Operating Safely at Alert Level 3

Alert Level 3 for business

The guidelines announced by the Prime Minister on Thursday 16 April, allows businesses to open under Level 3 if:

- They can operate safely – workers must work from home, either by working at home or, if this is not possible, in the workplace
- Do not allow customers on their premises
- Can trade without physical contact with customers.

Operating safely means:

- Complying with the Alert Level 3 settings
- Meeting appropriate public health requirements that includes physical distancing and good hygiene practices
- Fulfilling all other health and safety obligations.

Business operations that involve close personal contact, such as engaging in face-to-face transactions, are not allowed to open. Therefore, retail businesses and malls will remain closed as will public-facing bars, restaurants, and cafes, unless they can provide phone/online orders, delivery, pick-up and drive through options.

Furniture removals, electricians, and plumbers, etc., can work in people's homes if they keep their distance (2 metres) and follow good hygiene practices.

Businesses, in all situations, will still have to follow the three pillars involved in the fight to eradicate COVID-19:

1. Keep in your 'bubble' - physical distancing at work.
2. Provide detailed contact tracing arrangements.
3. Ensure good hygiene and cleaning practices.

The 3 Pillars

1 Physical distancing

Measures that need to be implemented by businesses to keep workers physically separated include:

- Work from home if possible.

and, if this is not possible:

- Keep workers isolated and/or segregated workers in the workplace with a physical distance of 2 metres, if possible, or, at least, 1 metre.
- Use, such as solid panels and shelving - not plants or anything where there are gaps - to keep workstations separate.
- Group workers into 'team bubbles' and keep these 'work bubbles' separate.
- Stagger 'team bubbles' start times and breaks.
- Limit the number of people at work and in 'bubbles' by using, for example, a scheduling or booking system.

2 Contact tracing

Businesses must detail who, what, when, how and even why people met, whether its workers in a supermarket, factory, an office or at a meeting or worksite. A sign in/out procedure must be maintained.

A way to trace all contacts will be particularly important for meetings and site visits and some form of Contact Tracing Record must be kept. See an example of such a record at the end of this article.

3 Good hygiene and cleaning practices

Promotion of general good hygiene and cleaning standards is important. Posters and expert COVIA-19 information is available from the [COVID-19 site](#).

Cough and sneeze etiquette (cover cough and sneeze with disposable tissues or the bend of an elbow) must be followed with closed bins available.

Regular washing of hands is an effective way to prevent catching COVID-19. Businesses must provide supply soap and warm water as well as the means to dry hands. Hand sanitisers and/or alcohol-based hand rub should also be freely available in the workplace and in vehicles.

All touchable workstations and equipment (such as desks, tables, phones, keyboards, and mouse) and common area surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Businesses must supply appropriate cleaning material, disinfectant, bleach, closed disposal bins and disposable gloves, etc., and ensure that cleaning and disinfection is carried out regularly and frequently. It may even ask office employees, for example, to help clean common areas during the workday day.

Personal cutlery, glasses, and plates, etc., should be washed in a dishwasher or, even better, brought in by the user and taken home again to be washed.

Bathrooms and floors should be cleaned regularly and frequently with separate sets of disposable cleaning equipment.

Protection measures

Personal Protective Equipment

Businesses must provide all required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Additional PPE to protect people from COVID-19 should also be used when appropriate. PPE must be kept clean and free from virus and gems.

The WHO recommends that facemasks, gowns and gloves only be worn if the recommended physical distance between people cannot be maintained. Freely distributed disposable gloves, though, may be useful.

Meetings and site visits

If a meeting or work site visit is needed, the following should be considered.

- Could the meeting or visit be conducted using technology?
- Invite only essential attendees to the meeting.
- Restrict meeting time to a minimum by completing work before after the meeting.
- Segregate meeting attendees from the work force.
- Ask any attendee who is unwell or who has symptoms to not attend.
- Ask attendees to wash their hands before, during and after the meeting.
- Ask attendees to use the hand sanitiser or an alcohol-based hand rub before, during and after the meeting.
- Ensure that there is physical distancing between attendees.
- Have an isolation room, with medical supplies, in case an attendee becomes unwell.
- Have the nearest health care hotline number and the location of the nearest COVID-19 testing station available.
- Keep details of the meeting or site visit and attendees (email, mobile phone and address, etc.) to allow contact tracing if necessary.

Attendees, too, must ensure that their expectations are clearly communicated and met before agreeing to meet.

Travel and vehicle use

If there is a need to travel, then the driver should:

- Consider whether they really need to go?
- Ensure that the business knows the details of the trip and c omplete a register to detail where, when and who they met – adapt the Contact Record to provide all the required contact tracing details
- Use only one petrol station to refuel, and note it in the record
- Make sure that they have appropriate PPE and sanitiser
- Segregate any passengers in the vehicle
- Wipe, with disinfectant, door handles, steering wheel, console, and anything they touch in the vehicle before and after the trip
- Wash worn clothes.

Other measures

Communication of business information

Business will need to provide regular and transparent information about COVID-19 and its effects on its operation. Changes to plans, workflow, supplier chains and relationship with clients and stakeholders, etc., need to be discussed with and understood by everyone.

IT security and tools

Whether workers are in the office or at home, IT is important, particularly in keeping information and data secure. Businesses will need to talk to their IT to update security arrangements both at the workplace and at home, provide collaboration tools and, maybe, set up cloud services.

There are several communication and collaboration tools that could be used. These include:

- Microsoft Teams, Skype, Google Meet and Zoom
- Call and video apps such as WhatsApp and Messenger.
- GoToMeeting, for group video calls where screens need to be shared, and GoToWebinar for large scale presentations.
- Slack – The tool integrates more than 1500 apps, making file access and sharing a breeze. With Slack, you can automate mundane tasks, organize important files, and exchange information easily and quickly.
- Trello is a visual collaboration tool for planning tasks and projects. It offers a digital board to create, organize and prioritize actions. Administrators or managers can even define workflows, assign tasks to individuals or teams, set deadlines and monitor progress.
- Google Drive – It's effective for creating, collaborating, and sharing text files, presentations, spreadsheets, and more.
- Serene – Helps to cut out any distractions, remain focused and complete tasks faster.
- Toggl – Both teams and individuals can use this tool to track time.

Policies

Driving policy

Businesses should update their Driving Vehicles policy to reflect additional COVID-19 measures such as those outlined above.

Meeting policy

A 'no meeting' policy should be considered. If it is necessary to hold a meeting, the conditions which would need to be met for the meeting to go ahead should be detailed.

Sickness policy

Business need to update their sickness policy to direct any person who is unwell, shows any COVID-19 symptoms or is using paracetamol or ibuprofen to go, or remain, at home.

A daily assessment of worker health, physical and mental, should be included in this policy.

Visitor policy

It is perhaps wise not to allow visitors or customers into the workplace at all during the Alert Levels.

Health, safety and well being

Primary duty of care

Business still have the primary duty of care to keep their workers safe and healthy under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 2015 and will have to be alert to new risks created by COVID-19.

It is also important that there is open and honest communication, in a supporting culture, that allows people to talk about their issues and anxieties and to be reassured that they are not alone.

Working from home

Businesses will still be responsible for ensuring that their people are safe and healthy whether they are in a workplace or working from home. If at home, then, the worker should complete a hazard register and take measures to control risks. They should also ensure that their workstation is ergonomically set up.

It is also important that people working from home remain connected and can communicate with others, so the collaboration and communicated tools listed above may help.

Resources

Useful resources and information are available at:

- https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/covid-19/
- https://www.business.govt.nz/covid-19
- https://covid19.govt.nz/
- https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks

ConstructSafe are offering their ConstructSafe Platform and an app that helps keep people in contact when out on the job, traces their movements and allows for self-reporting 'checks' on their own physical and mental health.

Refer to http://www.constructsafe.kiwi/ to find out more.

References

Information reviewed in writing this article included:

- The WHO: Getting Workplace Ready for Covid-19 sourced at https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf
- The Ministry of Health information on COVID-19 sourced at https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus
- COVID-19 government site at https://covid19.govt.nz/businesses-and-employees/essential-businesses/

Contact Tracing Record

Complete this record if you have attended a meeting or site visit, etc. Make sure you save this record for three (3) months.

Date of meeting/site visit _____

Your name		Organisation	
Mobile		Email		Other	
Meeting/site location			
Attendees	Organisation	Mobile	email	Other

Travel details (describe how you got to the meeting or site)

Your signature		Date	

Continued

Attendees	Organisation	Mobile	email	Other

Other