

COVID-19 advice for multi-unit dwellings



This page provides best practice public health advice for building managers, strata managers and strata committees to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their residents, and describes how current Public Health Orders apply to residential buildings in different areas.

It can also be used as a common sense guide for communities unaffected by Orders to manage their common property.

Building managers, strata managers and strata committees can download the COVID-19 Preparedness Checklist for Multi-Unit Dwellings to make sure they are equipped to stop the spread of COVID-19 in their building.

For information about local restrictions and relevant Public Health Order requirements, in particular the declaration of “general areas”, “stay-at-home areas” and “areas of concern”, please visit nsw.gov.au. For more information about COVID-19 and property management, go to fairtrading.nsw.gov.au.

Use of face masks

Please refer to the [latest rules](#) for information about where face masks must be worn while in indoor common areas of residential buildings. Please check the latest Orders for information about [exemptions to mask use](#).

Lifts and stairwells

Residents should be encouraged to maintain 1.5 metre physical distancing while waiting for a lift and during use. Use floor markings at lift entrances to prompt users to maintain physical distancing while waiting for the lift and encourage one-way flow to avoid bottlenecks occurring near lift entrance points.

Building managers, strata managers and strata committees may choose to include signage at lift entrances recommending a maximum number of people who should enter a lift in order to maintain 1.5m physical distancing. Residents should be instructed to avoid accessing lifts with others if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Gardens and courtyards

Communal gardens can remain open as a place for building residents to exercise and get fresh air. Recreation and exercise restrictions do not apply to residential premises, however gathering limits in these areas should adhere to [current visitor restrictions](#). These areas should not be accessed at any time by any person undertaking self-isolation.

Other common areas

NSW Health recommends a “common sense on common property” approach to managing these areas:

- Increasing ventilation of common areas by opening windows or leaving doors open (where safe to do so) can help to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- For outdoor pools in stay-at-home areas or areas of concern, it is strongly recommended that residential buildings operate under a [safety plan for outdoor swimming pools](#).
- Where common areas such as gyms, indoor pools or saunas are kept open, resident safety can be supported by clearly signposting capacity limits or voluntarily using a QR code check-in system.
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces such as intercom and lift buttons, hand railings and common area door handles regularly with disinfectant can reduce the spread of germs between residents.
- Closure of facilities may be considered if capacity numbers are not able to be managed, or adequate cleaning between use is not possible.
- For advice posters with further information, see links below.

Building entry and exit points (including car parks and bike racks)

Consider setting up separate exit and entry points in and out of the building to minimise contact where possible.

Entry foyer and waiting areas

Social distancing of 1.5 metres should be encouraged for entry foyer and waiting areas in all parts of NSW.

For stay-at-home areas, consider removing seats from lobbies or waiting areas to discourage people from congregating there. Where seating is required, space it at least 1.5 metres apart.

Rubbish chutes and waste areas

Consider placing hygiene stations with hand sanitiser near waste areas or rubbish chutes. Encourage residents to wash and sanitise their hands after using waste facilities.

Cleaning, construction, repairs, maintenance and safety

Within a general area, workers may enter a place of residence as well as common property to carry out work. If possible, the premises should be unoccupied while the work is being carried out.

Information about renovations, repairs, maintenance and cleaning of homes in a declared stay-at-home area is available [here](#).

Additional information is available for [tradespeople on working in residential premises](#), particularly in units where there is a COVID-19 case or contact.

Emergencies

In the case of an emergency, normal emergency evacuation protocols should be followed, and all residents should be wearing a face mask if they need to evacuate their units. It may be helpful to keep a supply of emergency face masks near the building's emergency assembly point in case residents have not been able to evacuate with their own.

Property inspections and auctions

In general areas, property inspections and auctions can occur in accordance with general density limits.

In stay-at-home areas, property inspections for the purpose of sale or lease should be carried out by appointment only, and with only one person inspecting the premises at a time. Auctions must not be carried out in person at residences in stay-at-home areas.

Short-term renting

Please check the [latest Public Health Orders](#) for rules about short-term renting and holiday homes in general and stay-at-home areas.

When a resident tests positive for COVID-19

Building managers, strata managers and strata committees are not automatically contacted when a person is notified that they have COVID-19.

If it is possible for someone with COVID-19 to self-isolate safely in their home, then they can do so. [Self-isolation guidelines](#) are provided to all COVID-19 cases and contacts, outlining requirements designed to ensure the safety of the community, including other building residents.

NSW Health contact tracers may ask the case for building or strata manager's contact details. In the event that further cases arise in residents, NSW Health may contact strata and building managers to seek assistance to contact residents quickly with public health advice. In order to make this process as smooth as possible, NSW Health asks that you ensure all residents of the building have manager contact details, and that building and strata managers have an up-to-date list of resident contact details at hand. If there are multiple cases in the building or suspected transmission may have occurred between residents on site, please seek advice from the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

Please note it is important to maintain the privacy of a positive COVID-19 case or contact and avoid disclosing their name or address to other residents.

Building quarantine or lockdown

A single case, or a small number of unrelated cases with different sources in a single building, does not mean that an apartment building will necessarily be shut down.

This decision is made by NSW Health and our partnering agencies based on a number of factors, including detailed risk assessments by the local Public Health Unit, suspected or confirmed on site transmission, and resident adherence to self-isolation requests.

The [Public Health \(COVID-19 Self-Isolation\) Order](#) contains additional provisions relating to site quarantine (apartment building lockdowns) where necessary to prevent further transmission. These provisions allow the Minister to declare a building as a "high COVID-19 risk premises" if there are two or more dwellings where at least one person is diagnosed with COVID-19 or a is close contact. If a premises is declared, the declaration lasts up to 14 days (but can be re-issued). The Order places strict limits on who can enter the building and all residents will be required to self-isolate in their home (or be transferred to a quarantine facility or medical facility). There are also directions requiring a person involved in the management of the building to provide information that will assist in the identification of affected persons.

Sharing information with NSW Health

Under the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988*, information can be used and disclosed if necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health or safety of any individual, or to public health or safety. In addition, if a declaration is in force under the Public Health (COVID-19 Self-Isolation) Order (No 3) 2021 in relation to a high risk apartment building, a person involved in the management of high COVID-19 risk premises must, at the direction of the Commissioner of Police, provide information that assists in identifying affected persons.

Deliveries for cases and contacts

If a case or close contact in isolation must receive deliveries of food, medicine or other parcels, goods should be placed outside the unit door, and only collected by the resident when the delivery person has left, and there is no one passing by. The resident should wear a mask when they open their door to pick up the delivery.

Building managers, strata managers and strata committees should develop plans to transport deliveries to individual units from the front entrance, in the event of a building quarantine, or if access is limited due to building security procedures.

If a case or contact in isolation is unable to access a delivery service or a friend who is able to assist in delivering food or medicine, they are able to contact the NSW Health Isolation Support Line on 1800 943 553. This service provides emergency assistance with food and other essentials, medication, pet care, financial support, accommodation for people experiencing domestic violence, and social support.

Garbage disposal for cases and contacts

Cases and contacts in self-isolation should not leave their apartments to dispose of rubbish. Garbage collection and disposal can be conducted by building management or a neighbour. The resident should be asked to double bag their rubbish and place it outside their door when there is no one present in the hallway or corridor. Only when they are back inside with the door closed should someone collect it and take it directly to the building's shared waste disposal area. The person collecting the garbage should wear single use gloves and a mask when conducting removal, and follow infection control hygiene advice by thoroughly washing their hands afterwards.

The same process may be followed regarding laundry.

Reporting non-compliance

If there are concerns that someone is not following the [Self-Isolation Guidelines](#) as directed by NSW Health, you may contact Crime Stoppers NSW on 1800 333 000.

Committee and strata meetings

In general areas, meetings regarding building management should be held via phone or online where possible. If it is not practicable to join remotely, measures should be taken to ensure attendees' safety, including maintaining social distancing and meeting in open areas.

In stay-at-home areas, all meetings should be held via phone or online.

Signage to display in common areas

- [Hygiene advice for people living in residential buildings](#)
- [Surface cleaning](#)
- [Elevator and lift limits](#)
- [Common area limits](#)
- [COVID-19 symptoms and testing](#)
- [Hygiene and handwashing](#)
- [Local Government Area \(LGA\) COVID-19 rules](#)
- [Masks](#)
- [Mental health](#)
- [Over 60s](#)
- [Protection and physical distancing](#)
- [Self-isolation](#)
- [Support](#)
- [Visitors](#)
- [Translated COVID-19 information](#)

Your local Public Health Unit will provide you with letters and additional signage to display if there are concerns about transmission in the building you manage.

Further information

- Visit the NSW Health Website for the latest information on [COVID-19](#)
- [NSW Govt Communication Toolkit for Strata Bodies and Building Managers](#)
- [NSW Fair Trading – COVID and Strata & Community Schemes Guidelines](#)
- [NSW Fair Trading support package for tenants and landlords](#)