

## **\*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 has moved to alert level 3. Building and Construction work has resumed for most businesses in the sector under level 3 health and safety requirements.**

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

The NZ pandemic statistics are looking good, down to two new cases yesterday and 1,229 recovered out of the total 1,474 confirmed and probable cases; sadly we've lost 19 people **since the pandemic began affecting New Zealand**. Most building and construction businesses returned to site on Tuesday morning under strict level 3 health and safety protocols.

**WorkSafe NZ** are proactively contacting businesses to ensure they have adequate plans in place to manage COVID-19 risks under level 3. We understand that these inquiries are finding that most businesses have sufficient strategies in place, though many lack provisions for employees' mental health and wellbeing. This is a very stressful time for everyone in the sector and it will continue to be that way for some time. We're all in this together and it's critical we look out for each other physically and mentally. We urge all businesses to treat mental health as a critical risk at this time, and make use of the full toolkit of resources available from our mates at **Mates in Construction**.

### **Back to work**

There has been a huge uptake on the COVID-19 Standards, Protocols and resources developed by industry and available at **Construction Health and Safety New Zealand (CHASNZ)**. This information is being continuously updated and it's important to ensure you are using the latest guidance.

There was initially confusion regarding the space required for physical distancing under level 3. This has been clarified by WorkSafe. *"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."*

There has also been **clarification of travel requirements** with workers being allowed to travel into neighbouring districts to work if it is part of their normal commute. Workers cannot travel outside their region unless it is for essential work.

### **Looking forward**

We are a long way from “business as usual”, level 3 restrictions are planned for a minimum of two weeks and the details and requirements of alert level 2 are still unknown. It’s expected that workplace requirements under level 2 will be very similar to level 3, but with additional businesses being allowed to reopen. It’s likely that those who can still work from home will be encouraged to continue to do so.

NZCIC and our members are continuing to work with the Construction Sector Accord on its ‘Construction Sector COVID-19 Response Plan. Current work includes developing further guidance for procurement and contractual issues that are being raised in the sector due to COVID-19. We expect this to be available within the next few days. A set of principles is being developed for government agencies to follow when negotiating the cost of variations due to the shutdown. These will align with the Construction Sector Accord principles and will be made available to the wider sector. Advice is also being developed on addressing potential increases in cost and loss of productivity due to restrictions during alert level 3.

Procurement guidelines around the cost of future disruptions related to COVID-19 in new contracts are also in development. Advice on risk allocation in contracts is being developed in consultation with lawyers.

The **Construction Sector Accord** continues to work with Crown Infrastructure Partners and the Infrastructure Commission to identify a pipeline of infrastructure projects that can be started in the next twelve months. More than 2,000 projects have been put forward for consideration, and a selection of these are expected to go to cabinet in mid-May. Projects will be assessed against a range of criteria including:

- economic stimulus (e.g. timing, location, and subsector)
- contribution to public welfare
- and alignment with long term outcomes such as environmental and social. If resource consent is required, they will need to meet the fast track RMA criteria.

Work is underway to identify models to rapidly mobilise projects during the recovery phase. This work builds on practices already used in New Zealand such as SCIRT, NCTIR and the Wynward Edge Alliance. This will help identify opportunities to streamline processes including consenting, governance, funding approval and procurement.

The Property Council of New Zealand (a NZCIC and Construction Sector Accord member) contributed advice to Ministers regarding the support needed for commercial landlords and tenants. The **government recently addressed some expectations** including extending the required timeframes before landlords can cancel leases. Additionally, mortgagees can exercise their rights which is crucial to support this sub-sector. Further support is being considered.

The Construction Sector Accord is also looking for ways to support the residential sector. This has included discussions with groups across the sector including banks. Kainga Ora is working to get their public housing build programme up and running quickly. The Construction Sector Accord is engaged in finding new ways to help build and support consumer confidence in the residential building sector. Advice on this is going to Ministers next week. An NZCIC working group has been formed to consider ways to mitigate this issue.

The Construction Sector Accord is also working to ensure we have a sustainable apprentice programme to build a new workforce over the longer term. There are serious concerns about the loss of apprentices and trainees over the next three to six months. We'll face an even worse skills shortage following a sector recovery if we don't retain and continue to recruit apprentices and trainees.

The NZCIC executive and sector leaders continue to meet weekly to share current affairs and updates regarding COVID-19. If your organisation has an issue related to COVID-19, please let us know. We can answer many questions from within our membership, and we're able to escalate systemic issues to the Construction Sector Accord and government.

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.