

For New Zealand General Businesses – 15 May 2020

Business can change the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in New Zealand by acting to reduce the spread of the virus.

The intention of this position statement is to provide your business with some worker health & wellbeing guidance. Health, safety, wellbeing and work are inextricably linked. Through an ongoing commitment to following 'good work' principles with help grow healthy, sustainable workplaces. As the situation continues to change, you must undertake your own due diligence in following the links for the latest *national information* and we encourage you to *monitor regional COVID-19 outbreak numbers*. New legislation, such as the COVID-19 Public Health Response Bill is being created that provides a different legal framework for responding to COVID-19 over the next 2 years or until COVID-19 is sooner brought under control.

Effective management remains critical as we return to community activities and there is a residual risk of isolated infection outbreak which may quickly spread.

NZOHNA has identified the New Zealand Government ‘**Unite Against COVID-19**’ as the best place to access up-to-date COVID-19 information and resources: <https://covid19.govt.nz/>.

WorkSafe have created a business webpage: <https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/> which includes a business risk assessment template.

The government has a four-level COVID-19 alert system. These alert levels specify the health and social measures to be taken. As at 15 May 2020, New Zealand has entered COVID-19 Alert Level 2 -‘Reduce’ : [Link to Alert System](#)

If you are keen to connect with an OHN working in your region, please contact our NZOHNA Administrator who can take your details and forward to your local NZOHNA Group person. Contact admin@nzohna.org.nz. Alternatively, the HASANZ Register provides businesses with contact details of verified H&S professionals throughout New Zealand: <https://register.hasanz.org.nz/>

The [ACC Workplace Injury Prevention Subsidy](#) (WIP Subsidy) is available for businesses in the manufacturing sector with 6 to 99 employees. Qualifying businesses can apply for the WIP Subsidy to engage an OHN to develop a health and safety action plan or improvement activity.

Business Approach to Staying Well

Taking COVID-19 precautions with worker health and wellbeing is one of the most effective measures you can take. Here’s an overview of controls you need to address to reduce community and business risk:

Focus	Comment/Control Suggestion	OHN Services (not exhaustive)
Business Planning	<p>A business pandemic plan will provide an overview of your response measures.</p> <p>Government guidance: https://covid19.govt.nz/businesses-and-employees/businesses-and-services/</p> <p>Ministry of Health workplace pandemic plan: https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/emergency-management/pandemic-planning-and-response/workplace-pandemic-influenza-guidance</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A tailored pandemic plan which meets people and business needs.

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	<p>Business public health requirements: https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/covid-19-alert-level-2-public-health-requirements-what-you-need-to-know/</p> <p>Ministry of Health information resources/posters: https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus</p>	
Business Visitors/Returning Workers	<p>Prior site arrival, and in order to protect your workers and business, it will be important to have a visitor/contractor approval process so you can ensure that the visitor presents no COVID-19 health risks. A registration process for visitors is a government requirement at Alert Level 2.</p> <p>Your induction process for visitors and workers should include current COVID-19 business controls.</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A visitor/contractor visit approval process. ● A symptom checker declaration process ● COVID-19 induction process; e.g. an overview of physical distancing, hygiene controls, self-isolation and additional health risk support.
Physical distancing	<p>It is important to maintain a 2 metre physical distance when possible. This can be reduced to 1 metre if the person is known and contact traceable.</p> <p>At Alert Level 2, changes to environmental layout to support this distancing is important. Where this is not practical, a hierarchy of control options can be applied.</p> <p>Avoid body contact where possible.</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worker awareness training and resources ● Layout changes ● Physical barriers ● Revise risk assessments of processes requiring close proximity, e.g. manual handling
Personal hygiene	<p>Regular cleaning and sanitising of hands in the workplace is essential.</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worker awareness training and resources. ● Hand sanitation programme. ● Infection control etiquette.
Environmental hygiene	<p>Regular clean and sanitise of the work environment and handled equipment.</p> <p>Antiviral hospital strength cleaning products are recommended.</p> <p>Good room ventilation is important.</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worker awareness training and resources ● Environmental hygiene programme – e.g. proactive reduction of contamination risk through process change and engineering controls, and recovery process post exposure. ● Cleaning and sanitation of shared PPE.
Contact tracing	<p>You must keep a track of where you and your staff have been and who you have seen until the government advises otherwise.</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A contact tracing process for workers, and visitors. ● Potential exposure – early contact tracing process for worker and workplace recovery.

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<p>Self-isolation</p>	<p>Self-isolation is used to protecting workers from at risk situations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case (including recent travel risk, new symptoms, close contact), or ● The worker (or living with a person) has pre-existing health conditions which makes them more vulnerable/at health risk if exposure to COVID-19 should occur in the workplace) <p>A further guide to self-isolation requirements in New Zealand can be found at: https://covid19.govt.nz/how-wereuniting/self-isolation/ , https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/.</p> <p>Information about what to do about a worker diagnosed with COVID-19: https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/worker-sick-with-covid-19/</p> <p>Healthline COVID-19 line (0800 358 5453)</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A self-isolation programme which reduces risk of workplace exposures and early return of all workers when safe to do so. ● Consider all work processes such as rotational shifts. ● Supporting the workers to access health advice and testing ● Interpretation of health exposure risks in a tailored individual plan. ● Interpretation of health exposure risks in a tailored group plan.
<p>Communication and Looking After Each Other</p>	<p>A new way of working, including job uncertainty, and the risk of COVID-19 exposure can create anxiety- this is a normal and to be expected human response.</p> <p>You need to be able to guide your team through this process and answer questions regarding your response to COVID-19.</p> <p>Empathy, respect and accurate information will support your proactive team communication and support mental resilience.</p> <p>Distressed workers will require prompt additional support.</p> <p>Mental Health Foundation resources: https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/covid-19/</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Business, and worker, COVID -19 communication plans. ● Focused wellbeing programme tailored to worker risks and needs such as resilience, discomfort (mental, physical). ● Navigation to mental wellbeing resources and support (proactive, early recovery).
<p>Individual Health Support Plans</p>	<p>Some of your workers (or people living with them) may meet the Ministry of Health classification as being vulnerable to infection (i.e. chronic health conditions such as asthma or diabetes, immuno-compromised, over 70 years old, or pregnant).</p> <p>A duty of care includes providing an individualised risk assessment and safe management, either by staying home and may include additional workplace controls.</p> <p>Ministry of Health guidance for Alert Level 2: https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-higher-risk-people</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Absence management. ● A health condition risk matrix ● Referral process to ensure GPs are aware of workplace safety controls. ● An individualised health plan for at risk workers to support their early return to work in a respectful and confidential way. ● Fear and anxiety management.
<p>Worker Privacy</p>	<p>Respecting employee privacy is important. If a worker is away from work due to a COVID-19 related reason, you should not disclose this to others without that worker’s consent (unless that disclosure is necessary to ensure the health and safety of those people – e.g. where they may have been exposed).</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A notification and ‘duty of care’ process which meets current privacy legislation. ● A process which is inclusive of whanau/family within appropriate boundaries. ● Anxiety management. ● This could include utilising OHN (tele) health consultation to ensure appropriate health questions are

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		asked to provide good context, and in a confidential setting.
Health Monitoring	<p>Workplace health monitoring services may resume at Alert Level 2 although MoH guidelines promote the continued use of telehealth and virtual appointments where possible.</p> <p>It is important to remember that health monitoring is not a control - it doesn't control risk. It should be used to verify that risk is suitably managed and as a result there are no adverse effects showing up on the health monitoring.</p> <p>The close proximity testing during health monitoring will be phased back in Alert level 2.</p> <p>A detailed history of changes to hazard process, consideration of the the controls in place, and health history is of equal value to a physical test when then is an elevation in COVID-19 alert levels.</p> <p>Please <i>contact your OH provider</i> to determine whether it is safe to resume face to face health assessments, and what additional safety controls may be required.</p>	<p>Please note that certain aerosol generating testing, such as spirometry, may be delayed due to the COVID-19 exposure risk outweighing the impact on delayed routine testing.</p> <p>Your OH provider may have other options such as online questionnaires or tele-health to support you to meet your PCBU obligations with health monitoring.</p>
PPE	<p>COVID-19 controls may include the need for new PPE use, e.g. for close contact work within 1 metres. Remember that with the hierarchy of controls, PPE should always be 'last resort' as it is reliant on safe use by the wearer.</p> <p>PPE may include eye protection, gloves (right type and size), respiratory protection and disposable overalls.</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worker PPE awareness training and resources ● PPE programme which includes selection, fitting, use, and maintenance.
Working from Home	<p>Risk management should include consideration of new ways of working, such as IT technology, home environment.</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working from Home programme including office ergonomics ● Laptop and work area set up ● Early discomfort management ● Social isolation prevention ● New technology adjustment e.g.IT connectivity, uses of headset versus hearing impairment.
Ways of Working	<p>Compliance training and business-related meetings are important, but the current Alert Level 2 requirements are to avoid face to face gatherings until Level 1.</p> <p>Group sessions of up to 10 people, for up to 2 hours, can occur so long as physical distancing is in place.</p>	<p>Supporting a review of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Business training and communication process ● Provision of suitable COVID-19 awareness training.
Safe Travel	<p>At Alert Level 2, there is a return to travel with NZ, and international travel is permitted when it is business critical.</p> <p>Differing international jurisdiction may require a 14 day quarantine period on entering the country. A risk assessment is required so safe travel controls can be determined prior to flight. https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/</p>	<p>Introduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A travel health & safety plan which includes keeping the traveller safe and protects others.
Seasonal Influenza Vaccination	<p>This is an important service to support the community health during COVID-19.</p>	<p>Provision of:</p>

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- A tailored seasonal influenza vaccination programme.

In summary, please remember that local Occupational Health Nurses OHNs are available to provide professional support. This can include developing a strategic pandemic business approach, infection control, establishing a COVID-19 outbreak notification and management system, individualised worker rehabilitation or return to work programme after isolation or illness, risk management of emerging work risks such as working from home, and health communication.

If you require any further information, please contact us by visiting our website <https://www.nzohna.org.nz/> or emailing admin@nzohna.org.nz.

Written on behalf of NZOHNA Executive Team.

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