

Policy

ATSE

Policy

History

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Pandemic Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy addresses The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering Limited (ATSE's) responsibilities and commitments to protecting the health and safety of staff, Fellows, visitors, and participants during the event of a pandemic. While this policy will be reviewed at least annually, reviews and updates may occur more frequently to comply with any changes in Government guidelines, in particular, in the event of a live pandemic situation. If this policy is in contravention of the current government guidelines, then the government guidelines will take precedence.

Created in 2021, it focuses on COVID-19, but it may be applied in other pandemic situations and will be updated accordingly to reflect the unique circumstances of such a situation.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the ATSE Occupational Health and Safety Policy - [OHS Policy](#)

2. Responsibilities

2.1 ATSE's Responsibilities

ATSE must maintain the workplace to ensure the work environment does not put workers and others at risk of contracting COVID-19.

ATSE will do this by:

- cleaning our workplaces regularly and thoroughly,
- assessing and notifying of safe maximum room capacities to allow for physical distancing, and
- ensuring the number of people in the workplace at any given time does not exceed COVID-safe guidelines.

ATSE will also ensure provision of adequate facilities at its usual places of work to protect the team from contracting COVID-19, including:

- washroom facilities including adequate supply of soap, water, and paper towel
- hand sanitiser, where it is not possible for staff to wash their hands,
- alcohol wipes, alcohol spray, gloves, and paper towel, and
- rooms that are regularly cleaned and allow for physical distancing.
- ATSE will also provide disposable masks for use by staff and visitors.
- Cleaners have been requested to undertake increased cleaning in the office each evening, focused on high touch points

2.2 Staff Responsibilities

Those considered to be a 'vulnerable person' according to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee advice, are eligible to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic regardless of whether lock-down or quarantine arrangements are in place. This includes:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions,
- People 65 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions,
- People 70 years and older, and
- People with compromised immune systems.

If staff have other health concerns that would preclude working in the office, or caring responsibilities that make working in the office difficult, they are requested to discuss these issues and alternate arrangements with the CEO. A medical certificate may be required. Once agreed, these arrangements will be confirmed in writing via email, and the team will be informed of all arrangements so that staff whereabouts are known. It is the responsibility of all staff to refrain from compromising the health and safety of other persons at risk of contracting COVID-19.

- Each staff member is allocated a hand sanitiser and alcohol wipes for their desk and regular personal use.
- Staff who feel unwell should take the days as personal leave (sick leave) to recover and advise their supervisor as well as all staff. If a family member is unwell and requires care, then staff have the option to work from home or take carers' leave once approved by their supervisor. If staff in either situation are COVID positive, then staff are not required to take personal leave and will be given special paid COVID leave upon production of proof from a relevant health authority. The duration of leave will be assessed on a case-by-case basis until the staff member has been cleared by the health authorities. This leave will not be cumulative.
- Staff are to take their laptops home daily to ensure they can work from home at short notice if necessary, especially in the event of a lockdown.
- Any member of staff who feels unwell with COVID-19-like symptoms must stay home, be tested for COVID-19, and inform the Director, Operations that you are undertaking a test, as well as of the test results.

If a staff member is undergoing a COVID-19 test all staff will be advised accordingly, however, no names will be provided for privacy reasons. All remaining staff will continue to work in the office pending the test results. Once test results are known, this will be communicated to all staff and if positive then appropriate action will be taken.

3. Actions to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19

3.1 Vaccinations

Although not mandated by law, ATSE employees are strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 if possible, to further reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to other employees and the wider community. Employees are encouraged to report their vaccination status, or their official exemption from vaccination. Employees are not required to submit a leave request for their and any family member's vaccination appointment.

3.2 Sanitisation and Increased Cleaning

- All staff and visitors are expected to wash hands with soap or use hand sanitiser upon entry.
- Alcohol wipes are provided in all meeting rooms. At the conclusion of each meeting, staff are encouraged to wipe down the table, phone and any other items in the meeting that are touched to ensure the space is clean for the next meeting.
- Disposable gloves are available for wiping down desks, door handles etc. for those who would prefer to use these.
- Staff must follow public health guidelines in place for mandatory mask wearing in the workplace. Where there is no mandate in place, staff may choose to wear masks in the workplace, at their own discretion.
- Alcohol spray and paper towels is provided for use in the kitchen.
- Alcohol wipes are also available for use by all staff members as required.

3.3 Use of Meeting Rooms

COVID-safe physical distancing capacity signs are displayed in each meeting room and ATSE's offices spaces.

3.4 Use of Kitchens

- Staff should always maintain social distancing while in the kitchen area in both offices. As the Board room provides a larger area, staff lunches can be taken in the Board room within the room capacity limits
- Staff are asked to wash with soap or use hand sanitiser regularly, including when using the kitchen

3.5 Visitors to ATSE premises

Guests are welcome to visit ATSE offices, providing physical distancing requirements are met and the number of people in a meeting room is not exceeded. Visitors must use the QR Code when entering the ATSE offices as well as when entering the Canberra and Melbourne buildings. If the visitor is not able to check in using the QR Code, they must provide their personal details in writing (refer to the ATSE COVID-19 Privacy Collection Statement for more detail ATSE COVID-19 Privacy Collection Notice).

3.6 Exposure Sites

If either offices are considered "exposure sites" by the health authorities then this will be communicated to all staff and appropriate action taken, as recommended, or required by Government.

3.7 Workplace Contact for Infection Mitigation

The workplace contact for infection mitigation is ATSE Director, Operations.

3.8 Returning to Work after Contracting COVID-19

ATSE staff who have been isolated after having tested positive for COVID-19 can return to work when they have fully recovered and have met each State and Territory government criteria for clearance from isolation. This will be considered special COVID leave and not personal leave.

3.9 Travel

As per the ATSE Travel Policy, all staff travel must be approved by the relevant manager or CEO. During a time of pandemic, staff should abide by all state, territory and federal government travel restrictions, isolation, and testing requirements. Even when formal restrictions are not in place, staff should seek to refrain from travel unless absolutely necessary. Any potential exceptions should be assessed by the staff member and their supervisor on a case-by-case basis, with consideration to potential risk of exposing staff, Fellows, or others to infection. The case for travel should be put to the CEO for determination.

The Director, Operations will keep staff informed of current government travel directives. However, it is the responsibility of the ATSE staff member to check relevant restrictions and directives prior to travel and ensure compliance. If a staff member is caught in lockdown while travelling for work, ATSE will make every attempt to assist them to return home as quickly and safe as possible, while adhering to government guidelines. If a staff member is unable to return home due to lockdown or infection contracted while travelling for work, ATSE will bear the cost of accommodation and meals until that staff member has returned home.

If ATSE staff are required to travel in a vehicle for work, the number of staff in the vehicle is limited to two and the COVID-19 cleaning protocols outlined in this policy must be adhered to clean common surfaces in the vehicle before and after use.

During a pandemic, ATSE will not arrange or formally endorse travel for Fellows, awardees, event speakers, or any other person (who is not a member of staff).

If ATSE staff are to travel internationally for ATSE business, prior approval from the CEO is required. In the case of the CEO, approval for international travel is required from the President. Anyone travelling internationally for ATSE business must present evidence of full vaccination against COVID-19 and should check the advice outlined by the relevant authorities such as Smart Traveller and Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) prior to making and confirming any travel arrangements.

3.10 Quarantining Due to Suspected COVID-10

ATSE staff who have completed a 14-day quarantine period (either after returning from travel or because they were a close contact with a confirmed case), and who did not develop symptoms during quarantine, do not need a medical clearance to return to work. All staff will need to advise the Director Business Operations or CEO regardless.

3.11 Suspected covid-19 Case in the ATSE Offices

If ATSE management reasonably suspects a person in the office has the virus, or has been exposed to COVID-19, this creates a health risk and ATSE will follow the steps below.

If a person is confirmed as having COVID-19 or is getting tested for COVID-19, they should already be at home. However, there may be circumstances where a person in the ATSE workplace is displaying COVID-like symptoms or shares information (e.g., they have been in close contact with someone that has the virus) that causes ATSE staff to have reasonable concerns about their health and the health of others in our workplace.

The person could be a worker, Fellow, or other visitor. Where this occurs, ATSE staff are required to implement the following steps:

- Understand the situation
- To determine if it is reasonable to suspect the person may have COVID-19, respectfully raise your concern with the person.
- If your concerns are confirmed, and there is a risk they have COVID-19, proceed with the following steps:
 - Assist the person to move to an isolated area
 - If the person has serious symptoms such as difficulty breathing, call 000 for urgent medical help. Otherwise, you must take steps to prevent the person from potentially spreading the virus by isolating them from others. You must also provide appropriate PPE to the affected person, such as disposable surgical mask, and hand sanitiser and tissues. Also provide protection to anyone assisting the person.
 - Notify the Director, Operations, CEO, or other senior staff member
 - Seek advice and assess the risks

If health advice is required, please call the health direct hotline on 1800 222 222 which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Ensure that you have current contact details for the person and make a note about the areas they have been in the workplace, who they have been in close contact within

the workplace and for how long. This will inform you about risks to others and areas to clean and disinfect. This information may also assist your state and territory public health unit if they need to follow up with you later.

Transport:

- Ensure the person has transport home, to a location they can isolate, or to a medical facility if necessary.
- Wherever possible, if a person is unwell or travelling to a location for mandatory isolation, they should use a personal mode of transport to minimise exposure to others. They should not use public transport unless there is no other option.
- If the person needs to use a taxi, uber or ride share service (or public transport) then the person should avoid contact with others including the driver to the extent possible. This includes:
 - wearing a surgical mask (if the person does not have a mask then one will be provided) avoiding direct contact with the driver, including sitting in the back seat to achieve as much separation as is reasonably possible
 - practising good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze hygiene, and
 - paying by card
 - Clean and disinfect
- Close off the affected areas and do not let others use or enter them until they have been cleaned and disinfected. Open outside doors and windows if possible, to increase air flow.
- All areas, for example offices, bathrooms, kitchens and common areas and equipment or PPE that were used by the person concerned must then be thoroughly cleaned and disinfecte
- Further information on the correct protocols for cleaning and disinfecting can be found on the SafeWork Australia website. These guidelines will be referenced (if required) to cleaners and any other contractor visiting ATSE premises
- Identify and tell close contacts

The public health units in each state and territory will identify close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case and provide them with instructions, for example, in relation to quarantine requirements. In the meantime, for the purposes of undertaking a workplace risk assessment and to assist your state and territory public health unit, consider who the affected person may have had recent close contact with.

If instructed by health officials, tell close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID- 19 and the requirements for quarantine. You must maintain the privacy of all individuals involved. Seek information about the areas that close contacts have been in the workplace, who they have been in close contact within the workplace and for how long. This will inform you about possible risks to others, and additional areas that may also need to be cleaned and disinfected.

4. COVID-19 Work Health and Safety Incident Notification

The Director, Operations will notify WorkSafe in the relevant State or Territory if it is suspected that a person who has attended ATSE premises may have contracted COVID-19.

5. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

ATSE is aware that the COVID-19 situation and restrictions can be stressful and isolating, and we encourage all staff to avail themselves of the EAP. Download the Uprise App or call 1300 209 371.

6. ATSE Meetings and Events

During a pandemic, ATSE will hold meetings and events virtually by default. Any proposed in-person or hybrid (in-person and virtual) event will be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on the pandemic situation in the relevant state or territory, and locality.

If an in-person event is to proceed, it is ATSE's responsibility to ensure that all COVID-safe protocols are in place to ensure the safety of staff, Fellows, and other attendees, including adherence to capacity and gathering restrictions.

7. Endorsement and Review

This policy will be actively monitored / reviewed as pandemic situations evolve.

COVID-19 Helpline – ACT - (02) 6207 7244 (8am-8pm daily)

COVID-19 Helpline – Victoria – 1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days per week)

General Enquiries - National Coronavirus Helpline – 1800 020 080 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

Health Advice – Department of Health – 1800 022 222

Employee Assistance Program - 1300 209 371