

# COVID-19 | Level 2 Health and Safety

## Working at Level 2

Under Level 2 most businesses will be open. The emphasis remains on businesses implementing strong public health measures including:

- Physical distancing
- Enabling tracing
- Maintaining clean workplaces and ensuring everyone onsite can maintain good hygiene
- Ensuring that those who feel unwell stay home

Businesses must meet public health requirements and their health and safety requirements and duties under the [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#) (HSWA).

It is also important to ensure that non-COVID related harm and risks are also being dealt with. With new ways of working implemented, it is critical that non-COVID related risks are being eliminated or otherwise managed.

## Worker Engagement, Participation & Representation

Our health and safety legislation requires employers to engage with workers on all matters that effect workers' health and safety. [This is a legal requirement](#). This includes when your employer is making decisions about operating at Level 2 (such as considering what control measures are being put in place, as well as listening to (and acting on) any concerns raised by workers).

Engagement in this context does not mean seeking worker sign-off on decisions that have already been made. Workers have the right to participate in improving workplace health and safety – your views must be sought and taken into account. Participation also means on an ongoing basis, as we move through alert levels and issues arise or become clearer, plans and processes need to update continuously with worker input. [Find more information here](#).

You know the risks in the workplace as you face the risks in the workplace - you have a crucial perspective when risks are being assessed. Without this input key risks might be overlooked.

Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) have an important role in workplaces and have specific powers under HSWA to protect workers as well as assist with workplace health and safety matters. HSRs should have a prominent role in plans and processes to operate through Level 2.

If you have any concerns about your or your colleague's health and safety at work, speak up to your employer, engage your union, and get in touch with your Health and Safety Representative.

### ***Safe Work Plans***

A good way for PCBUs (Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking) to engage with workers and unions onsite is to work together on safe work plans for operating at the various alert levels. This can ensure that

# COVID-19 | Level 2 Health and Safety

concerns are being addressed, effective control measures are being implemented, and everyone onsite can see that the business is considering the health and safety of workers and members of the public.

## Key Level 2 Control Measures

PCBUs must continue to manage the risks of COVID in the workplace at Level 2. The key control measures that have been identified by the Ministry of Health and WorkSafe include:

- Keeping people with COVID symptoms away from worksites
- Physical distancing
- Contact tracing
- Good hygiene
- PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

This is not a comprehensive list and, while these measures will be required, site specific control measures will depend on the specific risks of your work and workplace.

Consider what works best for you and your workmates. Also consider if the implementation of any specific control measure creates a new risk - for example will fatigue be an issue from a change in how your hours are split through the week?

COVID.govt resources including posters and information sheets [can be found here](#).

## Keeping People with COVID Symptoms Away from the Workplace

While this may seem the most obvious, it is crucial that PCBUs have considered this and have a process in place, on which workers are consulted and engaged.

From a worker's perspective:

- Do you know what the symptoms of COVID-19 include and [what to look out for](#)?
- What is the process if you or another feel sick at work? Has your employer confirmed that if you are feeling sick that you are able to leave immediately?
- What will the processes be for anyone at higher risk of the virus?
- What happens in regard to leave or pay while you're at home?
- Will you need a medical certificate?
- If someone at your workplace leaves with COVID-like symptoms – how will the workplace be cleaned in line with the [relevant public health requirements](#).

## Physical Distancing

Physical distancing measures are still in place through Level 2. In general, the rule for businesses is to ensure 1m between workers, and all other people kept 2m away from each other and workers on site.

Note that the general rule does not apply to health and education services, public transport, and other specified crown facilities and services. The minimum expectation in these businesses is to maintain 1m at all times.

# COVID-19 | Level 2 Health and Safety

The minimum requirements on physical distancing can be confusing. [WorkSafe have provided some service specific guidance here.](#)

Physical distancing needs to be implemented [so far as reasonably practicable](#). And if it's not reasonably practicable the business will need to implement additional infectious disease control measures. Keep in mind that just because implementing distancing might be difficult, this does not mean your employer can refuse to do it. For example, your employer can't bypass physical distancing expectations by simply providing PPE.

## *“Close Proximity” Environments*

Some workplaces will be providing services that involve close personal contact (i.e. work tasks where it will be impossible to maintain 1m). In these cases, work within 1m should be limited as much as possible and at all other times 1m distancing maintained.

Where undertaking work closer than 1m, other additional safety measures should be implemented to mitigate the risk.

## Contact Tracing

WorkSafe's expectation is for businesses to [keep contact tracing records for all workers and those who carry out work for the business or service](#). Extra Ministry of Health information can be [found here](#).

Businesses now are required to make tracing easy for all onsite to complete by having the NZ COVID tracker QR code posters up.

From a worker's perspective it's important to engage on how contact tracing will be implemented in your workplace especially if you work across multiple worksites or work in populated worksites.

## Good Hygiene Practices

Your employer must provide you with the ability to maintain good hygiene at work. Your employer's obligations include providing you with adequate facilities and equipment to ensure you can maintain good hygiene, as well as providing information and training on maintaining good hygiene at work.

See the [Ministry of Health guidance on COVID hygiene](#).

Good hygiene includes:

- Hand hygiene – that is, [washing hands](#) regularly with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds), or cleansing with good quality hand sanitiser (minimum 60% alcohol).
- [Coughing or sneezing](#) into a tissue or your elbow and then performing hand hygiene.
  - Disposing of tissues immediately.
  - Not touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands.
- Cleaning surfaces regularly, especially those that might be touched frequently.
- Ensuring good air ventilation.

# COVID-19 | Level 2 Health and Safety

You should also consider:

- What provisions have been put in place to clean your workplace and sanitize equipment and work vehicles.
- How open plan offices or offices with hot desks will operate and stay clean.
- How and when cleaning will take place, ensuring enough time is planned for in advance.
- If 'self-cleaning' is being implemented, that the PCBU is ensuring the appropriate training information and equipment needed for this is provided.

## PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

At Level 2 the public health advice is to wear masks where physical distancing is not possible. Remember it is crucial to ensure good hygiene alongside wearing masks – incorrect use can carry risks ([find more information here](#))

While PPE may not be required to operate in Level 2, if you are concerned about working without it engage with your employer alongside your Health and Safety Representative and union representative to ensure that the risk of COVID-19 is being managed so far as is reasonably practicable. This means:

- Your employer has ensured all reasonably practicable control measures are in place to manage the risk of COVID-19. This may include physical distancing, staggered breaks, minimal contact with others, physical barriers, providing clean and well-equipped facilities to ensure good hygiene, and safety equipment.
- That the messaging of what control measures are in place is clear and being provided to all workers.
- That worker concerns are being actively engaged on and feedback from workers is incorporated.

More Ministry of Health information on PPE can be [found here](#).

Key things to note regarding PPE:

- If PPE is being used in your workplace, ensure it is used correctly and safely. This includes, putting it on/ taking it off, disposing of it and still maintaining good hygiene practices
- Your employer must provide information and training on how to do this. Incorrect use of PPE can be even more dangerous in spreading COVID-19.
- If you used PPE in the workplace before the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an expectation this use will continue.

## Restarting Work / Returning to Work After the Alert Level Changes

It is important that your employer continues to manage other risks as well as protecting you from the risk of COVID-19.

Remember your employer has to engage you on any decision that impacts your health and safety.

Make sure you know how to log and follow up risks and incidents in your workplace. Now is a great time to find out the procedures for reporting health and safety in your workplace. If there are none, or your work has

# COVID-19 | Level 2 Health and Safety

inadequate procedures, now is the time employers must be remedying this in line with their COVID-19 safety plans.

As work practices change to adapt to COVID-19 safe work, new risks may present themselves. If you identify any raise them with your employer, union or HSR as necessary.

## Health Monitoring

Your workplace will be encouraged to check in on your health, in order to ensure that those with [COVID-like symptoms](#) are not coming into the workplace. WorkSafe are suggesting daily check-ins where possible.

Employers should have systems in place which ensure that workers are able to self-check symptoms and if COVID symptoms are identified, have processes in place which enable workers to stay home and get tested.

Employers should be ensuring that there are no barriers for workers to do the right thing and stay home. If you come across difficulties in this regard, engage your union and/or HSR.

Health monitoring is an area in which engagement with the workforce is crucial. Especially where PCBUs intend to undertake more extensive health monitoring. Where medical information of workers is being collected, ensure that this is being held securely and is only being used to the extent of minimising the spread of COVID-19. [Privacy requirements](#) will apply to these records.

## Ensure Your Mental Health is Being Looked After as Well

Dealing with COVID-19 is stressful for people's mental health. We've been through this before and know it can be difficult.

Your employer's obligations to protect your health and safety at work include work-related mental health.

As changes to workplaces occur be mindful of your mental health and engage your channels of support to assist you including your HSR and Union reps.

Mental health resources:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/covid-19/top-tips-to-get-through/>

For a range of other mental health helplines: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/in-crisis/helplines/>