

Resource for Employers in Essential Services

Purpose

This document serves as broad guidance for employers in essential services seeking to retain employees while keeping them, their families and their communities safe during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Key Message

Employers should take the following steps when they are working with employees to decide whether the employee should continue work as an essential worker or not through COVID-19:

- Undertake a partnership approach with the employee in agreeing whether and how the employee should continue work. Make sure the employee's mental and physical health and wellbeing are a priority.
- Consider the various risk factors for each employee. Considerations include whether the employee has an underlying health condition (see <https://covid19.govt.nz/help-and-advice/for-everyone/vulnerable-people/> for guidance and Appendix One for a template staff health questionnaire), whether they have someone at home with an underlying health condition, whether someone at home is an essential medical worker and whether the employee has to stay at home to care for children.
- If they have children at home the Government is implementing a range of home-based care options <https://education.govt.nz/covid-19/home-based-care-options-for-children-aged-0-14-of-essential-workers>
- Provide the employee with resources to assure them, that should they continue to work, that the processes and protocols being undertaken in your business will protect the health and wellbeing of them and their family. Guidance protocols can be found on the AQNZ web page with links shown below.
- Be aware that there is a process that you need to undertake in the circumstance that the worker has reasons not to come to work <https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/scenario-2/#ifthe>
- If they are going to continue to work ensure that they give an undertaking, ideally in writing, to adhere to the new protocols you have instigated to mitigate risks from COVID-19. A template 'staff declaration' is provided (in Appendix Two) which includes a range of protocols you should consider including in your requirements.
- Make sure you include considerations of protocols for leaving home, travelling to work, arriving at work, then leaving work and returning home. Mitigation of COVID-19 risk needs to 'complete a circle'.
- You should consider keeping a register of staff that are unable to work for health reasons and those that are unable to work for other reasons. You should also keep a register of those staff that will be working and record their signed declarations. You should also consider a register of travel arrangements – those staff that do not live together should ideally not travel together.
- If you have agreed that the employee should stay home then work with them to ensure you and they have access to Government wage subsidy/other financial support. Further information is available here <https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace>

Resources

Key resources can be found here:

Government's official COVID-19 response page	www.covid19.govt.nz
Government's COVID-19 page for employers	www.covid19.govt.nz/help-and-advice/for-businesses-and-organisations/employers
Government's employment page	https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace
Government's education page	https://education.govt.nz/covid-19/home-based-care-options-for-children-aged-0-14-of-essential-workers
Aquaculture New Zealand's COVID-19 page	www.aquaculture.org.nz/covid-19-essential-information-for-the-aquaculture-industry
Template staff health questionnaire	Appendix One
Template employee declaration to adhere to COVID-19 protocols	Appendix Two
Practical Measures to Reduce Risk of COVID-19 Spread for Essential Aquaculture Operations	www.aquaculture.org.nz/covid-19-essential-information-for-the-aquaculture-industry

Staff Health Questionnaire

Q. Do you have any of the conditions or meet the criteria below? If so, please provide detail.	
Q. Do you have a dependant or, anyone living with you that has any of the conditions or meets the criteria below? If so, please provide details.	
Q. Is there anything that would stop you coming to work?	
Please update your contact details:	
Name:	
Address:	
Email:	Phone:
Another contact person for you (name and phone number):	

- **Those over 70:** Older people often have underlying health issues, including respiratory issues that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- **People with medical conditions:** Underlying medical conditions can make you more vulnerable to COVID-19. In particular, people with respiratory conditions, such as COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), heart conditions, high blood pressure, kidney problems and diabetes.
- **People undergoing a treatment for cancer or blood conditions:** As treatments for cancer and blood conditions affect people’s immune systems, this makes them more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- **Pregnant women:** Health experts do not yet know if pregnant women are impacted by COVID-19 in the same way as other people. However, pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk from some infections.
- **People without easy access to healthcare**

If there are any changes to the information provided or you are unwell, please contact your Supervisor.

Name: _____ **Signed:** _____

Dated: _____

Appendix Two – Template Employee Declaration to Adhere to COVID-19 Protocols

EMPLOYEE DECLARATION - COVID-19

Tena koutou katoa,

_____ is now considered an essential service for the purposes of the current COVID-19 situation, which puts us in the privileged position of being allowed to continue to operate and provide kaimoana to New Zealand. This privilege covers all aspects of our business. This means your attendance at _____ to support our nation at these difficult times is of great importance.

The Government has set out clear requirements of who is to stay at home, and as such if you do not fit into this category, you are required to come to work.

As an essential service, we can only continue to operate if we meet specific criteria to prevent the spread of the virus. To be able to continue to operate is a privilege, the rules are strict, it's not business as usual and we must adhere to these criteria if we are to continue to operate.

As such, we've developed special COVID-19 protocols and procedures that everyone must follow. These are based on our best knowledge to date and may change, if changing situations dictate.

Our number one priority is keeping you safe. You must follow the guidelines we have put in place.

COVID-19 protocols:

Travel to and from work

For those who will be continuing to attend work at our site, there are a range of additional requirements which apply when you travel to and from work that are crucial to maintaining our essential business status.

- Using private vehicles for transport is allowed. Where possible, practice physical distancing.
- Driving is restricted to a direct route between your home and work only. It is a MPI requirement that we manage transit of employees to and from work so to that end, you cannot deviate to supermarkets or anywhere else. Any allowable activities in Alert Level 4 lock down self-isolation (e.g. going to the supermarket) must be carried out on separate trips and must not be carried out on the way to or from work.
- *Transport for those who are unwell.* If you have any COVID-19 related concerns, please call Healthline (0800 358 5453) for advice before you travel. If you have used your private vehicle to transport someone who is unwell with COVID-19, it must not continue to be used as a work transit vehicle.
- Public transport will be available for those working for essential businesses. If you are using public transport, maintain physical distancing as per MoH guidelines between yourself and other passengers.

Work environment

- Arrive to work no earlier than 10 minutes before your shift starts
- All personnel use normal health and hygiene procedures, as well as the following:
- Wash your hands regularly with hand-soap and running water for at least 20 seconds, then dry them properly with disposable paper towels, do this each time:
 - After visiting the toilet
 - Before eating
 - After smoking/vaping
 - Before putting on your protective clothing, including face mask and gloves and after removing your face mask and gloves
 - Before handling any product
 - Before and after cleaning, particularly after cleaning high hand contact surfaces
- Use hand-sanitiser after washing your hands
- Change or sanitise your gloves regularly
- Please try not to touch your face or eyes, if it occurs, wash hands as per the above
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with a disposable tissue, and place it in the rubbish or cough/sneeze into your elbow and then wash your hands
- If you are issued with a face mask - wear it at all times, only removing it to eat/drink. Remove the face mask by only touching the straps/ loops (not the front)
- Don't share your PPE
- Each day we'll be checking in with you to see if your personal circumstances have changed as we continue to monitor those that are in the high-risk category
- Some sites will be practicing split shifts to minimise the number of people in any one place at a time
- We are required to ensure that a distance of 2 metres is maintained between staff at all times. If that is not possible, staff must wear overalls/coveralls, face masks and gloves, and maintain a distance of 1 metre at all times
- Meal breaks and smokos will be staggered and we're increasing the cleaning of these areas
- Do not stay at work any longer than 10 minutes once your shift ends
- Follow any other instructions given by the supervisor/manager

Temperature checks

A fever is sometimes an early indication of a cold or flu. Sometimes carriers could be asymptomatic (show no physical signs of cold or flu) but still be contagious. Early detection is the best way to protect ourselves against COVID-19.

At some sites, upon arrival to work everyone will be given a temperature check using a non-invasive ear thermometer, just like at the doctors. The caps are disposable to ensure your safety.

If you are showing a temperature of over 38 degrees, you will be asked to go home and rest until your temperature has returned to under 38 degrees.

Permits

While you are out and about (for example on public transport on your way to work or out getting essential supplies), you may be asked to provide evidence that you work for a business that is considered an essential service. We'll be issuing all essential staff with permits which must be carried with you at all times and shown when asked by authorities. These are currently on a courier and will be with you shortly.

Returning home after work

- Go straight home, do not deviate.
- Call your whanau or flatmates when returning home from work prior to your arrival so they can go to their rooms
- Once home, disrobe and place washing directly into the washing machine, go straight to the shower and wash then go and sanitise any door handles that you would have touched coming in, then your whanau and flatmates can come out

Annual leave

If you are applying for annual leave, the process is the same as usual. However, please be aware that given the low staffing numbers we have at the moment, approval can only be given if there are sufficient staff levels to safely operate each site. We must consider the health and safety of everyone at work. Leave priority will be given to those who are unwell or have dependants that are unwell.

Government COVID-19 leave and self-isolation support

For those who are able and required to work, as an essential services worker you must come to work, unless leave is approved. You will not be eligible for wage subsidies from the Government or the company if you chose to stay at home voluntarily. This will be viewed as unauthorised leave.

The Government COVID-19 leave and self-isolation scheme financially supports workers required by the Government to self-isolate or stay home when sick with COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Leave Payment is available for people who:

- need to self-isolate as required by MoH criteria
- cannot work because they are sick with COVID-19
- cannot work because they are caring for dependents who are required to self-isolate, or who are sick with COVID-19

If you do not meet the criteria above, the government leave payment and subsidy does not apply.

Procedures for while you are at home

While New Zealand is at Alert Level 4:

- We are all instructed to stay at home and only see those that live in our house, we are not to visit other people or have them visit us, and if we leave our home, to stay at least 2 metres away from people (other than those who live in the same house)
- We are all instructed to limit travel to only that which is considered essential. This includes:
 - Travelling to and from work in a business providing essential services (that is us) - when travelling to work travel alone or only with others from your house
 - Going to the supermarket or pharmacy to buy essential supplies
 - Do not go anywhere or do anything that is non-essential

If you do not meet the criteria above, the government leave payment will not apply as nor will the government wage subsidy.

Consequences of not complying

We take your wellbeing seriously and we expect that you follow these protocols and procedures for yourself and those around you. Our number one priority is keeping you safe.

Failure to comply with these protocols and any further mitigating measures that we put in place will be considered serious misconduct and will result in an employment investigation that may have disciplinary action as you will be putting yourself and others at risk.

Staff Declaration:

_____ have had these procedures fully explained to me and I understand what my responsibilities are and the procedures I must follow both at work and outside of work and while I am at home.

I understand that failing to follow these rules may result in the Ministry for Primary Industries withdrawing _____ essential business status which may have severe impacts on _____ ability to operate.

_____ agrees to comply with all of these requirements.

I understand that failure to follow these requirements will result in an employment investigation that may have disciplinary outcomes.

_____ understands that if there changes to my circumstances, I will notify my manager immediately.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Company Representative: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____