

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Use of PPE for Maritime Workers

Who needs to read these FAQs?

These FAQs are intended for any person who is working at NSW Ports where international vessels arrive, as well as mariners on board international vessels.

People working at NSW Ports who are required to board international vessels and mariners on board international vessels who are required to disembark for essential tasks, must also comply with the [NSW Health Guideline: Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment for Maritime Workers](#). The guidelines provide recommended levels of personal protective equipment (PPE) based on the interactions maritime workers have with international crew.

These FAQs provide further information to support the [NSW Health Guideline: Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment for Maritime Workers](#).

What is donning and doffing PPE?

'Donning' is the process of putting on your PPE.

'Doffing' is when you remove and dispose of your used PPE.

It is recommended that you watch the following donning and doffing video, which takes just under 6 minutes. Although the person is in a clinical setting, the steps are the same for a person in the maritime setting.

Donning and doffing video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qk6ai3JUL9U>

What is the sequence for donning and doffing?

This table should be used as guide for the required sequence of putting on and removing PPE.

To put on your PPE, follow the procedure below:



To remove your PPE, follow the procedure below:



Not all roles will require all pieces of PPE. It is important the PPE does not interfere with the safety of your work.

What do you need in a donning and doffing station?

The donning (putting on PPE) station should be separated from the doffing (removing PPE) station to prevent contamination between the two stations. NSW Health encourages moveable/mobile stations, such as a suitable and cleanable trolley system that can be wheeled around as required.

These two areas should be separated to enable staff to put on and remove their PPE without coming into contact with each other. It is important that used PPE does not touch new/clean PPE, or touch any person trying to put new/clean PPE on.

The doffing station should have an appropriate waste disposal bin with hand sanitiser and single use detergent/disinfectant wipes located nearby. Used disposable PPE is placed into a general waste bin. Sanitise your hands immediately after removing each item of PPE.

The sequence of removing PPE aims to limit opportunities for contamination of the wearer, or the environment/surfaces around them.

What are the key points to remember when wearing a mask?

- Do not touch your mask or face, as your hands may have traces of COVID-19 on them and you can spread the virus to your nose, mouth or eyes
- Never pull your mask below your nose or chin
- Never leave your mask hanging around your neck or on top of your head
- Do not remove your mask and then put it back on
- Do not wear a cloth mask

DO

- Always wear a disposable surgical mask
- Always change your mask if it becomes moist
- Always change your mask if it is sprayed or splashed on
- Immediately perform hand hygiene if you accidentally touch your mask, and after removing your mask

Remember: After wearing, the front of your mask is potentially contaminated with COVID-19. When you need to remove your mask, make sure to grasp the ties or elastics, and remove without touching the front. Always perform hand hygiene after touching your mask, including after removing it.

What is good hand hygiene?

Hand hygiene is a way of cleaning your hands that reduces germs. There are two ways to correctly perform hand hygiene

1. Hand rub (alcohol-based hand sanitiser for 20-30 seconds)
2. Hand wash (liquid soap and running water for 40-60 seconds)

When do I need to perform hand hygiene?

Hand hygiene must be performed:

- Before putting on gloves
- After removing gloves
- Before putting on your mask
- Before touching your mask, and after removing your mask
- If you accidentally touch your mask while you are wearing it
- Before eating
- Before touching your face

Please also watch the donning and doffing video mentioned above.

If I am unsure what risk category I fit into, who do I speak to?

If you are unsure of what PPE you need, ask your employer for guidance and clarification. The level of PPE you wear must not interfere with the safety of your work. Your supervisor or manager can contact the Clinical Excellence Commission for more information via CEC-QuarantineProgram@health.nsw.gov.au if required.

What if I am an office-based staff?

If you work solely in an office with no interaction with overseas travellers, including not handling items that overseas travellers have handled, PPE is not required unless otherwise advised by NSW Health or your employer.

How long can I wear my disposable surgical mask for?

Disposable surgical masks can be worn for up to four hours. After this time, they are less effective as they become damp with the wearer's breath. However, they must be changed sooner if they become wet or soiled. If you are on board a vessel for a long period of time, make sure to bring additional PPE, hand sanitiser, as well as a sealable bag to place used PPE in.

Can I reuse PPE?

Most PPE items are single-use and should be safely disposed of after using. Reusable equipment such as reusable face shields or protective eyewear must be wiped clean with a suitable detergent and disinfectant wipe/solution, which should be available in the doffing area immediately after removal.

I do not have any contact with international persons, do I need to wear PPE?

If you do not have contact with international persons and you are not required to board a vessel, you are considered low risk. If you need to handle any items that come off a vessel, make sure to frequently use alcohol-based hand rub before and after handling them.

All persons entering a NSW wharf should be familiar with the [NSW Health Guideline: Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment for Maritime Workers](#).

I need to have a drink or have refreshments while wearing PPE. What do I do?

If you need to go on board a vessel, make sure to take your own refreshments, hand sanitiser, additional clean PPE, and a sealable bag for your used PPE with you. Do not accept refreshments or PPE from anyone on board. All food items must be suitably sealed (e.g. unopened packets or sealed containers). The following steps are to be taken when eating or drinking:

- Find a space away from crew to safely take off your PPE.
- Hand hygiene must be performed after removing each piece of PPE. This is to ensure any contamination on your hands is not put near your face or on your food/drink.
- Once PPE has been removed, it must be discarded immediately in a sealable bag. This avoids cross-contamination with clean PPE.
- Once PPE has been safely removed and disposed of, and hand hygiene has been performed, you can eat/drink.
- Once you have finished, put on the clean PPE. Always make sure to perform hand hygiene before putting on new PPE. Follow the steps for donning PPE above.

What if I need to take equipment off board?

All items that need to be taken off board after conducting the essential task must be cleaned and disinfected upon leaving the vessel. This includes laptops, phones, hard hats, etc.

The vessel has been at sea for over 14 days, do I still need to wear PPE?

Yes, PPE is still required. All international vessels and persons entering NSW from an overseas location are considered potentially infectious, regardless of how long they have been at sea.

I have been vaccinated; do I still need to wear PPE?

While vaccinations are very effective at preventing the symptoms of COVID-19, it is not yet confirmed that they will stop the spread of the virus. It is important to wear PPE after being vaccinated to prevent transmission of COVID-19.

What else can I do to protect myself while on board a vessel?

- Minimise face to face interaction with crew. Where possible, use digital communication instead of face to face contact.
- Minimise the amount of time spent on board a vessel, especially within enclosed spaces.
- Make sure you have read and are familiar with the COVID Safe Plan of both the occupier of the wharf and the master of the vessel.
- Make sure you have read and are familiar with the [NSW Health Guideline: Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment for Maritime Workers](#).
- Maintain good hand hygiene and physical distance of at least 1.5metres from international maritime crew as much as possible.
- All NSW-based maritime workers are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccination is also available to your household members. It is strongly recommended that you and your household members receive the vaccination to protect against COVID-19.