

## **\*UPDATED\* COVID-19 (coronavirus) Building and Construction Industry Advisory**

*This document has been prepared as a general Toolbox Talk for building and construction workers and supervisors. It supplements but does not replace information from the government and Ministry of Health which will always be the primary source of advice in this matter. [Please see the MOH website for further information](#)*



**New Zealand is in alert level 4 until 11.59 pm, 27 April. Building and Construction work may only resume after that time if level 3 health and safety requirements are met. We are a long way from returning to business as usual.**

### **COVID-19 What it means for business in Building and Construction**

We seem to be winning the battle against COVID-19, with new cases reported daily now reduced to single figures. Though we're fortunate to have taken swift action to stem the virus, we've still tragically lost 13 lives to it. **More information around next steps is available on the government's COVID-19 website.**

The government has announced that we will step down from alert level 4 to alert level 3 at 11.59pm on Monday, 27 April. Though many of us will be returning to work on Tuesday morning, it will not be business as usual. We can return to building and construction work under stringent health and safety conditions, which includes contact tracing; apart from that we are still in lockdown. We cannot afford to reduce vigilance and risk a resurgence of COVID-19 cases.

Four weeks in lockdown has taken a major social and economic toll on the industry and the nation. We continue to support the work of the Construction Sector Accord to minimise damage to the industry and prepare for recovery. We are working closely with Construction Health and Safety New Zealand (CHASNZ) in developing the Protocols and the resources required to return to work safely, and we encourage you to share the mental health resources developed by **Mates in Construction**.

### **Preparing for return to work**

Last Thursday, the government announced that building and construction work could resume under level 3 restrictions with conditions. The requirements for contact tracing and physical distancing are concrete. Businesses returning to work will need to complete risk assessments and engage with staff and clients to ensure work can comply with the **level 3 requirements**.

Building and construction businesses should use the CHASNZ Standard and Protocols to develop their business and site specific tools for working at level 3. Check the **website** for the latest version as these are updated frequently.

**Sector specific information** is available from members such as Concrete NZ. Please share any collateral that may be useful with CHASNZ and let us know so that we can share these updates with the NZCIC membership.

When the Prime Minister announced we will be moving down to alert level 3 on 28 April, she stated businesses could perform some limited work before then to prepare. Civil Contractors NZ have led the effort to clarify this statement for construction. The following guidance is an interpretation in determining what work is allowable.

- No physical works or construction is allowed to commence until we are in level 3. This includes work that is high-risk or would normally require a permit.
- There will be no access to sites until you have requested and received written approval from the client. Some clients will request that you have a Site-Specific Safety Plan or similar agreed prior to approval being granted.
- Access to sites you: own, rent, or control, should be under the following conditions:
  - Employees entering sites must be given an induction that covers the risks associated with working on them.
  - Anyone entering sites must adhere to site health and safety requirements, which may include lone worker arrangements.

**COVID-19 Alert Level 3 Protocols** for vertical and horizontal construction must be followed.

We interpret this as:

- You can install signage and posters related to workers returning to sites
- You can rearrange workplaces for physical distancing of/between workers
- You can conduct a review of installation of wash/sanitation stations
- You can clean premises and equipment
- You can check site conditions to ensure sites are safe for return of workers
- You can make observations that allow development of Site Specific Safety Plans
- You can clear, unpack and sort freight. This does not include being on site for the receiving of materials. Ensure you adhere to delivery protocols
- You can check and prepare equipment
- You can check site security and safety controls during lockdown
- You can obtain equipment or enable systems so employees can work from home.

[Read guidance on preparing workplaces for alert level 3 from the Director-General of Health>>](#)

[Read general information on returning to workplaces prior to COVID-19 alert level 3>>](#)

There has been some confusion regarding the space required for physical distancing, with the Prime Minister stating that work could resume at level 3 provided there is a minimum physical distance of one metre between workers. WorkSafe has clarified, *“Note that for physical distancing, at least one metre’s separation is required at work for alert level 3, and two metres in uncontrolled environments, like in public. This aligns with World Health Organisation advice. **We expect one metre separation between people at work as the minimum and greater separation where it is reasonably practicable to do so.** There are some very limited exceptions to this, for example when providing healthcare services that require close personal contact.”*

Following this definition, if more than one worker is using a vehicle such as a work van or truck, employers must ensure a minimum distance of one metre is maintained between passengers.

### **Returning to work**

Businesses need to ensure they are compliant with the government's COVID-19 level 3 requirements before work can start. This includes engaging with workers about risks and controls, and providing a re-induction for everyone onsite to explain COVID-19 procedures.

This has been a stressful time for many and it's important that mental and physical health are being considered. Mates in Construction have developed a [suite of materials](#) to help people in the sector return to work.

For the last four weeks, sites have not been maintained to their usual standard. Check that there are no new hazards and that scaffolding and other temporary works are fit for use. This may require an inspection by a specialist before they can be used.

Partly completed structures and materials have been exposed to the elements. These need to be checked for deterioration and have remedial work completed. [BRANZ have released guidelines](#) to help assess the condition of your site and materials.

### **Looking forward**

Getting back to site next Tuesday is a great step towards recovery, but there is still a long way to go. We're working to help members overcome issues and prepare for the restart and future of construction, which is likely to be different from the industry as we know it.

The government is planning to invest heavily in horizontal and vertical infrastructure, and housing to stimulate the economy and job growth. They are working to create economic and social value through stimulus schemes that are being developed by the Industry Infrastructure Reference Group, Kainga Ora and other agencies.

Sustainability is a possible legacy of stimulus packages that incorporate "green principles" into projects. The Green Building Council has [developed online courses](#) to upskill building professionals in green building requirements.

NZCIC continues to work with the Construction Sector Accord and our members are involved in several workstreams including contracts, procurement, workforce and education. We're guided by our purpose, "to be the cohesive voice driving industry well-being and performance for a better built environment for New Zealand".

For any media inquiries or if you're interested in becoming a member of the NZCIC, please contact the NZCIC Chair, Graham Burke at [graham@grahamburke.co.nz](mailto:graham@grahamburke.co.nz) or 021 249 3459.