

# COVID-19 FAQs

20 September 2021



## Alert Levels and General Information

This contains the most up-to-date and approved messaging on key COVID-19 matters.

Information that changes or is added between grids will be highlighted. Please ensure you are using the most up to date version.

This document answers frequently asked questions about what **Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2** means for New Zealand.

This information applies from **9.00pm, 20 September 2021.**

Information can be used for any government, agency, local government or relevant sector and business communications.

This is a living document that will be updated frequently. Information that changes or is added between versions will be highlighted. New sections and changes to messages are in **orange.**

Please ensure you are using the most up to date version.

## Contents

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <u>Alert Level status.....</u>                      | <u>2</u> |
| <u>Alert Level 3 arrangements .....</u>             | <u>2</u> |
| <u>Special requirements for Upper Hauraki .....</u> | <u>5</u> |
| <u>Alert Level 2 changes.....</u>                   | <u>5</u> |
| <u>Face coverings .....</u>                         | <u>6</u> |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <u>Doing business .....</u>                       | <u>7</u>  |
| <u>Travel across Alert Level boundaries .....</u> | <u>8</u>  |
| <u>International Travel .....</u>                 | <u>10</u> |
| <u>Vaccinations .....</u>                         | <u>12</u> |

## Alert Level status

### Q. What is happening?

Auckland will move to Alert Level 3 at 11.59pm on Tuesday, 21 September, for at least two weeks. Cabinet will review that setting on Monday, 4 October.

Special requirements are in place for those who live in or have been to certain areas around Upper Hauraki.

The rest of New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 2 for as long as Auckland remains at a higher Alert Level. However the size of gatherings will increase to up to 100 people from 11:59, Tuesday 21 September.

## Alert Level 3 arrangements

### Q. What are the main differences between Alert Level 4 and Alert Level 3 rules?

- There are only slight differences in restrictions between Alert Level 4 and Alert Level 3. It remains important to stay home, exercise locally and limit movement and people must still take precautions and protect themselves and others against COVID-19.
- If you need to, you can expand your bubble to bring in close family, isolated people or caregivers but keep it small and exclusive.
- Anyone over 65 should stay home until they are fully vaccinated.
- Early learning centres, schools and kura can open for children whose parents or carers need to go to work, and have no available options for childcare. Face coverings are now mandatory indoors at high schools for Year 9 to year 13 students at Alert Level 3.
- Businesses that can meet Alert Level 3 requirements can open, but in most cases customers cannot enter.
- It is mandatory for staff in public facing areas and customers to wear a face covering when entering a business or service open at Alert Level 3.
- Low-risk local recreation activities like golf, tennis, swimming, fishing from land and white-baiting are allowed – but not with people outside your household bubble.
- High risk activities which may require emergency services are not permitted, however those with experience can go surfing and horse-riding.

- Gatherings of up to 10 people are allowed but only for weddings, civil union ceremonies, funerals and tangihanga. Physical distancing and public health measures must be maintained.
- From 11.59pm, Thursday 23 September, people permitted to travel for personal reasons must have evidence of a negative test taken within 72 hours of travel.
- Exceptions are to provide for animal care and to access health services with an appointment (including vaccinations). For this travel, people will be required to carry evidence of having taken COVID-19 nasal swab or saliva test within seven days of their travel.
- There are some exclusions for things like emergencies, urgent care of a child, returning home in some circumstances, and transiting Auckland.

### **Q. Can my business operate at Alert Level 3?**

Businesses and services can open if they meet safety requirements. This includes physical distancing and extra hygiene measures, such as staff wearing face coverings in public areas and contactless options for ordering, pick-up, delivery and payment. They will also be required to have processes to ensure people are scanning in using the COVID-19 tracer app, or manually recording their visit.

There are some businesses that can allow customers on premises with 2 metre physical distancing in place, such as butchers, fishmongers and greengrocers. These businesses should limit customers with a 'one in, one out' policy

Businesses involving physical contact cannot open – for example hairdressers, personal trainers, driving instructors and tattoo parlours.

### **Q. When can workers return to work?**

Most people should continue working from home if possible. Only people who can't work from home should return to work. If you own or run a business where staff cannot work from home, make sure:

- Employees and any visitors and customers wear face coverings in public facing areas
- Employees keep physical distance
- Businesses and services must legally meet all health and safety obligations, such as PPE, supplying cleaning workers staying home if sick
- People can make a record when they visit.

### **Q. When can I access my business to get ready for opening?**

Business owners and operators can now safely access their premises in order to prepare for contactless opening, including to meet the public health requirements. Please familiarise yourselves with all the Level 3 requirements.

### **Q. Can gatherings occur at Level 3?**

In general, gatherings such as faith-based services, sports games, and social events are not permitted.

Weddings and civil unions ceremonies, funerals and tangihanga are allowed, with a limit of up to 10 people. Two-metre distancing, face coverings and record keeping are required at all

permitted gatherings. However, consider delaying these important gatherings and moments if you can, to stop the potential to spread COVID-19. Video calls are a way to come together safely from your bubbles.

**Q. How will a change to Alert Level 3 in Auckland impact schools and early childhood education?**

At Alert Level 3, most children and young people will continue to learn from home, however schools, kura and early learning services are open for children and young people whose parents or carers need to go to work, and have no available options for childcare.

Students in Year 11-13 must remain learning from home. However, there is a possibility for an exemption for some Year 12 and 13 students in limited circumstances, to attend onsite.

It is mandatory for face coverings to be worn in indoor settings at secondary schools, under Alert Level 3.

The 14 September Bulletin for School Leaders reiterated existing Alert Level 3 advice for schools and the 14 September ECE Bulletin shared documents to support a transition to Alert Level 3 in Auckland.

The Health Order allows people to go into a workplace to prepare the premises for opening (and to meet public health guidance). This means, with an Alert Level change announced, if public health guidance is followed some staff and contractors can access their school or early learning centre to prepare for returning to work.

**Q. Is there any difference in how education was impacted the last time Auckland was in Alert Level 3?**

The two differences are:

- Bubbles are limited to no more than 10 children. Staff are in addition to that number.
- Staff who are at a higher risk from severe illness because of COVID-19 can work onsite at Alert Level 3 if they are fully vaccinated (head to Unite Against COVID-19 for more information).

**Q. I really want my child to have access to face-to-face education – is this possible?**

Schools and early learning services may have a reduced capacity to have tamariki onsite, so it's important that this capacity is reserved for those who really need it.

In some circumstances, teacher aides can go into homes to support learners with additional needs. This will be by mutual agreement between the family, the teacher aide, the principal and the school board.

Some facilities may open for limited activities involving small groups (up to 10 people including tutor) where it is not possible to deliver teaching remotely.

# Special requirements for Upper Hauraki

## Q. What's the situation for Upper Hauraki?

Special requirements are in place for those who live in or have been to certain areas around Upper Hauraki:

- People who live in Upper Hauraki area must stay home, stay local, wear a face covering when you leave home and keep 2 meters distance from people outside of your bubble. Watch for symptoms of COVID-19 and call Healthline on 0800 358 5453 if you develop symptoms.
- People who have worked, been in a household or attended an indoor gathering in Upper Hauraki in Upper Hauraki since 8 September and are no longer there, must stay home, monitor symptoms of COVID-19, call Healthline if they feel unwell and check locations of interest here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/contact-tracing-covid-19/covid-19-contact-tracing-locations-interest>
- These requirements will be reviewed regularly.

## Alert Level 2 changes

### Q. What are the main changes to Alert Level 2 rules?

As the risk of transmission has reduced in Auckland, there have been some changes to Alert Level 2 rules:

- The limit for indoor gatherings, including hospitality and retail business has been increased to 100 people, so long as people can maintain appropriate physical distancing in the indoor space. This takes effect from 11:59, Tuesday 21 September
- Face coverings remain mandatory for everyone aged 12 and over at indoor public facilities like libraries, museums and shopping malls, and physical distancing should be maintained.
- Businesses must also ensure customer-facing staff wear face-coverings and that customers are enabled to keep a record of where they've been.
- If you have permission to travel across a boundary for personal purposes, you must now get a negative test within 72 hours of your travel. Exclusions include if travelling to care for an animal or to attend a health appointment, where you will need to provide evidence of having had a test must be within the last 7 days. There are some exclusions to the testing requirement for things like emergencies, urgent care of a child, returning home in some circumstances, and transiting Auckland.

- More information about these requirements will be available on the COVID-19 website.

## Face coverings

In general, face coverings should be worn whenever you can. The Delta variant is more transmissible by droplets, so face coverings are a way we can protect ourselves and each other.

If you're around people you don't know, it's a good idea to wear a mask.

### **Q: Where do I have to wear a face covering?**

In both Alert Level 2 and 3, people aged 12 and over are required to wear a face covering when:

- using public transport, airplanes (including in departure points such as train/bus stations) and in a taxi or ride-share vehicle.
- visiting a healthcare or aged care facility (other than for a patient)
- inside retail businesses, such as supermarkets, pharmacies, shopping malls, indoor marketplaces and takeaway food stores
- visiting the public areas within courts and tribunals, local and central Government agencies, and social service providers with customer service counters

You legally must wear a face covering if you work:

- as a driver of a taxi or ride-share vehicle
- at close contact businesses, for example beauticians and hairdressers
- in a hospitality venue, for example a cafe, restaurant, bar or nightclub
- at retail businesses, such as supermarkets, shopping malls, indoor marketplaces, takeaway food stores
- in the public areas of courts and tribunals, local and central Government agencies, and social service providers with customer service counters
- at indoor public facilities, for example libraries and museums (but not swimming pools)

### **Q: Are some people exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering?**

Yes, exemptions from the requirement to wear face coverings still exist and more information can be found about how these apply, and the exemption card, on the Unite Against COVID website. NZ Police is aware that there have been some issues with people without a face covering being denied entry upon stating they have an exemption. They have updated their communications to staff and to businesses as a result.

People are not required to provide an exemption card if they are exempt due to a health condition.

# Doing business

Full information on doing business at Alert Level 2 can be found at the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

## **Q: When do the next rounds of the Wage Subsidy and Resurgence Support Payments begin?**

Applications for the third round of the wage subsidy close at 11.59pm on 30 September.

The wage subsidy is for businesses with a 40% decline in revenue from 14 to 27 September because of the continuation of Alert Levels 3 or 4.

More information is available on the Work and Income website.

Applications open for the second round of Resurgence Support Payments (RSPs) have also opened. Businesses will need to show a 30% or more drop in revenue in a 7-day period from 8 September until immediately before all of New Zealand returns to Alert Level 1 compared to a typical 7-day period in the 6 weeks before 17 August.

The second payment will stay as \$1,500 plus \$400 per full-time equivalent (FTE) employee up to a maximum of 50 FTEs, or 4 times the actual revenue decline experienced by the applicant, whichever is less.

Businesses can apply for both payments at the same time. More information is available on [ird.govt.nz](http://ird.govt.nz)

## **Q. What was the announcement about the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF)?**

Government announced an extra \$7 billion is to be added to the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) on Thursday, 16 September.

There is also an additional \$3 billion available to be spent from money previously allocated and not yet spent in the fund.

The extra funding will be targeted at further economic support as well as building resilience in our health system, supporting the vaccination roll out and border and MIQ provision.

## **Q: Is record-keeping be mandatory for my business?**

Many businesses and locations are now required to make sure people can easily keep a record of when they visit. This is a requirement at all Alert Levels.

This is especially important in places where there is close contact between people, where it's harder to wear a mask, and where the virus can easily spread. This will apply to range of places including health and aged care facilities, local and central government facilities, exercise facilities, social services providers with customer service counters and hospitality and entertainment businesses.

More information about record keeping and contract tracing is available on the COVID-19 website <https://covid19.govt.nz/business-and-money/businesses/record-keeping-and-contact-tracing/>

### **Q. What do business and services need to do to be compliant with the record keeping requirement?**

Relevant businesses and locations will be responsible having systems and processes in place to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, people scan in using the COVID-19 tracer app, or manually record their visit.

What is reasonably practicable will differ between businesses. Workplaces (and public transport services) will continue to be required by law to display QR codes. Businesses and services are required to have an alternative system for people who do not use the NZ COVID Tracer app to record their details such as a tablet sign-in app or ballot box type system.

The use of paper-based lists is no longer acceptable as it risks private information being disclosed to others. Businesses, services and events should use a ballot box type system to collect manual records. Businesses and services must ensure information collected is used, stored and disposed of safely and securely in accordance with the Privacy Act.

### **Q. Is mask-wearing mandatory for my business?**

You legally must wear a face covering if you are either a customer or an employee involving customer contact at a business or service operating at both Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2.

## **Travel across Alert Level boundaries**

### **Q. Is it easier to cross the Alert Level boundary now Auckland has moved down to Alert Level 3?**

Travel in either direction across the Alert Level boundary remains strictly limited. Most people are not permitted to travel. These Alert Level boundaries are an important way to manage the risk of the virus spreading, so we keep our loved ones and communities safe. You can find out more about permitted personal reasons [here](#).

### **Q. What evidence will you need in order to cross the boundary?**

Travellers must have permission to travel documentation and/or acceptable evidence required for permitted travel, in addition to photo ID. Examples of evidence are included in the pages below:

- Personal [travel](#).
- Business [travel](#).

Everyone permitted to cross the Alert Level boundary, for either personal and business purposes, is required to have evidence of a test before crossing the boundary (or a certificate



from a registered medical practitioner as evidence of exemption for this testing requirement).

Please have all necessary documentation at hand, to speed up the process and help reduce congestion at the boundary.

### **Q. What are the testing requirements for crossing the Alert Level boundaries?**

There is now a requirement for people permitted to cross the Alert Level boundary, to get tested, whether they have symptoms or not.

- *For personal reasons:* From 11.59pm, Thursday 23 September, people permitted to travel for personal reasons must have evidence of a negative test taken within 72 hours of travel.
  - People travelling to providing for animal care and to access health services with an appointment (including vaccinations), will be required to carry evidence of having taken COVID-19 nasal swab or saliva test within seven days of their travel.
  - There are some exclusions to the testing requirement for things like emergencies, urgent care of a child, returning home in some circumstances, and transiting Auckland.
  - More information about these requirements will be available on the COVID-19 website.
- *For business purposes:* All workers who are permitted to cross the Alert Level boundary are required to have evidence of a test taken within the seven days before crossing the boundary, or a certificate from a registered medical practitioner as evidence of testing being inappropriate and that they are not exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms.

This proof of test will be in addition to evidence required of their need to travel (such as a Business Travel Document, work order or employer letter) all workers must carry when they travel across the Alert Level boundary.

More details about what proof 'permitted workers' will need to show as evidence of a test is available on the Unite against COVID website

### **Q. Where can I get tested?**

Permitted workers can use the existing testing services available. This includes going to a Community Testing Centre which requires no appointment or booking in with their local GP.

Check the Healthpoint website (<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/>) for free nasal swab testing locations in your area. Further testing facilities may be established.

### **Q. Is saliva testing available?**

Saliva testing is available for permitted workers, to give them different options to comply. It is self-administered and available 24/7. Workers can collect tubes beforehand and drop their sample at multiple collection points.

For those using saliva testing (initially), they need to download and install the APHG saliva testing app. The app will also record tests and results which can be used as evidence when crossing the alert level boundary.

For more information on saliva testing and to register, please visit the COVID-19 saliva testing website.

## International Travel

### **Q. When will more MIQ rooms be released?**

Following today's release of approximately 3,000 rooms, there will be another voucher release later in September in the [Managed Isolation Allocation System](#) (MIAS).

Information on the exact details for this will be up on our website 24-48 hours in advance, so please check the MIQ channels (websites and social media) for updates and instructions about the room release.

Each room release will be a new and independent event. At this stage, there will be no prioritisation for people who missed out in the last room release.

If you need to travel urgently, you can apply for an emergency allocation.

### **Q. When will quarantine free travel (WFT) be possible between Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand?**

The government has decided the suspension of quarantine free travel between Australia and NZ will be extended a further eight weeks. This will be reviewed again in November.

The decision was brought forward to enable access from Australia to the first tranche of MIQ rooms being made available in October and November. Travellers from Australia should visit the MIQ website to find out how to participate.

QFT from Australia to New Zealand was suspended on Friday 23 July, and the suspension was due to end on 24 September.

### **Q. Is there a flight from Australia on 26 September?**

Yes, however the 26 September flight will be open to emergency allocations only. This follows the two red flights that returned stranded Kiwis home to New Zealand on 5 and 15 September.

### **Q. How many people are you expecting would be eligible for this flight?**

We have continued to process applications for emergency allocations and currently have hundreds of applications that we are processing. As of Thursday 16 September, we have over 40 people who have been approved as eligible for this flight.

### **Q. What is a red flight?**

Red flights mean that all travellers will have to go into managed isolation for 14 days. Further information about this is available on the MIQ website.

For this 26 September flight, the normal rules around paying for the MIQ stay will apply.

### **Q. What is the flight schedule for October and November?**

Flights will be scheduled from 3 October to 28 November. At this stage, most flights will be from Melbourne or Sydney. Flights from Brisbane and Perth may also be added. Check the flights scheduled on the MIQ flight checker.

### **Q. What are the requirements for travellers on these flights?**

Travellers on these red flights must have the right to enter New Zealand, need to complete a 14-day stay in managed isolation, provide a negative pre-departure test and not have visited a location of interest in the past 14 days. The normal rules around paying for the stay in MQ will apply.

### **Q. Will people from Australia be guaranteed an MIQ voucher?**

No – they will need to secure an MIQ voucher through the [Managed isolation Allocation System](#).

### **Q. Are there plans to permit self-isolation options for international business travellers?**

The COVID-19 Group within DPMC is continuing to work with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and the Ministry of Health on the trial for a small number of vaccinated people travelling for business to go overseas and self-isolate when they return.

We expect to have an update on this work in the coming weeks once decisions are made by Government.

### **Q. What approval do New Zealanders need before they sail into Opuia from Fiji?**

Everyone arriving into New Zealand needs to comply with standard border entry and quarantine requirements, along with the Public Health requirements. New Zealand citizens are still able to return home. Vessels with all New Zealand citizens (NZ passport holders) do not require exemption. However, for a foreign flagged vessel carrying any non-New Zealand citizens are required to receive exemption from the Ministry of Health, along with Immigration requirements.

### **Q. Do sailors from Fiji need to book an MIQ spot, if they spend less than 14 days at sea? If so, given the variability of their leave date and the time to sail, how is this possible?**

All travellers entering New Zealand must undertake a precautionary self-isolation period for 14 days, which begins following departure from the last international port. We advise travellers to plan their journey so that as much of the isolation period as possible is completed at sea. Travellers cannot make up isolation time inside New Zealand territorial waters – so anchoring offshore is not allowed.

There can be no interaction with any other people or stops offs during the 14-day isolation period. This includes places such as Minerva Reef. Anyone doing so will reset the 14-day isolation period. If travellers have to make a stop for safety reasons, we advise they do so.

Travellers arriving in New Zealand on day 12, who have isolated on board with no interactions with other people or stop offs en route (subject to verification by Customs), may be able to complete the remaining required isolation time on board the vessel.

If travellers arriving by sea cannot appropriately isolate or quarantine on board their ship, they will be transferred to a MIQ facility.

**Q. How do Customs conduct checks of yachts, without compromising their safety?**

The Port of Opua is the designated port of arrival for all small craft in New Zealand. The border at Opua is safely and effectively managed to prevent COVID-19 from entering New Zealand. This entails health checks, isolation on vessels, isolation in managed isolation facilities in Auckland and COVID-19 testing.

On arrival into Opua, travellers are cleared by border and health agencies. These staff operate with the appropriate PPE and health protection measures in place. Customs also provides travellers with PPE.

**Q. Will there be International COVID-19 vaccination certificates, if yes how might they work?**

We recognise that evolving standards on COVID-19 health credentials is affecting some New Zealanders already offshore.

New Zealanders who need proof of vaccination for international travel currently can request a letter confirming their COVID-19 vaccinations from the Ministry of Health.

We are, however, unable to guarantee that other countries will recognise this COVID-19 vaccination letter as formal proof of vaccination.

This an interim solution, until a New Zealand digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate is available. Work is underway to develop a digital vaccination certificate that will be available from around December for people who have been vaccinated here.

It will contain a QR code, and a secure digital signature, or "seal". Certificates will be able to be printed off in hard copy or be stored and viewed on a smart phone.

The Ministry of Health is designing the digital vaccination certificate to be compatible with emerging international standards, so it can be recognised by as many countries as possible.

## Vaccinations

**Q. The deadline for border worker mandatory vaccination is approaching, what percentage have been vaccinated?**

It's less than two weeks until the September 30 deadline for all active privately employed border workers to have their first dose of the vaccine. As at 17 September, 94% have received at least one vaccination. Workers who have not yet been vaccinated should NOT wait for the deadline, and should get vaccinated as soon as possible.

**Q. Do employees other than Border workers need to be vaccinated?**

Both the public and private sector are supporting their employees to be vaccinated. Businesses have been doing this in a range of ways, from encouraging their workers to get vaccinated and allowing them to do this within work hours, through to some offering giveaways for attending vaccination centres.

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission has shared the expectation government employees will get vaccinated, but it is not a requirement. Government agencies encourage their people to get vaccinated and to do this during work time if needed.

**Q. Is support available to help ethnic communities with vaccination uptake?**

Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities Priyanca Radhakrishnan has announced \$1 million in funding has been made available to support ethnic communities in sharing vaccine information within their communities to encourage vaccine uptake.

The fund is provided by the Ministry of Health and has been set up in partnership with the Ministry for Ethnic Communities.

Eligible community organisations can submit applications for funding of up to \$50,000.

The fund is to assist organisations in providing tailored regional and local communication, and to support ethnic communities in the national vaccine rollout. For more information see the Ministry of Health website

**Q. How are vaccination rates progressing for Māori?**


Vaccination rates among Māori above the age of 55 are comparable to the rates for other ethnicities, but are lower for younger age bands.

As of 11.59pm 19 September, 291,019 Māori have at least one dose (51 percent of the Māori population) and 141,378 (25 percent) are fully vaccinated.

It is anticipated the rates for younger populations will improve as these age bands open up, as they have greater proportional numbers in younger age demographics and noting appointments have only been available to everyone aged 12 since 1 September.

MoH and DHBs are working to ensure that Māori communities can access vaccination through our Māori providers, but also through mainstream services. With a whānau-based approach – people eligible for an appointment can also take along the rest of their whanau.

**Q. How are vaccination rates progressing for Pacific Peoples?**



Ensuring Pacific people have access to COVID-19 vaccinations includes pop-up vaccination events, community outreach activity and a special 0800 number for Pacific families to call to book vaccinations, staffed by Pacific language speakers.

As of 11.59pm on 19 September, 188,534 Pacific people have had at least one dose (66 percent of the Pacific population) and 99,048 (35 percent) are fully vaccinated.