



Q & A with Lendlease - a building and construction company's management of COVID-19

The Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner (OFSC) spoke with Lendlease Building's Head of Environment, Health and Safety, Ross Trethewey regarding the company's management of COVID-19 as the pandemic emerged, and the steps they took in the wake of two confirmed COVID-19 cases on one of their worksites.

OFSC: Thank you for taking the time to chat to us Ross. We understand that Lendlease has some insights and lessons to share from its experiences over the past few months since COVID-19 emerged as a risk within Australia. Can you tell us, what was Lendlease's general approach to health and safety prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Lendlease: The health and safety of our people has always been a core value at Lendlease. In order to realise our vision to leave a legacy people care about, and to be an organisation people want to work with and for, we manage and measure our impact and the value we create in five focus areas: Health and Safety, Financial, Our Customers, Our People and Sustainability. Our approach to achieve these values comprises a comprehensive environment, health and safety management system that focuses on the key elements of risk related to construction project delivery.

OFSC: As the COVID-19 situation unfolded, what steps did Lendlease take to ensure the health and safety of its workforce?

Lendlease: Lendlease ensured that all sites remained focused on the health, safety and wellbeing of our workers. We established a national team of senior management personnel to manage our COVID-19 response across all our Australian projects and offices. The response team continues to meet regularly to discuss the changing face of the pandemic, as well as any updates to Government advice and we subsequently adopt any changes to our systems and processes for continuous improvement and a standard national approach. We very quickly developed management and implementation guidelines to inform our projects of the expectations and requirements for dealing with COVID-19 so that we could ensure a consistent approach across all our operations. To that end, we have devised a series of initiatives to minimise the risk of exposure and reduce the spread of COVID-19 across our projects including:

- The promotion of leading hygiene practices, increased frequency of cleaning in common areas and amenities, and ensuring hand sanitisers are available for our workforce.
- The segregation of our workforce to minimise large gatherings and co-mingling of work teams. This includes implementing staggered shifts on larger sites, increasing the number and location of amenity sheds, reducing worker numbers for face to face meetings, providing additional break facilities to cater to smaller groups, and minimised interactions with groups of people from multiple locations.
- The development of a set of physical distancing guidelines to inform our teams on how to approach workplace management and work tasks in a physically distant manner.
- The development and implementation of a procedure and tracking tool to track and manage suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- The provision of communication tools like toolbox and team talks to ensure the messaging was cascaded and consistent.
- The mobilisation of our global procurement group to assist in sourcing bulk supplies of sanitiser, masks and cleaning products.

We are also trialling temperature testing on some projects across Australia as a way of detecting those workers that may have an elevated temperature and require medical attention.

OFSC: How did having a robust documented safety system assist in responding to COVID-19?

Lendlease: Being able to apply Lendlease's existing risk management approach as soon as the crisis began was a fundamental component in our ability to effectively respond in a timely manner to COVID-19. As part of Lendlease's embedded risk management framework, having a complete and documented risk management approach was key to our ability to respond to the additional risks presented by COVID-19, and it enabled us to implement preventative controls based on workforce engagement and consultation. As such, COVID-19 has now become another risk we need to prepare for and mitigate against on our construction sites.

OFSC: Lendlease has identified two confirmed cases of COVID-19 on your Barangaroo site. What steps did the company take in the wake of confirmed cases?

Lendlease: As soon as Lendlease was advised of each of the subcontractor employees that had tested positive, we used our pre-determined procedure to undertake a detailed investigation of the specific worker's movements and confirmed:

1. The worker was in self-isolation and receiving medical attention. Lendlease continued to monitor the worker's health and wellbeing;
2. As a result of the COVID-19 protocols and site segregation initiatives and regular work teams of the same people, we identified the worker had come into limited contact with other personnel on the construction site and worked within a contained work zone;
3. Personnel working on the construction site, who may have come into close contact with the relevant worker were identified, notified, and directed to self-isolate;
4. Contact with the National COVID-19 Hotline and the Department of Health revealed they were at capacity managing public cases of the virus and in some instances were only able to make contact with the worker who was a confirmed case some time after their diagnosis. As a result, the mapping of the worker's whereabouts on site and who they were in contact with was left to the site team to manage, record and track. Lendlease developed a national approach for its construction sites to manage this process.
5. The specific work areas in which the worker had undertaken his work activities, as well as access and egress corridors and vertical transportation he had used, were closed until a decontamination clean in line with Australian Government Health Department COVID-19 cleaning and disinfection guidelines was undertaken. A Hygienist was engaged to review the proposed cleaning method, to have oversight of its implementation and to randomly sample for the absence of bacteria after the clean to provide assurance of the adequacy of the clean to the areas nominated.

Lendlease continues to monitor this situation and implement any further actions as necessary. Lendlease has continued to consult with the project team and all stakeholders involved with the construction site including the Regulator and continues to comply with the recommendations of the Department of Health.

OFSC: What practical measures have Lendlease introduced that other companies could learn from regarding COVID-19 management?

Lendlease: We would highlight the importance of being able to map where a worker had been on the construction site in the days prior to becoming a confirmed case emerged as a key learning. Being able to identify their work area, the amenities they used for meals and changing, the vertical transportation they used, their access routes though the site, who they worked with and those they may have been in close contact with was vital. The segregation measures that had been put in place were critical to allowing this to happen.

Additionally, Lendlease developed and implemented a questionnaire to help in determining this information, including the definition of close contact so that workers are clear on its meaning (see the questionnaire in this document's appendix). We also found that being agile and proactive was critical in our response to managing COVID-19 and having existing risk management processes embedded within our organisation as part of our management system was critical.

Lastly, we have been sharing information from our other international operations in Singapore, Malaysia, and the UK, and are developing our plans and best practice based on their experiences. Our teams have responded positively to the decisive and clear guidance that has been provided.

OFSC: Can you outline how the focus on worker safety is being maintained in the current environment?

Lendlease: Promoting the health and safety of our workforce is very important to us and we are continuously communicating with our team across multiple channels, providing the latest Australian and World Health Organisation information. We continue to risk assess all work activities and any potential for close contact between workers, which has resulted in alterations to work activities and work processes to achieve physical distancing. From Toolbox Talks between our Operations Managers and individual site teams before construction shifts commence each morning, to displaying signage about leading practice hygiene in breakout rooms to verbal and written communications via email and text, we are regularly keeping our workforce updated about safety and wellbeing measures.

Importantly, we are promoting access to employee assistance support services and mental health support to ensure our workforce has someone they can talk to regarding the many questions about all aspects of our lives this pandemic is generating. We have also set the challenge to all of our people managers to regularly stay in contact with their staff to discuss personal and work-related challenges and discuss solutions.

We are now moving to normalise our new operational mode to ensure the ongoing focus on managing COVID-19 until such time as a vaccine is available.

OFSC: Lastly, is there any additional information or learnings that Lendlease wish to share regarding its COVID-19 experience?

Lendlease: When we have encountered a confirmed case, having a uniform questionnaire for our workforce has helped eliminate some of the confusion regarding the definition of 'close contact' and the challenges in mapping the areas on site frequented by the worker in the days prior to becoming a confirmed case.

There was initially some general confusion regarding what constitutes a decontamination clean in the event of a confirmed case and the cleaning method required. We relied on the Government guidelines to ensure hospital grade disinfectant is applied to a cleaned surface and have used a variety of different general cleaning methods and in some cases have used the application of misting or clouding for the application of disinfectant products across large areas to achieve the Government guidelines requirements. Engaging a Hygienist to be part of the process has proven beneficial though we recognise this is not a mandatory requirement.

Readiness for different scenarios has been a key success and leveraging our international experience has allowed us to be agile and responsive. The situation was changing daily in the initial stages, so being agile and responsive was also very important.

The OFSC would like to thank Ross Trethewy and Lendlease for their participation in this interview. We hope that building and construction companies find value in reading about the lessons learned by an accredited company in this unique and unpredictable time.

For further information:

- Visit the OFSC website at www.fsc.gov.au
- Contact the FSC Assist Line on **1800 652 500**
- Contact the OFSC via email at ofsc@jobs.gov.au
- Visit Lendlease at www.lendlease.com/au/

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Project: _____

Date: _____

At Lendlease we want to ensure the health and safety of your workplace and prevent exposure to COVID-19.

In order for Lendlease to do that, I need to ask you as a Confirmed Case, a number of important questions regarding your exposure to the virus.

Some of the questions are not those we would generally ask of one another; however, I am asking you these questions to help gather critical information that means we can make the best decisions as to how we operate our workplace going forward and prevent the spread of the virus.

It is essential that you answer the following questions honestly and openly, I will ensure that all information is retained in accordance with our legal and privacy obligations.

Name:		Date of Birth:	
Employer:		Contact Number:	

1. When did you notice the symptoms of COVID-19 e.g. sore throat, temperature/fever, cough?

2. Where and when did you undertake a test for COVID-19?

3. When did you get the Confirmed Case results for the COVID-19 test?

4. What advice have you received from your doctor / medical practitioner or Department of Health?

5. What date and time were you last on the site?

6. What lunchroom did you use?

7. Did you purchase food from the canteen, vending machines or bring your own?

8. Which lifts / hoists did you use?

9. Which toilet or toilet facilities did you use?

10. What levels, areas / zones of the building did you work in over the last 7 days?

11. Did you attend the induction room or first aid room within the last 7 days?

12. Have you been in close contact with other workers over the past 7 days? *"Close Contact" means in direct physical contact or you worked face to face with another worker (within 1.5m) for greater than 15 minutes, or you have been in the same enclosed space with other workers for at least 2 hours".*

13. Have you been in close contact as defined above with other workers from other subcontractors or Lendlease?

14. Have you been on any other Lendlease or other construction projects in the past 7 days?

15. Who did you eat with over the past 7 days?

16. How did you travel to/from work? And with whom?

17. Do you socialise with workers from the project outside of work?

18. Do you have any information or ideas on where you may have contracted the virus?

19. Do you have any other information related to the potential exposure to the spread of COVID-19 that you would like to share with us?

Completed by	Signature	Date	Contact No.
[insert Lendlease name]			

SITE SPECIFIC FLOOR PLAN/S [INSERT]

Please identify / map your path of travel whilst on site.

Example

