

COVID-19 | Level 3 Health and Safety

Safe Work at Alert Level 3 Information for Workers

Stopping Unsafe Work

Always remember, if you believe your work is unsafe you have the right to cease work.

You can stop unsafe work when:

- The work will expose any worker or other person to a serious risk. Work should be ceased if there is a real likelihood of harm, regardless of whether the resulting injury would be minor; and
- The exposure to the hazard is immediate or immanent.

If you are worried about unsafe work – tell your employer in writing, engage your Health and Safety Representative (HSR) and/or your union and [make a notification to WorkSafe](#).

What Businesses will be Open?

Most businesses are permitted to stay open but must operate safely and without physical interaction with customers. If work is able to be conducted from home it should be.

Essential services will continue to operate. These include health services, emergency services, utilities and goods transport. If you have concerns that your employer is incorrectly claiming the business to be essential, engage your union or speak with MBIE.

Operating safely means:

- Compliance with the Government Level 3 requirements
- Meeting all public health requirements
- Meeting all obligations and duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Businesses that do remain open must ensure that workers who feel unwell are able to stay home.

Don't Forget about Other Risks

It is important that your employer continues to manage other risks as well as protecting you from the risk of COVID.

Make sure you know how to log and follow up risks and incidents in your workplace. Now is a great time to find out the procedures for reporting health and safety in your workplace. If there are none, or your work has inadequate procedures, now is the time employers must be remedying this.

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As work practices change once again to adapt to COVID-safe work new risks may present themselves. If you identify any new risks, raise these with your employer, union or HSR as necessary.

Engage your Health and Safety Representatives

Do you know who your workplace Health and Safety Representative is? If not, now is the best time to find out. HSRs have key powers under our legislation to keep you and your workmates safe at work.

If your work doesn't have an HSR, begin the process [to establish one now](#).

Employers Must Engage with Workers on How They're Keeping you Safe during Level 3

Our health and safety legislation requires employers to engage with workers on all matters that effect workers' health and safety. [This is a legal requirement](#). This includes when your employer is making decisions about ways of work at Level 3, what control measures are being put in place, as well as listening (and acting on) any concerns raised by workers.

If you feel unwell or are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 you should not be compelled to turn up to work. The Ministry of Health has outlined who at most at risk [here](#).

If you have any concerns about your health and safety at work, or are vulnerable and being compelled to return to work, speak up to your employer, engage your union, or get in touch with your HSR. Your HSR has powers under the Health and Safety at Work Act to assist you with workplace health and safety matters.

Key Public Health Measures

Keeping symptomatic people away from the worksite

While this may seem the most obvious, it is crucial that PCBUs have considered this and have a process in place, on which workers are consulted and engaged.

[Be aware of what to look out for](#) and find out about the process for staying home when you are unwell.

Physical distancing

Given the serious harm that COVID-19 can cause, the level of precaution taken in workplaces needs to be high. Physical distancing has been identified as one of the key precautions.

The obligations to ensure the health and safety of workers so far as reasonably practicable still apply. This means implementing the highest levels of physical distancing practicable. While all businesses must maintain at least 1m with effective controls during Alert Level 3, where effective control measures cannot be implemented, 2m may remain the safest distance.

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The requirements to work from home where possible are in place in Level 3.

(In order of effectiveness) businesses should:

- Enable working from home.
- Allow for remote working.
- Ensure as much space as possible between workers, and workers and other people to over 2 metres.
- If not reasonably practical to maintain at least 2m, implement effective control measures for working between 1 and 2 metres.
- As noted above, no work within 1m, unless essential and the duty to implement effective controls measures still stands for essential work.

Ensuring good hygiene at work

Along with physical distancing another key precaution to minimising the spread of COVID-19 is enabling good hygiene at work.

Your employer must provide you with the ability to maintain good hygiene at work. Your employer's obligations include providing you with adequate facilities and equipment to ensure you can maintain good hygiene, as well as providing information and training on maintaining good hygiene at work.

Good hygiene includes:

- Hand hygiene - that is, washing hands regularly with soap and water, or cleansing with hand sanitiser.
- Staying at home if you are sick.
- Coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and then performing hand hygiene.
- Cleaning surfaces regularly.
- Ensuring good air ventilation.

If you are still working onsite during Level 3 consider:

- What provisions have been put in place to clean your workplace and sanitize equipment and work vehicles.
- How worksites will ensure workers can maintain distance/ cleaning of shared spaces like lunchrooms or print rooms (e.g staggered use).
- How and when cleaning will take place, ensuring enough time is planned for in advance.
- If 'self-cleaning' is being implemented, that the PCBU is ensuring the appropriate training information and equipment needed for this is provided.

Enabling contact tracing

There are strong expectations on business to ensure that everyone that visits a worksite is able to track where they have been. Businesses now must make tracing easy for all onsite to complete by having the NZ COVID tracker QR code posters up.

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Safety and personal protective equipment

Public health guidance now highly recommends that we wear masks outside of our homes and on public transport. [**Make sure to know how to safely wear masks as incorrect use carries its own risks.**](#)

If you are concerned about working without safety equipment, engage with your employer alongside your HSR and union rep to ensure that the risk of COVID-19 is being managed so far as is reasonably practicable. This means:

- Your employer has ensured all reasonably practicable control measures are in place to manage the risk of COVID-19. This may include physical distancing, staggered breaks, minimal contact with others, physical barriers, providing clean and well-equipped facilities to ensure good hygiene, and safety equipment
- That the messaging of what control measures are in place is clear and being provided to all workers.
- That worker concerns are being actively engaged on and feedback from workers is incorporated.

Whether or not your workplace decides PPE is needed – your employer must have in place all reasonably practicable controls measures to keep you safe and they need to work with you to alleviate any concerns about your return to work.

If personal protective equipment is being used in your workplace, remember to use it correctly and safely. Your employer must provide information and training on how to do this. Incorrect use of PPE can be even more dangerous in spreading COVID-19.

Information on managing PPE supplies can be found [here](#).

Ensuring Your Mental Health is Being Looked After as Well

Dealing with COVID-19 is stressful for people's mental health. We've been through this before and know it can be difficult.

Your employer's obligations to protect your health and safety at work include work-related mental health.

As changes to workplaces occur, be mindful of your mental health and engage your channels of support to assist you including your HSR and union reps.

Mental health resources:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/covid-19/top-tips-to-get-through/>

For a range of other mental health helplines: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/in-crisis/helplines/>