

COVID-19 (coronavirus) Building and Construction Industry Toolbox Talk and Advisory

This document has been prepared as a general guide 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 back in lockdown as of 11.59pm Tuesday, 17 August 2021. Most Building and Construction work has been shut down at Alert Level 4.

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

New Zealand is at COVID-19 Alert Level 4 as of 11.59pm Tuesday, 17 August. From that time, all building and construction work must have ceased, other than essential building and construction work. As of Monday, 23 August there are a total of 107 reported community cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand, all of which are based in the North Island.

New Zealand's previous lockdown measures proved successful and are shown to be vital to the prevention of death and long-term economic disruption. It is critical 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 lockdown is lifted and we return to lower alert levels. Additionally, in order to ensure that we can be trusted to operate at Alert Level 3, we need to act with integrity during lockdown.

Since the announcement on 17 August, the government has outlined updated Alert Level guidance that has taken additional measures to combat the more volatile Delta variant. The latest version of the government's guidance can be found [here](#).

Over the past week CHASNZ, NZCIC and many of our member organisations have undertaken work to review and update Alert Level 4 building protocols. CHASNZ published the [COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols for New Zealand Residential Construction Sites](#) at the end of last week. In addition to the Alert Level 4 protocols, the protocols for working at Alert Level 3 have also undergone review. All Building protocols can be viewed on the [CHASNZ website](#).

Additionally, the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy scheme was reinstated on 17 August 2021. It is available to all businesses and self-employed persons that meet the criteria. Learn more and apply on the [Work and Income website](#). Applications will be accepted for two weeks from the announcement date.

What Building and Construction work can be undertaken at Alert Level 4?

Building, construction, and maintenance services can be provided during Alert Level 4 only if required for one or both of the following:

- to address immediate risks to health and safety
- nationally important infrastructure

Nationally important infrastructure means infrastructure that enables or supports supply chains that are needed for one or both of the following:

- to provide for the current needs of people and communities
- to enable or support the recovery of the whole or any part of New Zealand from the effects of COVID-19.

Any entity with statutory responsibilities for building and resource consenting that is necessary to enable the building, construction, and maintenance services.

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 – sites need to stay vacant at Alert Level 4. 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.

A more detailed outline of what work can and cannot occur at COVID-19 Alert Level 4 can be found on the [MBIE Building Performance website](#).

Messages from the Construction Sector Accord

The Construction Sector Accord (CSA) released a helpful list of FAQs last week. [See the full list here](#).

Additionally, the CSA shared some key messages for the building and construction sector. NZCIC echoes and shares the sentiments outlined below.

Key messages:

- Non-urgent work must wait. Any work that can be delayed, should be delayed, to minimise the risk of person to person transmission of COVID-19.
- Building, construction and maintenance services may be able to operate during COVID-19 Alert Level 4 restrictions if they meet the [Government criteria of Alert Level 4 businesses and services](#).
- If your work does not meet the criteria or you're unsure if it does, you should defer the work to when the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- It is the responsibility of all businesses in New Zealand to check whether they meet the criteria for operating at Alert Level 4. MBIE has published guidance with examples of the type of work that would meet the criteria, but cannot make these decisions on behalf of businesses.
- Health and safety of workers remains paramount during Alert Level 4. Employers should limit the number of people on site so everyone can safely stay two metres apart.

Additional Accord messages:

- The Construction Sector Accord urges employers to be responsible during Alert Level 4 and to show leadership on looking after their people and their customers.
- We want to see construction businesses supporting the letter and the spirit of the law, which is about keeping people safe. That means non-urgent work must wait.
- The Delta variant is more transmissible than previous forms of the virus, therefore guidelines are more stringent than previous lockdowns. The updated CHASNZ health and safety guidelines reflect this, and provide details of the additional precautions that should be taken by workers. The CHASNZ guidance also calls out the importance of getting staff vaccinated, and ensuring that staff have time-off to receive their vaccines.
- The CSA has published [guidance for the construction sector in the COVID-19 environment](#). The CSA encourages open and transparent dialogue between clients and their supply chain partners to try and achieve the best outcome for the project. For practical tips on doing so, see the CSA's recently published [COVID-19 Construction Risk Management guidance](#).

During Alert Level 4

Many of us were under the impression that New Zealand would never be in COVID-19 Alert Level 4 again. This will have a major impact on individuals and organisations. **Some** considerations to make as we navigate Alert Level 4 and move towards lower Alert Levels are:

- Maintaining open, honest, and non-judgemental lines of communication between employees and employers.
- Sharing resources such as [Mates in Construction](#)'s 24/7 help line (0800 111 315) and reinstated daily free [Lunch Room chats](#) which are 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 wellbeing, take a look at [CHASNZ's Pocket Guide](#).
- For those on wages that may struggle for money during isolation, think about how you can support your staff and each other for food and necessities.
- This lockdown is a good time to complete training modules, webinars or other work that can be completed while social distancing, 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!

Additional COVID-19 Resources

- [See NZCIC's Guide to Perfect PPE](#)
- [See NZCIC's Tips to Keep Work With BCAs Moving Remotely](#)
- [Workplace operations at COVID-19 alert levels — business.govt.nz](#)
- [Doing business at Alert Level 4 | Unite against COVID-19 \(covid19.govt.nz\)](#)
- If you have any questions relating to the building and construction sector, email info@building.govt.nz
- For businesses and individuals wanting more information on essential businesses, email AL4businessservices@mbie.govt.nz or call 0800 424 946.

For any media inquiries or if you're interested in becoming a member of the NZCIC, please contact NZCIC's Executive Director, Graham Burke at graham@grahamburke.co.nz or 021 249 3459.