

Building and plumbing work to continue with precautions

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) is urging Victorians to take extra precautions to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) when using a builder or plumber.

The Victorian Government has designated construction work as essential, meaning builders, plumbers and other trades are still carrying out jobs in homes, other buildings and on construction sites.

Trades must comply with the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidelines for the Building and Construction Industry](#), which have been endorsed by building and construction unions and employer and industry associations.

Builders, plumbers and other trades can continue to work in private homes and buildings if the owner or tenant is not self-isolating or in quarantine.

However, if the owner or tenant has coronavirus, feels unwell with a fever or has cold or flu-like symptoms, they should postpone any non-urgent work.

An exception exists for any building or plumbing issues that pose a serious risk to health or safety.

For these urgent or emergency cases, homeowners are permitted to call a builder or plumber, but they must inform the tradesperson they are self-isolating, so the trade can take all necessary safety precautions.

Urgent works include blocked or burst pipes, blocked stormwater drains, roof leaks, collapsed balconies, ceilings or walls, faulty heaters, gas leaks, no hot water and non-functional smoke alarms.

The VBA's State Building Surveyor, Andrew Cialini, said Victoria's building practitioners and trades were following the recommended safety precautions when attending to jobs at people's homes.

"Builders and plumbers are making important changes to their work practices to help reduce the risk of infection and keep everyone safe," said Mr Cialini.

All trades must take precautions to reduce the spread of infection. These include:

- sanitising their hands before entering a home and frequently while they are there
- staying at least 1.5 metres from other people – or wearing a mask if this is not possible
- working with one person per four square metres of space, whenever possible
- covering their nose and mouth with their upper arm, a flexed elbow or a tissue when coughing and sneezing, then washing their hands afterwards
- wiping down their tools and equipment with alcohol wipes.

"By handwashing more frequently, adopting physical distancing and wearing personal protective equipment, Victoria's trades are keeping this vital industry open," Mr Cialini said.

"Builders and plumbers understand the importance of workplace health and safety, and now more than ever, it's important we all follow the government's advice to keep people safe."

Homeowners looking for a registered building practitioner or a registered or licensed plumber should visit vba.vic.gov.au/find to find a tradesperson in their local area.

VBA inspectors are continuing to inspect building and plumbing work across the state for compliance.

"Our inspectors have a critical public safety function, so they are out on the street, inspecting properties. They'll be taking all necessary precautions to keep themselves and others safe," said Mr Cialini.

For further information on the coronavirus, visit www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au.