

Waste at events in the time of COVID-19

OVERVIEW

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has changed almost all aspects of our daily lives. However, events can still be operated and enjoyed, provided it is safe to do so and all relevant health jurisdiction advice is adhered to.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the standard COVID-19 practices and considerations for waste management before, during and after your event.¹ At your event, you will need to ensure:

- You have a COVID-safe event plan
- There is 4 square metres of space per person (or as determined by the relevant health jurisdiction)
- People can remain 1.5m from people they do not live with
- Hand washing and sanitising facilities are available
- Frequently touched surfaces are cleaned regularly
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided to staff and volunteers.

Before planning your event, check the latest guidelines from the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) and other relevant authorities for COVID-19 specific requirements.

BEFORE THE EVENT

IDENTIFYING AND MITIGATING THE RISK OF COVID-19 SPREAD

The first step is to assess the risk of COVID-19 transmission at the event and for your front and back of house waste services. This will vary depending on whether your event is indoors or outdoors and the amount of people likely to be attending or working at the event. To do this, consider the likelihood of transmission and the relative consequences.

Once you have determined the level of risk, consider the following:

- How much space you need in back of house areas for all stallholders/staff/volunteers/contractors to remain socially distanced
- The appropriate location for wash stations and/or sanitiser stations (at least 60% ethanol) to ensure proper hand hygiene, such as near bins and stallholders at the front and back of house
- Implement a frequent cleaning schedule for all high-touch areas such as bin lids, hygiene stations and other equipment
- Provide training for staff on the safe use and storage of cleaning products (Safety Data Sheets should be made available for the team to refer to)
- Check whether there are properly operating ventilation systems that increase the circulation of outside air in any back of house or front of house storage and bin areas

¹ Note: These general practices and considerations are current as of December 2020.

- Ensure public bin infrastructure does not need to be touched when used (e.g. caps with holes for disposal of waste and recycling rather than lids that require lifting)
- If bin monitoring staff are used, make sure procedures prevent them from directly interacting with waste and help them to provide information and direction at a safe distance.

COMMUNICATING YOUR PLANS

It is important to ensure everyone is aware of your waste management and COVID-safe plans to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Before your event, consult with all land managers, stallholders, staff, volunteers and contractors to communicate the measures you have put in place to mitigate any transmission of COVID-19. Some ways you can do this are:

- Understand all relevant COVID-safe health regulations and any applied by respective Councils/land managers
- Promote hygiene measures during stallholders/staff/volunteer/contractor meetings and existing communication channels
- Promote personal hygiene at the event via signage and announcements to encourage the use of hand washing and sanitiser stations available
- Communicate your COVID-19 responsibilities and measures to all stallholders/staff/volunteers/contractors and patrons in advance of the event with other promotional material.

DURING THE EVENT

MITIGATING THE RISK OF SPREAD

During the event, the following steps should be followed:

- Monitor all bins and skips in front and back of house areas and ensure lids remain shut when they are not being used
- Activate your cleaning program and monitor bins, crockery wash stations and sanitising stations to ensure they remain clean
- Ensure promotion of personal hygiene and correct disposal of waste is maintained throughout the event
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are using PPE appropriately when handling reusable material (e.g. crockery, cups) or waste
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are social distancing.

REUSABLES ARE SAFE TO USE

Based on the guidance provided by scientists and public health professionals¹, it is safe to use re-usable cups and crockery at events when proper hygiene practices are in place. Standard dishwashing practices are sufficient to kill any viruses or bacteria. To incorporate reusables, the process can include a:

- Contactless food and drink transfer
- Swap and go container exchange program.

A reusable system where patrons bring their own cups, drink bottles or crockery for refill is not always suitable for COVID-19 practices, unless a contactless system is in place. For most events where reusables are used more than once (e.g. plates for food) a swap and go approach is recommended. This way event managers can ensure dishwashing practices are adequately sanitising the items without relying on patrons to do it themselves.

SERVICES THAT MAY BE IMPACTED

In the event that public water drinking fountains are permitted, monitoring and cleaning must be undertaken regularly. Clear messaging should also be provided to patrons to ensure bottles do not touch taps. The use of water fountains where bottles are placed on a level area and water automatically fills the bottle is considered the safest option.

Where public water drinking fountains are not permitted, alternative options include:

- Reusable cups or compostable cups at an attended water station filled by a volunteer or staff member
- Reusable cups or compostable cups at an unattended station, which is frequently monitored and cleaned
- Provision of water through stallholders.

AFTER THE EVENT

CLEAN-UP

When undertaking the final clean-up for the event, ensure all staff and volunteers are provided with the appropriate PPE. This includes:

- Rubber gloves
- Heavy duty apron
- Face mask (certified to AS 4381:2015 *Single use face masks for use in health care*)
- Tongs/litter grabber
- Enclosed sturdy shoes.

WASTE AUDIT

A professional waste audit considers all material as potentially contaminated and assumes all practices will be appropriate during COVID-19.

If your event is doing its own waste measuring and auditing, ensure:

- All PPE outlined above is worn
- Any sorting is done on a covered area (tarp on ground/table) which can all be disposed and sanitised when the audit is completed
- The audit occurs outside, in a well-ventilated area, without wind, and at a safe distance from other workers and operations
- Hygiene procedures for staff (handwashing, touching) is maintained at any breaks and at the end of the audit
- The procedures are checked by the local Council's health and safety officer.