

21 May 2020

Circular to Shareholders, Clerks & Tenants - New guidance on social distancing in lifts

I refer to my circular of 7 May 2020 regarding the Safe Work Australia Guidelines for social distancing when using lifts.

The email below from the Property Council summarises the updated guidelines from Safe Work Australia for the use of lifts and contains links to the relevant page on the Safe Work Australia website.

In addition, Members will note from the Bar Association's Inbrief Newsletter that was circulated yesterday, that over the coming weeks the NSW Supreme Court are moving towards resuming face-to-face hearings which will have a significant impact on the lifts in both CCL's buildings and the Courts. To assist with managing lift congestion during peak periods, Lee Albert from CCL will contact all Floor Clerks over the coming days to discuss this matter, provide guidance as required and also obtain feedback from Clerks.

Members will be aware that CCL has introduced additional cleaning measures throughout the buildings which extend to common touch point cleaning of all lift buttons and all fire stairs. Over the coming weeks CCL will also be monitoring pedestrian traffic in the foyers and will implement additional precautions if necessary.

I also take this opportunity to remind Members & Clerks that it is possible to use the **rear fire stairs** in Wentworth & Selborne Chambers to gain access to Floors provided you have a valid access card or tag. CCL encourages Members and Clerks to use the fire stairs wherever possible and it would be particularly helpful to use the fire stairs when possible to alleviate congestion in the lifts and foyers. All four fire stairs in Wentworth & Selborne Chambers are suitable to use to leave the building.

CCL is also updating its Infectious Diseases Management Plan to incorporate the Safe Work Australia guidelines for lifts, this will be available on our website over the next couple of days.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information in relation to this matter.

Kind regards,

Debbie George

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ADVOCACY ALERT

NEW GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL DISTANCING IN LIFTS

WEDS 20 MAY 2020

NATIONAL

- Updated guidance from Safe Work Australia removes strict requirement to provide 4 square metres of space per person inside lifts
- Strong measures must be taken to minimise the risk of exposure including good hygiene, signage and regular cleaning
- Ensure social distancing is maintained in lobbies and lift wells to the extent possible

The Property Council have been strongly engaged on the issue of lifting and related guidance on social distancing as our members continue to plan for a staged return to the workplace. Following frequent discussions with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and Safe Work Australia (SWA) we are pleased to confirm there is now revised guidance available on the [SWA website](#) that provides much needed certainty for building owners, managers and their tenants.

The revised guidance emphasises the need to take a range of complementary measures to mitigate the risk of queueing and the risk of exposure to COVID-19 within lifts. These include the need to maintain working from home arrangements for some workers, stagger arrival times to workplaces to avoid travel peaks and using technology available to reprogram lifts for more efficient travel. SWA also advises appropriate signage within lifts, regular cleaning of high touch points and good hygiene in addition to social distancing to minimise risk of exposure.

The revised guidance does not include the previous strict requirement to observe a distance of 1.5m between people and provide 4 square metres of space per person within lifts. Application of this strict requirement, particularly in large office buildings, would lead to congestion in

lobby areas and significant wait times for lift travel when the duration of travel within lifts is short compared to public transport.

The Detail

Copied below is the full guidance now provided by SWA on lifts which you can view on their website [here](#). We strongly encourage building owners and managers to review this guidance and take the necessary steps to implement these measures in consultation with workers and their health and safety representatives.

Safe Work Australia guidance on lifts

- Even if workers and others only spend a short amount of time in a lift each day, there is still a risk of exposure to COVID-19 that you must eliminate or minimise so far as reasonably practicable.
 - See our information on the meaning of [reasonably practicable](#).
- There is no requirement to provide 4 square metres of space per person in lifts, however you must still ensure, as far as you reasonably can, that people maintain physical distancing in lifts and lift waiting areas.
- Remember, you must consult with workers and their representatives (e.g. health and safety representatives (HSRs)) on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19. This includes consulting workers and their representatives on what control measures to put in place to minimise their risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, including when using lifts.
- You must also consult with the building owner/manager and other employers in the building about the control measures to be implemented to address the risk of COVID-19. You may not be able to implement all of the control measures yourself but must work with others to ensure those measures are put in place.

What can I do to manage the risk of COVID-19 transmission in lifts?

- Safe use of lifts is best achieved through a combination of measures, determined in consultation with workers, including those that control the number of people needing to use a lift at any one time. This includes:

- reducing the number of workers arriving and leaving buildings and using lifts in peak periods, where possible (e.g. stagger start and finish times for workers by 10-15 minutes per team or group)
- maintaining working from home arrangements for some staff (where this works for both you and your workers). This could include splitting the workforce into teams with alternating days in the workplace (e.g rotate teams so they are one week in the office and the other week at home), and
- changing lift programming to facilitate more efficient flow of users – e.g. decrease the time that doors stay open on each floor (where safe to do so) or where there are multiple lifts, assign specific lifts to certain floors based on demand (e.g. lift A to service floors 1-5, lift B to service floors 6-8 etc).
- Where workers and others use lifts it is still important that they physically distance themselves to the extent possible when waiting for a lift and when in the lift. You must do what you reasonably can to ensure crowding in and around lifts does not occur.
- In the lift lobby or waiting area:
 - ensure workers and others maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres, to the extent possible
 - implement measures at waiting areas for lifts, such as floor markings or queuing systems. Also create specific pathways and movement flows for those exiting the lifts where possible (you may need to consult with your building manager or other employers in the building to ensure this occurs). You could consider engaging someone to monitor compliance with physical distancing measures where appropriate
 - place signage around lift waiting areas reminding users to practice physical distancing and good hygiene while waiting for and using lifts, including to wait for another lift if the lift is full
 - display an advisory passenger limit for each lift – these limits could be temporarily adjusted up by one or two during peak periods where additional demand is unavoidable (subject to it not leading to overcrowding in lifts) to facilitate extra movement of workers and to prevent overcrowding in waiting areas. This may result in fewer persons travelling in a lift at any one time to ensure workers and others maximise physical distance from each other, to the extent possible
- Within lifts:

- users of lifts must maintain physical distancing, to the extent possible. Lifts must not be overcrowded and users should avoid touching other users.
- workers must practice good hygiene in lifts. If they do need to cough or sneeze during a journey they must do so into their arm or a clean tissue.
- place signage in the lift reminding workers and others to practice good hygiene by washing their hands, or where this is not possible, using appropriate hand sanitiser, after exiting the lift, particularly if they touched lift buttons, rails or doors – see also our information on hygiene
- implement regular cleaning of high touchpoints such as lift buttons and railings – see also our information on cleaning.
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- Staff must not to come into work, including using lifts, if they are unwell.

New risks

- In some cases, depending on the design of a building, stairs may be an option to reduce demand on lifts. If workers and others are to use stairwells or emergency exits as an alternative to using lifts, you must identify and address any new risks that may arise. For example:
 - the increased risk of slips, trips and falls particularly if the stairs are narrow and dimly lit
 - the risk that arises when opening and closing heavy fire doors, and
 - the risk that a person may become trapped in the stairwell.
- You must also consider workers' compensation arrangements and whether your contract of tenancy allows for workers to use stairs, other than in an emergency.
- You must also consider how other existing WHS measures will be impacted if you allow workers and others to use stairwells or emergency exits. For example:
 - does increased usage of emergency exits and stairwells impact your emergency plans and procedures? See also our [information on emergency plans](#)
 - will stairwell usage increase the risk of fire doors being left open?

Further information

Find the full guidance for COVIDSafe workplaces from Safe Work Australia [here](#).

See our media statement on the revised lift guidance [here](#).

If you have any questions please contact Frankie Muskovic, National Policy Manager – Sustainability and Regulatory Affairs at fmuskovic@propertycouncil.com.au

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