

**ASBG Email to Martin Puddey, Unit Head, Regulatory Practice Unit, NSW EPA
Conflict between PIRMP testing and training and the COVID19 contact avoidance measures**

From: Andrew ASBG [mailto:andrew@asbg.net.au]

Sent: Wednesday, 18 March 2020 5:30 PM

To: 'Martin Puddey'

Subject: Conflict between PIRMP testing and training and the COVID19 contact avoidance measures

Hi Martin

ASBG is getting feedback from its members on how to resolve the conflict between PIRMP testing and training requirements and the impact of COVID19 contact avoidance measures.

ASBG also notes the [Victorian EPA has instructed](#) all duty holders:

If your activities are conducted under an EPA licence or other approval, all conditions remain in force and must be complied with.

However, Victorian environmental laws do not legislate training and testing as required for NSW PIRMP laws.

So advice on how to proceed in compliance with both PIRMP and COVID19 requirements is sought from the NSW EPA.

One approach to address this issue is splitting EPL holders into two main groups:

1. Sites which are shutdown or virtually shut down
2. Sites which are considered an essential service such as utilities, waste management, telecommunications, fuel industry etc, and must continue to operate at normal capacity

Many companies and organisations including Government Enterprises and Councils are introducing their own procedures on COVID19.

Obviously a Government requirement on COVID19 can be a legal requirement, which may need to be worked into the overall Government response to this health crisis.

Many sites are simply banning training and face-to-face meetings of any or above a limited number. As a consequence, both PIRMP training requirements and PIRMP Testing (non-desktop) are caught between compliance with such internal policies and meeting the legal requirements under PIRMP laws.

ASBG proposes that for Group 1 sites (above) the EPA permit at least a one month period extension of the 12 month requirement of PIRMP testing and training requirements.

For Group 2, as these sites are continuing to operate, they are running at a business as usual risk level unlike Group 1 sites.

Consequently, extension of the 12 month requirement for PIRMP testing and training may be either shorter or not provided.

Risks for essential training and testing can be managed, for example:

- Training could be conducted in a room with the 1.5 m separation distances
- Health checks (no persons with symptoms attend) hand washing and other hygiene practices are observed.
- Training is limited to a maximum number of people, perhaps limited also by training room size. At this time of writing 100 is the Commonwealth Governments maximum number permitted.
- Testing is usually based around spill kit training and use of other measures, depending on the scenario used. Here the 1.5m separation distances are more easily attained in an outdoor setting.

A clear position by the EPA would assist on what EPL sites can do to manage conflicts with their own procedures and Government requirements if they arise.

ASBG also notes that many types of training will be vitally important during the COVID19 crisis. More medical staff and replacement essential workers will need to be trained to replace those who fall ill. ASBG expects many other Government agencies will be working on how to conduct effective training while minimising viral transmission.

This could include EPA's incident response staff.

Should you require further explanation of this issue please contact me.

Yours Sincerely

Andrew Doig

CEO

Australian Sustainable Business Group (ASBG)

T. +612 9453 3348

F. 1300 303 816

M. 0407 238 258

A. (PO Box 326, Willoughby NSW 2068)

E. andrew@asbg.net.au

W. www.asbg.net.au