

1. Executive Summary

Commercial passenger vehicles (CPVs) may be used to transport passengers who:

- are considered high risk, for example they have been exposed to a person who has tested positive to COVID-19 and are themselves awaiting test results;
- are suspected cases of COVID-19; or
- have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Non-emergency patient transport (NEPT) services may not always be available to transport high risk and COVID-19 positive passengers, or they may have mobility or accessibility requirements that NEPT vehicles are unable to support.

In these cases, should a CPV be utilised to provide this service, it is essential appropriate controls to protect driver, passenger and community health and safety are put into place. At a minimum these controls include appropriate physical distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE) for drivers and passengers, proper disinfection practices and appropriate treatment of waste.

2. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to outline the minimum requirements for physical distancing, PPE, cleaning and the disposal of waste for a CPV that is being used to transport high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger(s). These guidelines should be used in conjunction with other operational controls to ensure the health and safety of the driver, passenger and community.

3. Scope

These guidelines will cover:

- Vehicle preparation
- PPE
- Disposal of PPE
- Vehicle cleaning
- Operational planning, controls and assurance

These guidelines solely focus on the minimum health and safety requirements for providing a CPV service, that is, transporting a high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger from point A to point B and returning the CPV to a safe state for use in the community. Procedures and controls for safely moving a high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger to a CPV, at a pick-up point, and from a CPV, at a drop off point, must be put into place to protect the health and safety of other stakeholders and the community.

4. References

- Australian Government Department of Health – Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for COVID-19
- Victorian Department of Transport – COVID-19 public transport operators cleaning guidelines
- Department of Health and Human Services – Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) for clinical transport services, last update 09 April 2020
- Australian Commission on Safety & Quality in Health Care – Sequence for putting on and removing PPE
- Victorian Department of Transport – COVID-19 public transport operators ill passenger/staff guidelines
- Ambulance Victoria – CTS guide for vehicle cleaning
- Victorian Department of Health and Human Services – Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce COVID-19 transmission

5. Coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission

Human coronavirus diseases, such as coronavirus (COVID-19), are believed to spread from close contact with an infected person, mostly through face-to-face or between members of the same household. The time between when a person is exposed to the virus and when symptoms first appear is typically five to six days, although may range from two to 14 days.

People may also pick up the virus from surfaces contaminated by a person with the infection and then transferred by hand-to-face contact. The length of time the virus that causes coronavirus (COVID-19) can survive on inanimate surfaces varies depending on factors such as the amount of contaminated body fluid (e.g. respiratory droplets) or soiling present, and environmental temperature and humidity¹.

Studies² are looking into the current virus' ability to survive on surfaces, however, it should be noted that these figures are based on a perfect lab environment and officials say the virus survival is likely impacted by several factors, as stated above.

Some of the lab-based studies have estimated the below figures based on surface type:

Aerosol: Less than three hours
Copper: Less than four hours
Cardboard: Less than 24 hours
Stainless steel: Less than 72 hours
Plastic: Less than 72 hours.

While coronaviruses can survive on surfaces for many hours or more, they are readily inactivated by cleaning and disinfection.

These guidelines will focus on the PPE requirements to protect the health and safety of the driver and the cleaning and disinfection requirements for a CPV to return it to a safe state for use in the community.

¹ <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaningand-disinfection-in-the-community>

² National Institutes of Health, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and scientists at Princeton and UCLA

6. Personal Hygiene

While cleaning is an important measure in slowing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), implementing good personal hygiene practices is the most important way to stop the spread. Drivers (and passengers) should always ensure they adopt good hygiene practices in accordance with health guidelines at all times. For further information, [click here](#).

These practices should be regularly communicated to drivers of CPVs via alerts and other mediums (e.g. intranet, Twitter), as well as posters in common areas. The Commonwealth and State Governments are also promoting these requirements. Passenger alerts should be in place, such as in vehicle signage.

Hand hygiene is the single most important way to prevent the spread of infection:

- Soap and water can be used for hand hygiene at any time and should be used when hands are visibly soiled.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitiser (sanitiser) can be used if soap and water are not readily accessible, except when hands are visibly soiled.
- Cleaning hands regularly also helps to reduce environmental contamination.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.

Sneeze/cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene is the best defence against respiratory viruses:

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of tissue immediately, or cough/sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

7. Communication and Training Strategy

Internal

It is vitally important that drivers transporting high risk/COVID-19 positive passengers are advised of the physical distancing, PPE, cleaning and waste disposal requirements in place and are made aware of any additional measures that they need to undertake. CPV drivers are not patient transport or public health professionals and will require instruction in correctly wearing, removing and disposing of PPE as well as cleaning techniques and waste management. A coronavirus (COVID-19) specific communication and driver training program must support these guidelines.

8. Vehicle selection and preparation

When selecting a vehicle to provide service to a high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger it must be capable of allowing a minimum 1.5 metre distance between the driver and the passenger at all times, including when entering and exiting the vehicle.

A registered wheelchair accessible vehicle may be used. Other types of high occupancy vehicles such as a commuter van may also be appropriate depending on their design. A standard sedan will not meet the required physical distancing.

The use of a CPV will provide a physical distance between the driver and the passenger that meets the recommended³ 1.5 metres during the trip. Prior to the high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger entering the vehicle the driver should undertake the following preparations⁴:

- a. Complete hand hygiene using hand sanitiser.
- b. Clearly label the seats closest to the driver to prevent the COVID-19 positive passenger from sitting in these seats e.g. with a sign printed on A4 paper placed on each seat.
- c. Ensure the rear seat is clear and there are no obstructions between the door and the rear seat that would prevent the COVID-19 positive passenger from immediately sitting down.
- d. Cover cloth seats with plastic or vinyl covering which can be regularly cleaned.
- e. Open the windows slightly. Keep the windows open throughout the trip.
- f. Vehicle air conditioning should be set to fresh air.
- g. Leave the rear door of the CPV open while the vehicle is parked so the passenger can enter and exit without touching the outside of the vehicle.

9. PPE

All PPE should be worn, removed and disposed of in accordance with Attachment A⁵, the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Sequence for putting on and removing PPE.

Driver PPE

CPV drivers are not patient transport or public health professionals and should be provided with instructions to correctly wear, remove and dispose of PPE.

Driver PPE – Prior to a trip commencing

Before a COVID-19 positive passenger approaches the CPV the driver must use/dress in the following PPE⁶:

- a. Hand hygiene product: sanitiser or soap and water
- b. Gloves
- c. Surgical/P1 mask
- d. Protective eyewear should be worn when assisting passengers in and out of the vehicle. These can be cleaned with disinfectant wipes. They are NOT disposable.
- e. An outer garment (disposable gown/Tyvek suit)

³ <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-transmission-reduction-measures>

⁴ Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) for clinical transport services, last update 09 April 2020.

⁵ <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/sequence-putting-and-removing-ppe>

⁶ Ambulance Victoria CTS Guide for Vehicle Cleaning - Last updated: Health Incident Action Plan (HIAP) COVID-19 v19 – 24 April 2020. Updates to the full HIAP operational procedure can be found on the 'Urgent Information' intranet page: <https://intranet.ambulance.vic.gov.au/sites/Teams/em/Pages/Urgent-Information.aspx>

To reduce the risk of transmission of infectious agents, PPE must be used. Drivers should follow the dressing sequence and procedure for putting on PPE outlined in Attachment A⁷ – Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Sequence for putting on and removing PPE.

Driver PPE – At the completion of a trip

PPE must not be removed until the vehicle has been moved to a pre-arranged and designated cleaning area.

The driver must ensure no other person enters the CPV before it is cleaned in accordance with this guideline, see section 11 of these guidelines on cleaning.

Driver PPE – Removal of PPE

To reduce the risk of transmission of infectious agents, PPE must be used appropriately. Drivers should follow the sequence and procedure for removing PPE outlined in Attachment A – Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Sequence for putting on and removing PPE.

PPE must be disposed of in accordance with these guidelines. See section 10 on disposing of PPE.

Passenger PPE

In most cases high risk/COVID-19 positive passengers will not be public health professionals and will require instruction in correctly wearing, removing and disposing of PPE.

Before a high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger approaches the CPV the passenger must dress in the below PPE⁸:

- a. Gloves
- b. Surgical/P1 mask
- c. An outer garment (disposable gown/Tyvek suit)

PPE must remain on and correctly fitted throughout the trip. At the conclusion of the trip the high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger should not remove any PPE until outside of the CPV and directed to by a public health professional.

The driver should not direct a high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger to remove or alter their PPE at any stage.

PPE must be disposed of in accordance with these guidelines. See section 10 on disposing of PPE.

⁷ <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/sequence-putting-and-removing-ppe>

⁸ Ambulance Victoria CTS Guide for Vehicle Cleaning - Last updated: Health Incident Action Plan (HIAP) COVID-19 v19 – 24 April 2020. Updates to the full HIAP operational procedure can be found on the 'Urgent Information' intranet page: <https://intranet.ambulance.vic.gov.au/sites/Teams/em/Pages/Urgent-Information.aspx>

PPE – Vehicle cleaning

Please refer to section 11 of these guidelines for details of the PPE required for vehicle cleaning after transporting a high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger.

10. Disposal of PPE

CPV drivers are not patient transport or public health professionals and will require instruction in correctly wearing, removing and disposing of PPE.

To reduce the risk of transmission of infectious agents, PPE must be used appropriately. Drivers should follow the sequence and procedure for disposing of PPE outlined in Attachment A – Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Sequence for putting on and removing PPE.⁹

All used PPE should be placed into a sealed bag and placed into a regular bin. Hands must be washed immediately after disposing of PPE.

11. Vehicle cleaning

Vehicles must be cleaned after each high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger trip is completed and before a new passenger, high risk/COVID-19 positive or not, enters the vehicle. Vehicles should be cleaned in a pre-arranged and designated cleaning area that can accommodate the following considerations:

- The CPV should be parked in a specific area, away from regular parking and clearly marked not for use.
- Keys to the CPV should be held by the driver if they are remaining with the vehicle or by the cleaning manager.
- Consider how the cleaning effluent will be disposed of when selecting the CPV quarantine location. Try to place the quarantine area near rainwater drains or facility that can take cleaning effluent. Cleaning effluent must run to a suitable location.

Minimise the number of people who access the vehicle isolation area.

It is recommended that a specialist COVID-19 hygiene and cleaning service provider be engaged to clean the CPV after transporting a high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger. Where a service provider is not engaged, or is not available, cleaning can be undertaken by the driver, under the advice of a supervising Health Safety and Environment (HSE) team and strict adherence to PPE requirements.

Safety and PPE for cleaning

The risk when cleaning is not the same as the risk when face to face with a COVID-19 positive person who may be coughing or sneezing. However, the following PPE must be used/worn when accessing and/or cleaning a CPV that has been used to transport a high risk/COVID-19 positive passenger:

- a. Hand hygiene product: sanitiser or soap and water
- b. Gloves
- c. Surgical/P1 mask
- d. Protective eyewear. These can be cleaned with disinfectant wipes. They are NOT disposable.
- e. An outer garment (disposable gown/Tyvek suit)

⁹ <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/sequence-putting-and-removing-ppe>

Cleaners should follow the sequence and procedure for putting on and removing PPE outlined in Attachment A – Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Sequence for putting on and removing PPE.¹⁰

- Cleaning staff should be informed to avoid touching their face, especially their mouth, nose, and eyes when cleaning.
- Cleaning staff must wear the above PPE.
- Cleaners should use alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60 per cent alcohol before putting on and after removing gloves.
- Alcohol-based hand rub should also be used before and after removing the surgical mask and eye protection.

The surgical mask and eye protection act as barriers to people inadvertently touching their face with contaminated hands and fingers, whether gloved or not.

Preparation of disinfectant solution

The disinfectant used should be one for which the manufacturer claims antiviral activity, meaning it can kill the virus (such as chlorine-based disinfectants, which are commonly used – see below).

- Gloves should be worn when handling and preparing bleach solutions.
- Protective eye wear should be worn in case of splashing.
- Bleach solution should be:
 - made up daily
 - used mainly on hard, non-porous surfaces (it can damage textiles and metals).
- Sufficient time is required to kill the virus, i.e., at least 10 minutes contact time.

Household bleach comes in a variety of strengths. The concentration of active ingredient – hypochlorous acid¹¹ – can be found on the product label.

Table 1. Recipes to achieve a 1000 ppm (0.1%) bleach solution

Original strength of bleach		Disinfectant recipe		Volume in standard 10L bucket
%	Parts per million	Parts of bleach	Parts of water	
1	10,000	1	9	1000ml
2	20,000	1	19	500ml
3	30,000	1	29	333ml
4	40,000	1	39	250ml
5	50,000	1	49	200ml

¹⁰ <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/sequence-putting-and-removing-ppe>

¹¹ Hypochlorous acid (HOCl) is a weak acid formed when chlorine (Cl) dissolves in water and dissociated to hypochlorite (ClO⁻) which is the oxidising disinfectant in bleach.

Use of disinfection

- Use freshly made bleach solution and follow manufacturer's instructions for appropriate dilution and use (see table 1 for dilution instructions).
- Wipe the area with bleach solution using disposable paper towels or a disposable cloth.
- Dispose of gloves, mask and cleaning materials in accordance with section 10 of these guidelines on disposing of PPE.
- Wash hands well using soap and water and dry with disposable paper or single-use cloth towel. If water is unavailable, clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub.

Where to clean

The outside of the CPV should be washed using standard car washing equipment and process.

The interior of the CPV should be cleaned and disinfected in all areas, focusing especially on frequently touched areas as identified in table 2. For soft surfaces such as seats, remove any visible contamination with suitable cleaning products.

Table 2. Vehicle high touch areas

Commercial passenger vehicle cleaning	Includes	Cleaning standard
Internal – Driver touch areas	Steering wheel and controls, keys, door handle, window control, rear view mirror adjuster, hand brake, gear stick, heat/air conditioner controls (if used), navigation/radio controls (if used), visor, rear view mirror (if adjusted), seat belt clip, centre console (if used), glove box (if used)	Surfaces are to be wiped to ensure they are free from dirt, dust, film and residue.
Internal – Passenger touch areas	Door handle, door opening and passenger assistance buttons, railings, window control, seat belt clip, individual heat/cool controls (where applicable), visor (if applicable), glove box (if used)	Surfaces are to be wiped to ensure they are free from dirt, dust, film and residue.
Luggage area	Internal luggage storage compartment(s)	Surfaces are to be wiped to ensure they are free from dirt, dust, film and residue.
External	Door handles (including boot)	Surfaces are to be wiped to ensure they are free from dirt, dust, film and residue.

While all high risk passengers should wear PPE, in the event that they do not, then a terminal clean is required, in line with the Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for COVID-19¹².

Terminal cleaning is a complete and enhanced cleaning procedure that decontaminates an area following discharge or transfer of a patient with an infectious/communicable disease, sometimes also referred to as an 'infectious clean'. Terminal cleaning requires both thorough cleaning and disinfection for environmental decontamination.

Cleaning should be followed by or combined with a disinfectant process (see 2-step clean and 2-in-1 step clean below).

2-step clean

Physical cleaning with detergent followed by disinfection with a TGA-listed hospital-grade disinfectant with activity against viruses (according to label/product information) or a chlorine-based product such as sodium hypochlorite.

2-in-1 clean

A physical clean using a combined detergent and TGA-listed hospital-grade disinfectant with activity against viruses (according to label/product information) or a chlorine-based product such as sodium hypochlorite, where indicated for use i.e. a combined detergent/disinfectant wipe or solution.

12. Operational planning, controls and assurance

In addition to these guidelines it is essential other operational controls are in place to protect the health and safety of the driver, passenger and the community. These controls may include but are not limited to:

- A breakdown or collision procedure
- Signage to prevent a new passenger from entering the vehicle before it has been cleaned
- Drop off and pick-up procedures to ensure high risk/COVID-19 positive passengers get into the correct CPV and are met at the destination to be escorted from the CPV
- Luggage and cargo procedures to prevent the cross contamination
- Access to appropriate quantities of PPE and cleaning products
- Arrangements for the disposal of waste.

Further, drivers and cleaning personnel will need to be provided with adequate training in:

- Putting on, removing and disposing of PPE
- Preparing disinfection solutions
- Cleaning procedures and techniques
- Interacting with high risk/COVID-19 positive passengers and maintaining social distancing.

¹² <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>

Finally, quality control and assurance processes and procedures must be in place to ensure all controls are effective and compliance with training standards is being maintained. These are essential elements in providing a CPV service, and in fulfilling safety duty obligations under the *Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017*.

Attachments

Attachment A – Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Sequence for putting on and removing PPE.¹³

¹³ <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/sequence-putting-and-removing-ppe>