



Covid-19 Update on New Zealand Situation

FACTS

Border restrictions

- New Zealand's border remains closed to everyone, except citizens, residents and immediate family of citizens and residents.
- Workers are unable to depart New Zealand at this time due to the border restrictions in most Pacific countries and lack of flight availability. As such, it is recommended that they continue to work if they are able.

New Zealand Alert Levels & Essential Workers

- New Zealand has implemented 4 levels of alert status. From the 25th March 2020 New Zealand went into Alert Level 4 which effectively means New Zealand is currently in 'lock-down.'
- The Government recently announced New Zealand will be moving to Alert Level 3 on Tuesday 28 April for two weeks before the Government makes further decisions on our alert status. Alert level 3 allows further businesses to open up and for some regional travel to occur.
- RSE workers and fisheries workers will continue to work at all levels as *Essential* workers. Construction businesses can start work again in level 3.
- Alert 3 will largely not impact RSE workers or fisheries workers as they were already allowed to work at alert level 4.
- Employers are still required to implement new ways of working, including physical distancing, strict hygiene measures and minimising staff interactions.

Government's Epidemic Management Notice

- This came into effect on 02 April 2020 and automatically extended the visas of all temporary visa holders that were due to expire between 2 April and 9 July (inclusive) until **25 September 2020**.
- The extended visas will have the same conditions as their original visa (i.e same employer/employers, region and job title).



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- Anyone unlawfully in New Zealand (without a visa) on or before 02 April is not covered by the automatic visa extension and need to urgently rectify their visa status.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Will New Zealand's Alert level 4 impact RSE and other Pacific workers ability to work?

- RSE workers and fisheries workers will continue to work, however, their employers are required to implement new ways of working, including physical distancing and minimising staff interactions.
- Construction workers will not be able to work during Alert Level 4 but will be covered by the Government's wage subsidy and will be paid \$585.80 per worker per week as a minimum. They will be able to work when we move to Alert Level 3 (from Tuesday 28 April).

How else will Alert Level 4 impact workers?

- Employers will set strict rules for the safety of their workforce and in order to follow New Zealand law under the State of Emergency. These rules will restrict workers ability to leave their work sites and will strictly prohibit any engagement with people outside of the people they live and work with. This is to ensure they limit their contact with people that could spread the virus.

How will Alert Level 3 impact Pacific workers?

- For the most part, Alert Level 3 looks the same as Alert Level 4. People are still required to stay in their bubbles and practice social distancing. Some further businesses will open up but as RSE and fisheries workers are already working, this will not affect them.
- Workers in the Pacific Trades Partnership will be returning to work after not being able to work at Alert Level 4.

How will workers in New Zealand be supported financially if they cannot work?

- RSE workers continue to be entitled to a minimum of 30 hours per week of pay averaged over the length of their employment contract under Immigration law, regardless of whether they are able to work.



There are two subsidies available to RSE and Essential Workers through their employers:

Wage Subsidy:

- All migrant workers are entitled to the Government's wage subsidy of **\$585.50** per week per worker if they cannot work during the lock-down because the employer's business is impacted by COVID-19, and it faces laying off staff or reducing their hours.
- Employers are responsible for applying for this wage subsidy to pay their workers if they face financial difficulty.
- Workers will still need to cover the costs of their food and accommodation during their employment period, regardless of how they are paid.

Essential Workers Leave Support:

- All Essential workers are able to access the *Essential Workers Leave Support* of \$585.80, if they can't come into work because Ministry of Health (MOH) guidelines recommend they stay at home.

If any of the following criteria is applicable to any worker, MOH recommends that they do not work at this time. Someone should not work if:

- They are feeling unwell;
- They have existing health conditions that might put them at greater risk,
- They come into contact with someone who has COVID-19. In this case they must self-isolate for 14 days.
- They have tested positive for COVID-19. In this case they are required to remain off work until they've been cleared by a health professional to be released from self-isolation, or
- They are living with people who are at [higher risk if they get COVID-19](#)

*These subsidies are before tax and normal tax rates apply. Only one subsidy is payable at a time.

What happens if an RSE worker needs to self-isolate while in New Zealand?

- No RSE workers have been recorded as having contracted or suspected Covid-19.
- If an RSE worker currently in New Zealand faces a requirement to self-isolate for 14 days during their time in New Zealand (either as a confirmed COVID-19 case or due to close contact with a confirmed case), we can confirm:
 - RSE employers are required to make appropriate accommodation and pastoral care facilities available for workers.
 - Costs incurred during any self-isolation period, including accommodation and living costs are the responsibility of the worker themselves (as they are during the normal course of employment).



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- They can receive the *Essential Workers Leave Support* (see above).

WARNING

Self-isolation rules and any other government health measures must be obeyed. Visa holders who do not comply with instructions from a Health Officer can be detained and deported.

Are workers covered by insurance if they need medical treatment due to Covid-19?

- Under existing medical insurance, RSE workers are entitled to receive medical treatment for any presenting conditions, including COVID-19.
- New Zealand's Ministry of Health (MOH) covers the cost of any Covid-19 treatment for anyone in New Zealand.

What is your bubble?

- In New Zealand the term "bubble" is being used to describe the people you are allowed to have contact with during the lockdown. For most kiwis, this is only the people they live with. We are not allowed to move house or have physical contact with anyone else.
- For RSE workers their "bubble" will be the people they live and work with. They will not be able to have physical contact with anyone else. Including family and friends.

What happens if the worker can't leave but their visa is going to expire?

- All temporary migrants lawfully in New Zealand on 02 April 2020 with visas expiring before 9 July 2020 had their visas automatically extended till late September.
- If their visa expires after 09 July 2020 they will be required to return home as per usual. This could change if the epidemic notice is extended.
- Some workers will have come to the end of their existing employment contract or will soon. The RSE unit is working to vary the conditions of these workers visas to allow them to continue to work (either for a new employer or their existing employer).

Can workers move between regions and employers during this time?

- RSE workers are allowed to travel between regions and employers due to their specific role as an essential worker in the primary industries. Their travel is limited only to the travel that is absolutely necessary for them to do



their job, or get to a new job (such as moving between a Joint Agreement to Recruit under RSE). A trip to the beach or the park is not travel required to carry out essential work and they cannot choose to take up other work not RSE related.

- RSE Employers are required to submit to INZ travel and accommodation plans that meet the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Alert Level 4 guidelines. INZ must give approval before any worker is relocated. Approved workers will have an authorised letter for their travel.
- Employers are responsible for supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) to workers and must ensure the safety of workers by ensuring they stay in their "bubbles" even while moving between regions.

Can workers still remit money home during Alert Level 3 & 4?

- At this stage it is difficult for workers to remit money home unless they use online services due to limited access to in person services. It is likely that more will become available as we move to Alert Level 3.

What happens if workers breach the requirements under Alert Level 3 or 4?

- If workers breach the rules they will be warned by their employer and could potentially lose their job. If they continue to breach the rules then Immigration New Zealand will be forced to inform the New Zealand Police. They may be deported and will not be able to return to New Zealand.

