



COVID-19 Government Property Workplace Guidelines

- Alert Level Four

The overriding consideration for managing workplaces in the response to COVID-19 is a focus on the health, safety and well-being of workers and people accessing the workplace.

This guidance is provided to assist agencies with workplace matters under Alert Level 4. It is based on current information about Alert Level 4 as at 13 August 2020, which includes the general requirement for physical distancing of two metre at work. Guidance on [health and safety](#) and [workforce](#) considerations is available from the Government Health and Safety Lead and the Public Service Commission.

The latest information on COVID-19 can be found on covid19.govt.nz

Settings under Alert Level Four

- Workplaces are closed to the public and visitors (unless otherwise required as part of essential or emergency response workers).
- Alternative ways of working, such as continuing to work from home, remote working, rostering, and split shifts are required.
- The general physical distancing requirement is two metres at work.
- The physical workplace needs to provide sufficient space for workers to maintain the appropriate level of physical distancing, depending on the circumstances.
- Records of all staff and visitors on the premises to support contact tracing is required.

** Agencies should conduct their own risk assessments and engage with unions and workers to determine the most appropriate measures across different work sites and operations. Always refer to covid19.govt.nz for more information on Alert Levels and to worksafe.govt.nz for workplace health and safety guidance.*

General Guidance for your Workplace in Alert Level Four

Workplaces are closed to the public and visitors, however they may be open as part of essential or emergency response workers who are unable to work from home.

Consider how each work space is used and what changes are required in order to ensure physical distancing and health and safety is able to be managed

Think about each different area, the way each space is used and what controls are likely to be the most effective and appropriate to maintain physical distancing.

- Physical barriers or screens may be needed where physical distancing cannot be achieved. In other areas floor markers, signage or similar measures may be appropriate.
- Regular communications should be used to reinforce why physical distancing is important.
- Consider assigning workers to desks to support physical distancing
- Workers must be able to maintain the general physical distancing requirement in the workplace.
- Different types of areas include:
 - **Congregation spaces** - kitchens, meeting rooms and utility areas
 - **Confined or circulation spaces** - lifts, hallways, entrance ways, bathrooms
 - **Public areas** - building entrance, lobbies and reception areas
 - **Workstations** - differ according to the type of work being undertaken.
- The number of workers occupying a lift should reduce significantly to enable physical distancing requirements to be met.
- Where possible, utilise lower floors of the building or areas of the workplace to reduce movement throughout the building. This will enable you to maintain distancing in stairwells and concentrate cleaning protocols to those areas available for use. Clear communications and signage will be needed to ensure workers are aware of procedures.

Review and implement any physical changes to the workplace that are required in order to meet physical distancing and hygiene requirements in the workplace

- Develop a checklist of all physical changes across each workplace and the different types of areas within those sites. This may include any physical barriers or screens, movement or removal of furniture (e.g. reduce the number of chairs in meeting rooms or meal areas, spread out desks if additional space is required), along with the installation of floor markers, tape etc. Include reference to these in communications with staff.
- Consider deploying personalised equipment such as wireless keyboard and mouse to minimise sharing of hard to clean equipment.
- Ensure workplaces are well equipped with appropriate hand hygiene facilities and cleaning materials for self-sanitisation of high-touch work surfaces, equipment and facilities.
- Equip the workplace with visible signs in common/shared spaces explaining processes and requirements for use e.g. clear signage of one-directional use of stairwell, capacity limit on lifts and meeting rooms etc.

Ensure evacuation procedures are reviewed

- Review evacuation procedures to determine how best to meet physical distancing requirements during emergency evacuation of buildings, and subsequent re-entry. Noting that evacuation of the premises in an emergency will remain priority.
- Ensure that procedures include the requirement to record all staff re-entering the building, and that all visitors* to the building are signed back into the premises.
- Ensure that adequate provision of floor wardens and first aiders are available.

** Visitors refers to those which are approved by the agency for access, as required as part of essential or emergency response workers, i.e. contractors or suppliers.*

Engage with contractors, suppliers and others that require regular access to your premises

- Identify all contractors, suppliers and others who may be required to access your premises, and ensure your communications clearly include these parties so they know what will be required of them.
- Review contractor and supplier arrangements, including leases and sub-leases, to determine whether these require clarification or amendment, including what additional supplies or equipment may be required, e.g. cleaning and sanitising (products and services), PPE (where appropriate), waste disposal services, mail, couriers and deliveries.
- Engage directly with your facilities management service provider to ensure that any new facilities management service levels (including, for example, cleaning services) are clarified, understood and documented.

Procedure for managing unwell people in the workplace

If someone displays symptoms of COVID-19 or is generally unwell, agencies are encouraged to take the following steps:

- Escort the unwell person from the general office area to the room designated for the care of unwell people. Once the person is in the designated room:
 - Keep the unwell person a distance of at least 2 meters away from others
 - Open a window in the room if there is one
 - Wash and dry your hands after escorting the person to the designated room
 - Reassure the unwell person and advise them that you will notify the appropriate people within the office to support them
- Use common sense and avoid direct contact or touching people or as few surfaces and objects, as possible.
- Advise the unwell person's manager or organisation (if a visitor) that the person has become unwell.
- The unwell person should call Healthline for free on 0800 358 5453 (or their doctor) immediately and explain the situation and their symptoms.
- The person should be asked to exit the building, ensuring they contact as few surfaces and people as possible.
- Arrange transport home/to a medical facility (as appropriate) for the unwell person, and encourage the following:
 - Avoid the use of public transport
 - The preferred option is transport by a family/whanau member
 - If a taxi is required, ensure the person sits in the back seat
- Check in with the unwell person to make sure they made it to their destination safely.
- Regularly check on the unwell person.
- Ensure the room the unwell person has been isolated in, is cleaned and disinfected as appropriate before being used again.

If the individual is seriously unwell or their life is at risk, dial 111.

Wearing face coverings

Face coverings are only one part of keeping safe and protecting others, along with good hygiene practice and physical distancing.

Some workers may choose to wear these in the workplace, and they should not be made to feel uncomfortable with their personal choice.

For the most up to date information on the use of face coverings, please refer to COVID-19 website for [Alert Level 4 guidance](#) and Ministry of Health for guidance on the [use of face coverings](#).

Develop and implement procedures for work conducted outside of government workplaces

- Review and update risk assessments for all work conducted off agency premises, including community work, field work, working from other locations (vehicles, private businesses, boats etc.). Specific COVID-19 considerations should be incorporated into on-site risk assessments, such as when workers conduct a risk assessment prior to entering a client's home address.
- Develop alternative ways of working if physical distancing cannot be maintained, except for essential services where relevant guidance including [Ministry of Health guidance on PPE](#) should be followed.
- Amend procedures and provide clear guidance to all workers on any changes, in particular where workers are required to work across various regions where different Alert Levels may apply. This may include things like requiring workers to phone ahead and check COVID-19 procedures before conducting site visits.

Regular review and monitoring of new practices and procedures

- For all new or temporary measures implemented, a process to review, agree and adapt to further changes should be in place.
- It is recommended that you have any measures documented for different Alert Levels, to ensure that requirements are able to be implemented quickly.

Record keeping to support contact tracing

- Records of all staff and visitors on the premises to support contact tracing is required.
- Ensure that all visitors to the workplace are recorded with their contact details, including details of who they meet with, how long they are on the premises, and which meeting spaces have been used.

Increase the frequency and scope of workplace cleaning

- Consider and implement regular deep cleaning of the premises.
- Undertake more frequent cleaning of:
 - common areas, such as kitchens, bathrooms and meeting rooms
 - high contact areas, such as door handles, tables, handrails and photocopier touchpads
- Ensure that:
 - cleaning contractors are regularly cleaning the common areas and high contact areas, and that they are cleaning surfaces with a suitable cleaner and/or disinfectant and following the manufacturer's instructions for use.
 - rubbish bins (kitchen, café, bathroom etc.) are lined to make it easy to empty bins and reduce the cleaner's exposure to rubbish.

Make cleaning products readily available to workers

- Ensure there is sufficient soap and paper towels (unless hand dryers are installed) in bathrooms. Consider providing paper towels as well as hand dryers for those who would prefer not to use hand dryers. This will also ensure people are able to turn off taps and open doors with a hand towel.
- Install sanitisers at all entry points to the building and/or floors; lifts, lobbies and kitchen areas.
- Make alcohol based cleaning wipes or similar cleaning products available in multiple locations around the general office area.
- Ensure suitable cleaning products and disposable cloths are made available in multiple locations around the office (eg utility bays, near personal lockers or tambours).

Ensure good ventilation

- Agencies should request their landlords ensure air conditioning systems are well maintained. Air conditioning systems should not re-circulate air and should be vented to the outside as much as possible.
- If the workplace does not have an air conditioning system, open windows regularly to circulate fresh air.
- Other considerations
 - At nights and weekends, do not switch off ventilation, but keep systems running at low speed
 - Avoid opening windows in toilets to ensure the right direction of ventilation
 - Switch air handling units with recirculation to 100% outdoor air
 - Replace central outdoor air and extract air filters as usual, according to maintenance schedule
 - Perform regular filter replacement and maintenance works with common protective measures including respiratory protection

Duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA)

Under the HSWA, Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) have a range of health and safety obligations in respect of their workers. In particular, a PCBU's primary duty is to ensure as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its workers while at work for the PCBU, and any workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the PCBU while carrying out work. The term "worker" includes employees, contractors, subcontractors, apprentices and volunteers.

As such, Chief Executives, Directors and other "officers" under the HSWA of agencies as PCBU's need to consider and apply these guidelines in light of their primary duty of care towards their workers.

Links to other Resources and Guidance

[Workplace principles relating to COVID-19 alert levels](#) from Government Property Group

[Workforce guidance](#) from Public Service Commission (*previously known as State Services Commission*)

[Managing health and safety](#) from Worksafe

[Unite against COVID19.govt.nz](https://www.unite.org.nz)