through clinics and over 10 pop-up clinics situated within the community, outside the traditional hospital setting. The impact of winter and wet weather conditions on the clinics were managed at a local level. The extreme weather of summer has prompted state-wide coordination in conjunction with the LHD/SHNs to assist drive-through clinics, pop-up sites and other locations which may be affected by extreme weather, to work together to manage and minimise the effects on staff, patients and COVID-19 consumables.

The Bureau of Meteorology has predicted that La Nina will likely affect the Australian climate through the end of 2020 into early 2021. There is an increased risk of storms that produce destructive wind gusts, torrential rain flooding/flash flooding and longer periods of high humidity.

## Consultation and Endorsement

Publication Date	November 2020 (CM:H20/140377)
Developed by	COVID-19 Clinics Team, State Health Emergency Operations Centre (SHEOC)
Endorsed by	Deputy Controller, State Health Emergency Operations Centre (SHEOC)
Consultation	Director Operations, State Health Emergency Operations Centre (SHEOC) Public Health Response Branch (PHRB) Deputy Controller and Laboratory Team Health Infrastructure NSW Health Pathology COVID-19 Clinic Leads, Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Specialty Health Networks (SHNs) Bureau of Meteorology Fire and Rescue NSW Director Howard Springs COVID-19 Health Facility, Northern Territory Health Service

## Options to minimise the impact of extreme weather conditions

### Staff and Patient Wellbeing

Staff should take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take precautions to not adversely affect the health and safety of other people. Staff should also comply with reasonable instructions relating to health and safety in the workplace and be alert to symptoms of heat stress in themselves and others.

Heat-related symptoms may include the following:

- Heat rash
- Heat cramps
- Dehydration
- Heat exhaustion
- Heat stroke
- Burns
- Slips/falls
- Reduced concentration
- Increased chemical uptake into the body

Symptoms of heat illness should not be ignored. Any staff with the above symptoms or who are feeling unwell should rest in a cooler environment, drink adequate quantities of water and is advised to escalate to the COVID19 safety officer or team leader, if required. First aid and/or medical attention should also be provided to anyone showing signs or symptoms of serious heat-related illness.

### Working/rest schedules

All work should be carried out in an environment in which the temperature range is comfortable for workers and suits the work they carry out. Generally, the use of a WetBulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) reading takes into account air temperature, humidity, and radiant heat pressure- factors that influence the potential for any heat-related illness. For general work environments, recommended WBGT readings for summer range from 21°C - 24°C, with air movement speeds of 0.15 - 2.5 metres/second depending on the temperature, humidity and work rate.

There are obvious limitations with being able to control the ambient temperature at drive-through and pop-up clinics since they are more prone to extreme heat. SHEOC suggests that all drive through and pop-up testing sites should maintain controlled work schedules in which staff are routinely rotated between work and rest. Below is an example of a work system that accommodates extreme weather conditions.

#### EXAMPLE:

If air temperatures exceed \*35\* degrees celsius, it is recommended that drive through COVID19 clinics consist of three zones.

1. Zone A (Hot): All swabbing staff must be clothed in full PPE. Staff should operate in Zone A for a *maximum* of 20 minutes.
2. Zone B (Warm): All administrative staff are to wear PPE appropriate for their level of contact. e.g. gloves/masks.
3. Zone C (Cool): Rest break idea. This area would be appropriate in a shaded area e.g. gazebo or inside a demountable/building/cooler room.

### Example 1:

20: 20: 20

Drive through and pop-up clinics have a heat wave system in place in which staff operate in all three zones for a maximum of 20 minutes each zone i.e. 20min in hot zone, 20 min in warm zone and 20min in cool zone.

### Example 2:

20: 30: 30

Drive through and pop-up clinics have a heat wave system in place in which staff operate for a maximum of 30 minutes in one zone i.e. 20min in hot zone, 30 min in warm zone and 30min in cool zone.

### Example 3:

20: 40: 30

Drive through and pop-up clinics have a heat wave system in place in which staff operate for a maximum of 40 minutes in one zone i.e. 20min in hot zone, 40 min in warm zone and 30min in cool zone.

\*Work schedules will also be dependent on variable site factors such as humidity, airflow and available shade.

### Clinic opening hours

In the circumstances where the ambient temperatures exceed 35 degrees celsius or as communicated through advice provided by the Bureau of Meteorology, testing site opening hours may be altered including opening and closing the clinic early or potentially introducing after hour daylight testing.

In extreme situations and upon further discussion with management, a complete cease of operations may be required if temperatures or incumbent weather conditions make it difficult to follow or maintain reasonable working conditions throughout the day.

### Shelter

It is advisable that workstations are set up where possible under cover and out of the sun. This can be facilitated by using existing structures that are on site such as undercover fixed awnings and shelters or hiring extra equipment. Homebush Drive-through clinic in Sydney Local Health District is a good example of how a fixed sporting stadium shelter has been utilised to provide extra shade for cars entering the site.

Western NSW Local Health District HD have also provided valuable insights into their current operations at drive-through testing sites, indicating that they intend to also use gazebos to provide extra shade for staff undertaking clerical and administrative work at testing sites. They have indicated that these gazebos could include UV protection covers and mesh wall sides or air vents to allow for air and reduce glare.

Drive through testing facilities should also allow for adequate shelter for staff in rest zones. This can be in the form of gazebos, demountable or fixed portable buildings that have basic amenities such as a lunchroom, storage for personal items and toilets.

Drive through and pop-up clinics should be also be well equipped with adequate stable shelters and structures that can withstand extreme weather conditions, particularly high winds. If there are severe rain conditions, flash flooding, destructive wind gusts or hail, clinic operations at drive-through or pop-up facilities can be ceased.



## Gazebos



*Rouse Hill Pop-up Drive through clinic - partnership with Western Sydney Local Health District and SydPath.*



*Bathurst Pop-up Drive through clinic*

## Drive-through Shelters



*Bondi Drive through clinic operated by St Vincent's Health Network (SydPath)*



*Other forms of shelter specifically for staff as relief from extreme weather include demountable, fixed portable buildings and air-conditioned structures.*

### **Personnel heat/sun protection items**

Staff are encouraged to speak up immediately if they are feeling distressed or unwell due to heat or extreme weather conditions, regardless of ambient temperature.

The SHEOC suggest that all staff working outdoors are provided with:

- SPF 50 sunscreen
- Wide brimmed hats
- Refillable water bottles
- Cooled bottled water/hydration sticks/ice blocks
- Shaded area to rest and cool down

Other items currently being trialled at some LHD drive-through COVID-19 clinics:

- Body cooling ice vests



### **COVID-19 Safety Officer**

A member of staff should be designated as a COVID-19 heat safety officer to ensure proper protocols relating to heat risk mitigation and staff wellbeing is promoted.

The Safety Officer should have the knowledge and authority required to monitor and direct staff.

Responsibilities may include the following:

- Remind staff to drink cool water regularly
- Remind staff to apply sunscreen and re-apply every 2 hours
- Monitor how long have been working in personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensure rotation roster is followed
- Ensure all staff are rotated equally throughout different zones requiring less or no PPE
- Monitor staff members that may be exhibiting signs of heat stress and direct them to rest in an air-conditioned/cooler area and rehydrate and continue to monitor the staff member until they are feeling improved.

## Adequate resources including first aid measures

The SHEOC recommends that drive through and pop-up testing clinics have a snake bite first aid kit, general first aid kit and readily available information relating to heat related illnesses (e.g. posters/information sheets).

\*SHEOC Communications have a number of posters that can be readily provided to LHDS/SHNs that outline the importance of first aid, COVID19 safe measures and heat mitigation strategies e.g. wearing sunscreen.

## Logistical Considerations during Hot Weather Conditions

### Storage of swabs

The viral transport medium tubes (VTM) must always be kept between 2 -25°C. Consideration should be given to the transportation of these swabs in a cool storage facility. Consideration should also be given to store swabs and VTM in a cool temperature-controlled area. Some examples include an air-conditioned room and dedicated fridges. Consideration should also be given to increased pathology delivery throughout the day to ensure safe storage of swabs.

Other facilities to accommodate cool temperatures for both storage and transportation include demountable/fixed portable buildings, fridges/mini fridges and mobile cool rooms.



*Example of a mobile cool room*

### Bottled water supplies

All pop-up and drive-through testing sites should have an ample supply and storage of water bottles available for all staff and public. This is also for any person queuing outdoors whether a pedestrian or in a vehicle.

Delivery of water bottles can be arranged from HealthShare through SHEOC Clinics team via [MOH-COVID19-Clinics@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-COVID19-Clinics@health.nsw.gov.au) . Sites should also have ample storage and refrigeration to maintain a reasonable number of cooled bottled water. Bottled water should be stored out of direct sunlight to prevent degradation of the plastic bottle.

## Other resources

LHD and SHN Disaster Managers are a resource that is available in all LHD/SHNs.

## Bushfire Preparedness and Planning

- NSW Rural Fire Service provides information relating to bush fire prone land, available at: <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/building-in-a-bush-fire-area/planning-for-bush-fire-protection/bush-fire-prone-land/check-bfpl>
- If you are planning to establish a pop up or drive through clinic, this resource can aid your risk evaluation process.

There are four simple steps to get ready for a bush fire:



### STEP 1: DISCUSS

Discuss what to do if a bush fire threatens your home.



### STEP 2: PREPARE

Prepare your home and get it ready for bush fire season.



### STEP 3: KNOW

Know the bush fire alert levels.



### STEP 4: KEEP

Keep all the bush fire information numbers, websites and the smartphone app.

## Severe Storm and Flood Planning

- NSW State Emergency Service provides a range of useful links and resources to prepare for summer. Planning should include:
  - Whether your clinic may be setup up on or near a flood plain
  - How well your clinic might withstand a severe storm
- Please see below useful links and resources:
  - NSW SES Tsunami Evacuation Area, available at <https://nswses.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d54531ab176d48c4951b7fd40c27be68>
  - NSW SES Storm Warning Information, available at <https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/stormsafe/how-you-might-be-warned-about-a-storm/>
  - Safety tips from NSW Emergency Services. Get Ready for Summer Guide, available at <https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/stormsafe/how-you-might-be-warned-about-a-storm/>

## Snake bite kits and information

- St John Ambulance Australia Snake Bite Facts Sheet, available at [https://stjohn.org.au/assets/uploads/fact%20sheets/english/Fact%20sheets\\_snake%20bite.pdf](https://stjohn.org.au/assets/uploads/fact%20sheets/english/Fact%20sheets_snake%20bite.pdf)

## Staff resources to monitor own wellbeing

- NSW Health “Beat the Heat”, available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/default.aspx>
- Urine colour chart to provide staff with an indication of how hydrated they are, available at : <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat/Pages/urine-colour-chart.aspx>

Please contact SHEOC COVID-19 Clinics team [MOH-COVID19-Clinics@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-COVID19-Clinics@health.nsw.gov.au) if you require further information on any extreme weather items.