

COVID-19 Health Border Advisory (21) – 26 June 2020

Dear Colleagues

This is the twenty-first health border advisory relating to COVID-19. These Border Advisories are available on the Ministry of Health's website, along with guidance, fact sheets and updates. We encourage you to keep checking the Ministry's website for updated information at: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>.

This Health Border advisory is independent of, and additional to, Immigration border advice. For Immigration-related advice please visit <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19>.

Summary:

This Border Advisory includes the following information:

- Update on the current situation - update on numbers
- New Zealand COVID-19 Alert Level
- Summary of current border measures
- Entry and exit health processes at international airports – now includes health assessments of air crew
- Exemptions to managed isolation – all compassionate exemptions from managed isolation have been suspended
- Advice to persons transiting through New Zealand to another country – no change
- Advice for air crew – updated requirements for air crew
- Strengthening of maritime pathway border controls through the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Maritime Border Order 2020) which comes in force on at 11.59pm on 30 June 2020 – this replaces previous advice on craft and persons arriving via the maritime pathway with changes to strengthen the controls on the maritime border
- Persons arriving on yachts and pleasure craft are subject to the requirements of the new order
- Personal protective equipment for border staff – reminder
- Ministry of Health testing strategy – update
- Further information and resources – no change.

Current situation

On 11 March, the Director-General of the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic. The first reported cases of COVID-19 were reported from Hubei Province, China in late December 2019. Since then cases have continued to be reported in many countries.

By 24 June 2020, as reported by the World Health Organization, there have been 9,129,146 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 473,797 deaths. For further details see:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>.

Given the global pandemic and the numbers of COVID-19 cases being brought into New Zealand by arriving passengers, New Zealand has implemented enhanced border measures.

New Zealand COVID-19 Alert level

New Zealand is currently at *Alert Level 1– Prepare*. Further information on the all of Government response and New Zealand COVID-19 Alert Levels can be found here: <https://covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/covid-19-alert-system/#new-zealand-covid-19-alert-levels>.

Summary of current border measures

The following is a summary of the current border measures. Further information on the immigration measures can be found on the immigration website <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/border-closures-and-exceptions>:

- Only New Zealand residents and citizens (and their children and partners) are permitted to enter New Zealand. This includes the Realm countries (the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau), Australian citizens and permanent residents ordinarily resident in New Zealand, airline crew and marine cargo crew.
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- There are some exceptions, on a case-by-case basis, for critical workers, humanitarian reasons, partners or dependent children of visa holders living in New Zealand, and others (<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/border-closures-and-exceptions>).
- Foreign national marine crew entering via the air border (eg. for fishing crew changes) must apply, via their employers or shipping agents, for an exception to the border restrictions. Further information is available here: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/covid-19-information-for-employers>.
- Cruise vessels are not permitted to enter New Zealand's territorial waters on public health grounds until 30 June 2020. This will be extended through the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Maritime Border Order 2020 (see further information below).

Health border measures

- Every passenger arriving into New Zealand on a flight will either enter a managed isolation or quarantine facility for a minimum period of 14 days from their time of arrival.
- A very small number of people will be eligible for exemption from managed isolation, such as medical transfers, people with medical or physical needs which can't be managed in the accommodation provided, transit passengers, and people entering the country as essential health workers. From 17 June 2020, all compassionate leave exemptions were suspended, and no new exemptions were issued. Legal guardians can apply to join unaccompanied minors in managed facilities.
 - If an exemption is granted, the person must complete their 14-day self-isolation at home.
 - Anyone symptomatic on arrival will still be placed in quarantine
- The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order 2020, which came into force on 22 June 2020, includes an exemption for marine crew (immediately transferring to a vessel) from 14 days of isolation or quarantine in a managed facility.

Border measures in detail

Entry and exit health processes at international airports

Health staff are undertaking entry screening for all flights. Every traveller entering New Zealand via the aviation pathway will be assessed for COVID-19 on arrival. If travellers have a domestic transit flight, they will not be allowed to connect to that flight. From 29 May arriving air crew are also being assessed on arrival.

If a traveller is symptomatic on arrival, they will be placed in a quarantine facility for 14 days and tested for COVID-19. If a traveller is not symptomatic on arrival, they will be placed in an approved managed isolation facility for 14 days.

Exit screening is currently limited to travellers and flights departing to the Pacific.

Exemptions from managed isolation

As noted above, a small number of people will be eligible for an exemption from managed isolation. These include medical transfers, and those with serious medical conditions that cannot be managed in the accommodation provided. Exemptions from managed isolation are granted centrally through the email address MI_Exemptions@health.govt.nz.

If a traveller does not hold an exemption or are not otherwise exempted under the Health Act Order (eg. marine crew immediately transferring to a vessel), they will be placed in a managed facility. No exemptions will be granted at the border.

Once in a managed facility, requests for exemption can be discussed with the facility management team who will send information through to the MI Exemptions team. A person with an exemption will still need to pass the health screening check prior to leaving for self-isolation and receive a negative test result. No exemptions can be granted from high-risk facilities.

From 17 June 2020 all compassionate exemptions from managed isolation have been suspended. People entering New Zealand should not expect to be granted compassionate exemptions for grieving with family, spending time with someone at end of life, or attending funerals or tangihanga.

Advice for persons transiting through New Zealand to another country

Transit arrangements that detail who may transit New Zealand are published by Immigration NZ and available on their website at <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/coronavirus-update-inz-response>.

Advice for air crew

The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order 2020, which came into force on 22 June 2020, excludes aircraft pilots, flight crew members, marine crew (immediately transferring to a vessel), and medical attendants, assisting with medical air transfers, from 14 days of managed isolation or quarantine if they follow the Ministry of Health requirements. It replaces the Health Act Order Section 70(1)(e), (ea) and (f).

Ministry of Health officials have reviewed the requirements that allow air crew exemption from quarantine. This review was undertaken in response to concerns being raised about the risks from aircrew coming to New Zealand. The key changes are:

- Amending the risk criteria and requiring additional risk mitigations.
- Confirming the definition of aircrew for the purpose of the guidelines.
- Requiring NZ based crew deemed high risk to self-isolate on their return for 48 hours, have a COVID-19 test and continue to self-isolate at home until the result of the test is known.

The updated guidance is available on the Ministry of Health website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-advice-airline-crew>.

Strengthening of maritime pathway border controls

The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Maritime Border) Order 2020 was recently made to strengthen maritime border controls to further mitigate the risks from COVID-19 entering New Zealand via the maritime pathway. A copy of the order can be found here <https://uniteforrecovery.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/legislation-and-key-documents/#legal-notice>.

The Order was made under section 11 of the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 by the Minister of Health. It will come into force at 11.59pm on 30 June 2020.

The purpose of the Order is to:

- Restrict the vessels that may arrive in New Zealand, and
- Put in place strict isolation or quarantine requirements for those arriving at the maritime border.

All non-New Zealanders arriving on New Zealand flagged vessels, or on any foreign-flagged 'exempted' vessels, must be approved to enter and stay in New Zealand in accordance with New Zealand's immigration requirements (<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/border-closures-and-exceptions>).

The information below summarises the Order. Separate INTERIM operational guidance has been developed.

Restrictions on vessels permitted to enter New Zealand

Foreign-flagged vessels (including yachts and pleasure craft) are prohibited from entering New Zealand (land, ports and territorial sea (except for innocent passage)), unless they are specifically exempted as listed below:

- If the vessel is in distress and/or it is necessary for the vessel to arrive in New Zealand to preserve human life.
- An Antarctic ship
- A Cargo ship to allow the loading and unloading of cargo.
- A fishing ship, that is unloading its catch, provisioning or refuelling, or both; or embarking or disembarking crew.
- A foreign State ship that has been granted diplomatic clearance by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- A ship where there is a compelling need for the ship to arrive in New Zealand for provisioning and refuelling, or both; OR to deliver the ship to a business, including for the purpose of repairing or refitting the ship; AND the Director-General has granted the ship permission to arrive in New Zealand.

- A ship granted permission by the Director-General of Health (after consulting any relevant agencies) for humanitarian reasons or other compelling needs.

New Zealand vessels are permitted into New Zealand, but must comply with applicable legislation, including any relevant border control imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation/covid-19-border-controls>.

The Order exempts persons arriving on warships (New Zealand and foreign) and other Government ships (New Zealand and foreign) from its requirements.

Movement of vessels after their arrival

Vessels in New Zealand may undertake the following movements without being subject to any prohibitions on entry to New Zealand or any additional isolation or quarantine requirements upon returning to port:

- a. A ship arriving in New Zealand, if the ship was previously in New Zealand and left to support an offshore platform on the continental shelf and/or to support another ship operating offshore. These movements are only permitted if the ship has not interacted with any other ship or place other than those the ship is supporting.
- b. Fishing ships previously at a New Zealand port that left New Zealand to operate in one or more of New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone, the high seas, or the exclusive economic zone of another state. These movements are only permitted if the ship has not interacted with any other ship and has not embarked or disembarked any crew member.

Quarantine and isolation for persons arriving on vessels

All persons arriving via the maritime border (with limited exceptions) must adhere to the quarantine or isolation requirements. This includes those arriving on small craft and pleasure craft. The exception to this rule only applies to a New Zealand warship, a foreign State ship, a New Zealand Government ship and, and crew on board vessels that are not leaving the vessel.

People wanting to disembark the vessel must remain in quarantine or isolation on the vessel for at least 14 days except in certain circumstances which are noted below. The 14-day period of quarantine/isolation begins when the vessel arrives in New Zealand. The definition of arriving has the same meaning as the Customs and Excise Act 2018 section 5(1). New Zealand is defined as *"means the land and waters enclosed by the outer limits of the territorial sea of New Zealand."*

If the vessel is an Antarctic ship the 14-day period is counted from the time the ship was last in port AND the time when it last took a person on board.

Quarantine/isolation on board a vessel requires all persons on board to minimise contact with any other person to the extent possible, in order to reduce the risk of a chain of transmission ie passing COVID-19 to other crew members. It also includes being examined or tested for COVID-19 at any time during the quarantine/isolation period.

The exception to this is if the ship has been at sea for at least 28 consecutive days AND during which no person has had contact with any other persons other than those people who were on board the ship when it most recently departed AND Customs and Excise Act 2018 requirements have been adhered to AND where a medical officer of health or health protection officer is reasonably satisfied that no persons on board have displayed symptoms of COVID-19.

If a person is unable or unwilling to remain in isolation or quarantine on the vessel, a medical officer or health protection officer may transfer the person to a managed facility to undergo their isolation or quarantine.

Circumstances where a person may disembark the ship

A person may disembark from the ship to undertake an essential task. The essential tasks include (limited only to):

- Loading and unloading cargo from the ship on which the person arrived.
- Maintenance of the ship on which the person arrived.
- Undertaking safety checks.
- Necessary preparations of the ship on which the person arrived (for example rigging gangways).

Persons undertaking such tasks must:

- Remain as close as reasonably possible to the vessel.

- Take reasonable steps to minimise the spread of COVID-19 (including undertaking physical distancing measures from other persons (not on their vessels) and wearing personal protective equipment (masks and gloves) if coming into contact with a person not on their vessel.
- Follow any other directions of an enforcement officer.

Port staff working on vessels or with crew where the crew are still in quarantine/isolation should follow the advice for border staff provided previously. This advice is repeated in a separate section, below.

Other reasons a person may be permitted to leave the vessel include preserving life or safety; to access any court or tribunal; to access health services; if required by a medical officer of health or health protection officer to move to a managed facility; if required to leave the vessel under Part 4 of the Health Act 1956; to comply with a court order or other enactment related to detention. In these instances, the person is permitted to depart only if they have, where practicable, advised and complied with any instructions of an enforcement officer.

Crew members who are joining or departing a vessel

Crew changes - maritime crew arriving by air

Maritime crew arriving in New Zealand by air who are heading to vessels which are **departing** a New Zealand port, must travel as quickly and directly as reasonably practicable to the vessel from their airport of arrival. They must travel from the airport to the vessel using dedicated private transport.

Maritime crew arriving in New Zealand by air who are heading to vessels which are not departing New Zealand must comply with New Zealand's immigration requirements. They must travel to a managed facility and remain in isolation there for at least 14 days.

Crew changes - maritime crew departing by air

Maritime crew members wishing to depart their vessel and remain in New Zealand must comply with New Zealand's immigration requirements: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/border-closures-and-exceptions>.

A maritime crew member, who wishes to disembark their ship before they have completed 14 days of isolation on the ship must either transfer directly (on the same day) to the airport via private transport, or if the flight is not on the same day, transfer to a managed facility for 14 days or until the flight departs (whichever is the earliest). Any costs associated with crew undertaking isolation in a managed facility will be at the employer's cost. Information on managed facilities can be found here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation/covid-19-border-controls/covid-19-managed-isolation-and-quarantine>

Yachts and pleasure craft

Under the Marine Border Order, yachts and pleasure craft are banned from entering New Zealand unless they meet the exemption criteria for ships that are listed above (and are in the Order). Persons on board yachts and pleasure craft are now required to meet the same criteria as above.

Personal Protection for Border Staff

It is essential all frontline staff working at the border follow the advice on personal protective equipment and measures to keep themselves safe. This applies to staff working in the maritime and aviation pathways.

If you work in an area with high passenger flow, there are steps you should always take to reduce your chance of respiratory infection. This is especially important if you are interacting with passengers or crew who have travelled from or through any overseas port in the past 14 days. The advice from WHO and the Ministry of Health is:

- Avoid close contact with people suffering acute respiratory infections.
- Frequently wash and dry hands, especially after contact with ill people or their environment.
- Avoid close contact with sick live farm animals or wild animals.
- When coughing, maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow, disposable tissues or clothing, and wash and dry hands afterwards or use hand sanitizer.

Staff are also required to follow these infection control processes:

- When staff are required to wear gloves (for example when conducting personal searches) nitrile gloves should be worn. Ensure you remove your gloves with the correct technique, and dispose of gloves in a MPI quarantine bin, or if this is not readily available in a standard rubbish bin.
- Be conscious of not taking gloved hands or ungloved hands to your eyes, nose or mouth and use a thorough handwashing technique.
- Before and after wearing gloves wash and dry your hands using the correct technique or immediately use the antiseptic gel (hand sanitizer) at your work station.
- If there is droplet contamination of an area (eg. from coughs), use sodium hypochlorite spray to disinfect the area and dispose of wipes in designated bin. Note, normal clean wipes are not the same as antiseptic sodium hypochlorite and will not remove viruses.
- If staff caring for the very young, elderly or people with compromised immune systems have any concerns, please speak to your line manager.

Border staff who are working in situations that meet all three of the below requirements should wear a mask and gloves. A surgical/medical mask is acceptable:

- passengers/crew have come from overseas in the last 14 days, or are coughing, sneezing, or visibly sweating **and**
- you are going to be with the passenger/crew longer than 15 minutes **and**
- you are within 2 metre of the passenger/crew
- in addition, border staff may wear a mask and gloves for all personal searches as a precautionary measure or if they will be within 2 metres of a passenger/crew for 15 minutes or longer.

Ministry of Health COVID-19 testing strategy

New Zealand now has few active cases of COVID-19. This is due in large part to the great work of our health sector teams around the country. Thank you again for that effort.

However, our efforts need to continue to keep COVID-19 out of the New Zealand community. As part of the Government's ongoing COVID-19 elimination strategy we are updating various aspects of our public health response to reflect the current situation and expected future needs.

Two areas being updated are our testing strategy and the 'case definition'. The changes identified below will come into effect shortly.

Key elements of the new testing strategy are:

- **testing anyone presenting to primary or secondary care who has clinical symptoms consistent with COVID-19**, with priority given to those who meet a new higher index of suspicion (HIS) criteria (see below)
- thorough **testing around a confirmed case** with:
 - testing of symptomatic close contacts
 - wider testing of close contacts if required upon advice of the Medical Officer of Health
- **testing at the border** to mitigate risk including:
 - testing international travellers twice while in managed isolation facilities as a requirement of their exit from managed facilities
 - regular health checks of border-facing workers (for example customs, biosecurity, immigration or aviation security staff at airports) and staff in managed isolation facilities and testing those who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19
 - ongoing testing of these border workforce groups
 - quarantine exempt people (such as air crew).

The Ministry will also compile weekly surveillance data of testing volumes and results from each of the four testing strands by DHB for consideration by a panel made up of relevant technical experts and Māori and Pacific advisers from across the Ministry of Health and ESR.

Further information and resources

The COVID-19 webpages are updated daily: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus> and <https://covid19.govt.nz>

Advice for airline crew <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-advice-airline-crew>

Advice on cleaning <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/general-cleaning-information-covid-19>

Advice for hotel operators and staff <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-hotels-and-hotel-staff>

Advice on personal protective measures <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-essential-workers/personal-protective-equipment-use-non-health-essential-workers>

Advice for travellers <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-advice-travellers>

Advice on self-isolation <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation>

Advice on caring for yourself and others who have, or may have, COVID-19 at home <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/caring-yourself-and-others-who-have-or-may-have-covid-19-home>

All of Government Factsheet for Welfare Support: information on what welfare support is available for people who may be self-isolating or are not sure what assistance may be available here <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources> or phone the 0800 Government Helpline on 0800 779 997 (9am–5pm, seven days/week). For health specific questions, please call Healthline directly on 0800 611 116 (24 hours/day, seven days/week).

Border advisories <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-resources-border-sector>

Border controls <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation/covid-19-border-controls>

Contact details for District Health Board public health units <https://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/public-health-units/public-health-unit-contacts>

Current case definition <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/case-definition-covid-19-infection>

Factsheets for close contacts with a confirmed case, close contacts of a suspected case and people who have been on an aircraft with an unwell person: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/contact-tracing-covid-19>

General information about COVID-19 <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public>

Immigration requirements and border exceptions: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/border-closures-and-exceptions>

Information for the border sector <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-resources-border-sector>

Public events and mass gatherings <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-public-events-and-mass-gatherings>

Requesting an exception to enable essential workers to enter New Zealand <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/border-closures-and-exceptions>

World Health Organization situation updates and advice: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus> and <https://www.who.int/csr/don/en> (updates only).

World Health Organization guidance: Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/operational-considerations-for-managing-covid-19-cases-outbreak-on-board-ships>

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