



CICA – Vic / Tas Branch
Crane Safety Bulletin
#263 April 2019



A bit of Perspective and rationality in these troubled times.

Given the overwhelming and ever-changing amount of COVID-19 related information and updates going around about what we should and shouldn't be doing, I thought I'd write a different sort of bulletin.

Construction is fortunately viewed as an essential industry and while some projects have been postponed, most crane companies are still operating. Many are swamped with work from clients keen to complete projects in case further restrictions are imposed.

No one knows where we will end up once normality returns, or what 'normality' will look like. What we do know is what we are faced with in the here and now. We might be forced to stop work soon like other industries, but if we can continue to function responsible and safely in our day to day roles as crane operators and crew, we will definitely minimise and possibly even prevent any lost time or potential layoffs/stand downs.

Generally, viruses like COVID-19 and other illnesses represent more of a threat to older workers while younger workers may be 'carriers' and suffer less severe symptoms, if any at all. This is not a new concept and generally the older we are, the more pre-existing conditions we are likely to have and the more care we need to take with our health. Statistics both local and international are telling us that the average age of the COVID-19 related deaths is well above 70 with the majority having at least one and often many major pre-existing medical conditions. Fortunately this differs vastly from the [H1N1 pandemic of 2009](#) where 80% of the 575,000 world wide deaths were in fact under 65 years old.

The advice we've been given to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is to practice good personal hygiene and keep your distance from people (especially sick people) where possible. Coming into the flu season this advice is timely, bearing in mind that the flu and pneumonia kill roughly [2,500](#) Australians every year while influenza lost work time, costs our economy millions of dollars annually. If we want to avoid all other illnesses in the coronavirus 'family' (that includes the common cold), healthy diets, moderate alcohol intake and plenty of rest are proven to reduce frequency and severity of infection.

There are plenty of health experts on TV bombarding us with news, stats and warnings about COVID-19. The effect of these constant and unrelenting messages combined with isolation can have an impact on our mental health. This is at a time when we have an existing mental health crisis already. In our industry alone, we are more likely to commit suicide than die in a workplace

accident. The last thing we need is extra anxiety and stress about factors out of our control.

It's up to us to make sure we focus on the things we can control in situations like these. Your mind is probably the most powerful tool you have and it's time to start training it to work for you not against you. *Beyond Blue* and *MindSpot* have teamed up to present the following [tips on how to use yours for the better not worse in these difficult times](#).

The bottom line is: Humans are susceptible to many different infectious diseases, including coronavirus (COVID-19). Worrying about diseases is a normal reaction but, excessive worrying about infectious diseases can affect both our physical and our mental health. This document describes practical psychological skills to help you and your loved one's cope with anxiety and worry about infectious diseases.

The main focus of the 10 separate tips is based on perspective, rationale, mindfulness and proactivity. We have control on what we focus our attention on, and if we do this well, we'll be happier and healthier.

It's not about burying our heads in the sand or distracting ourselves with entertainment. We do need to stay informed about what we are allowed and not allowed to be doing and what risks are out there. It's best to stick to the government websites and programming as they are the most informed and the origin of most of the information anyway. What we don't want is to sit in front of our TV's or on our smart phones once we leave work waiting for updates as the repetition and constant reinterpreting of old information is not much use to us and potentially harmful. We need to be careful about how we receive the news from other countries. Unless we have relatives caught up overseas, it's best to focus on our local challenges and not the common falsehoods circulating such as that 'we will experience exactly what Italy is in a few weeks'. Several emotive images have been circulating internationally and are proven to be completely unrelated to the COVID-19 virus.

Currently at the time of writing this bulletin exercise is still allowed in Victoria and Tasmania. It's proven therapeutic advantages are just what we need right now, not to mention the other health benefits like reducing the [67% obesity rate in Australian Adults](#). It's worth getting out in the sun and fresh air with family or loved ones where possible rather than worrying about which pay TV subscription is going to get us through a possible lockdown.