

# **\*UPDATED\* COVID-19 (Corona Virus) Construction and Building Industry Toolbox Talk and 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 going into lockdown on Wednesday, 25 March. Building and Construction has been conditionally categorised as essential work.**

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

New Zealand is at COVID-19 alert level 3 and moving to level 4 at 11.59pm on Wednesday, 25 March. From that time, all building and construction work must cease, other than Essential Construction and Building work.

These measures are vital to prevent the deaths of potentially thousands of New Zealanders and long term economic disruption. It is crucial to businesses and New Zealand's economy that the building and construction sector is ready to resume work as quickly as possible and return to full productivity when the level 4 alert is reduced, and we can return to work.

We are fortunate to have the Construction Sector Accord in place. It is an alliance of industry and government leaders with direct access to six Cabinet Ministers linked to the construction sector. Work is already underway to minimise the impact on businesses and to facilitate the resumption of work as quickly as possible.

## **Essential Building and Construction Work**

*Essential construction and building work is limited to:*

- work that is required immediately to maintain human health and safety at home or work, such as blocked sanitary drains, electrical faults likely to lead to electrocution;
- work to enable the continuation of other essential services, such as hospitals, supermarkets or utilities;
- building and resource consenting and supply chains for essential construction and building work.

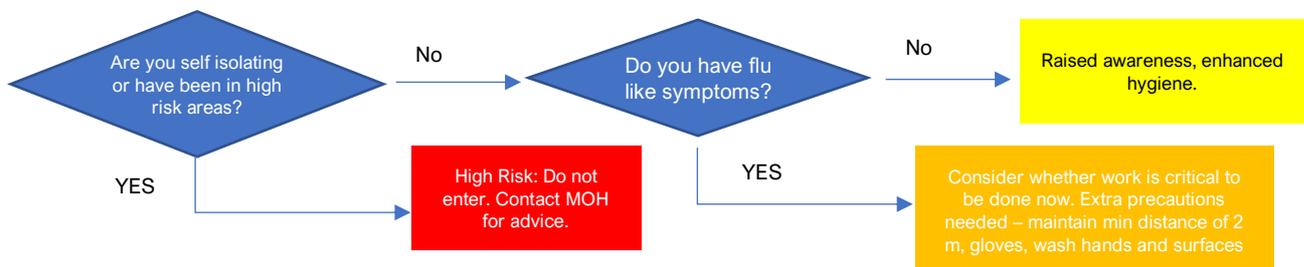
Essential construction and building work does not include new work, renovations, maintenance or any other work unless it fits the criteria above.

The government has set the bar high and there are no loopholes. We must restrict the amount of people who are not isolated to the maximum extent possible, while also maintaining reasonable standards of public health and safety.

## Before we reach level 4

- Think about our people and how we can support each other preparing for isolation.
- Secure sites and premises as well as practicable:
  - protect against weather and the environment;
  - protect against unauthorised access, theft and vandalism (consider hazards such as stacked material that could injure unsupervised minors who might access the site);
  - remove materials, tools and office equipment which may be attractive to thieves off-site if possible or into secure storage;
  - arrange appropriate security measures for sites and premises.
- Where possible, set up facilities for staff to work remotely, especially administration, project management and design personnel.
- Arrange means of communication with all staff during level 4.
- Ensure progress claims for work completed up to 25 March can be invoiced on time.
- Ensure all payments due in March are paid or arrangements are made with supply chain.
- Talk with financial advisers, banks and insurers.
- Apply for the government wage subsidy.
- If applicable, plan to carry out any essential work required during the level 4 period:
  - call outs;
  - storm or environmental incidents;
  - triage of essential work requests; risk management for essential work;
  - supply chain and equipment for essential work.

### Potential questions and responses for tradespeople entering residential buildings



**If you or a worker thinks they have been exposed to Covid 19 or have symptoms – please call 0800 358 5453 which is the ministry of health line dedicated to this. If you have been overseas within the last 14 days and develop a fever, cough or shortness of breath, phone Healthline’s dedicated COVID-19 number [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) or contact your GP, including phoning ahead of your visit.**

## During level 4

- Think about our people and how we can support each other during isolation.
- It is important for businesses in the professional services sector of construction (Engineering, design, quantity surveying, project management, etc) to continue work on current and forward projects if work can be completed remotely from home. This is essential to be ready to resume work on current and new projects as soon as possible when level 4 is reduced.
- For businesses engaged in essential construction and building work:
  - plan for appropriate staff, equipment and supplies to be available as required;

- plan system to triage work – do not complete work unless it fits the definition of essential construction and building work;
- ensure safe methods of work are established to protect staff completing essential work, including social distancing, appropriate ppe and enhanced sanitation;
- check that staff completing essential work are not at risk persons and are not residing with at risk persons.
- Ensure business processes are maintained (Payroll, debtors, creditors, orders for forward supplies) and stay in contact with advisors and finance providers.
- Keep in contact with staff and workmates during level 4. Support each other and watch out for those who may need help.
- [Mates in Construction](#) has a 24/7 help line (0800 111 315) available for anyone in the sector who is having issues with mental health. To learn more about how to have a conversation about mental health and well-being, take a look at [CHASNZ's Pocket Guide](#).
- Complete training modules, webinars or other work that can be completed while isolated during level 4, for example:
  - course work assignments for apprentices;
  - online driver training;
  - online meetings to review health and safety, and other company procedures;
  - all those admin jobs that never get done!

#### **After level 4 is reduced**

- Think about our people and how we can support each other to return to normal life.

It is extremely important that the construction and building sector returns to full production as soon as possible following the reduction of level 4 restrictions. The COVID-19 crisis will inevitably have an adverse economic flow on. However, construction is well placed to bounce back and the Construction Accord is working to reduce impacts to the sector.

It is vital that all businesses in the construction and building sector plan and prepare for return to work as quickly as possible following the lifting of restrictions.

For more tips and info about staying safe and COVID-19's impact on the industry, see [our 18 March Toolbox Talk](#).

## COVID-19 FACTS

This is a new virus and what we know about it will change over time. New Zealand has currently low rates of the virus however this situation could change rapidly.

It is more infectious than normal flu but with similar symptoms. The virus affects older people with underlying conditions. For most working age people the mortality rate is less than 1%.

It can cause fever (high temperature), sore throat, cough, breathing problems, and muscle aches.

Symptoms can start day after exposure but could be up to 14 days later.

**Most have a mild illness but like other flus it can be fatal.**

It is most likely spread by coming into contact with droplets created by people sneezing, coughing or even talking.

The droplets infect you when they enter your mouth, nose or eyes. If you touch contaminated objects (e.g. handles that were recently touched by an infected person) then touch your face you can become infected.

If symptoms are mild they can be treated with normal medicines to lower fever and reduce discomfort. If symptoms are more severe (e.g. trouble breathing) then hospital may be required.

Tests are needed to confirm COVID-19.

## Fight Colds and Flu



**Get a flu shot – it is not too late to protect yourself from seasonal flu**



**Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds – dry them properly**

**Cover your cough – in your elbow not your hands.**



**Stay home if you are sick.**

