



MINISTRY OF HOUSING  
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

# COVID-19 Provider Guidance

Alert Level 3

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Guidance up-to-date as at 12 August 2020



## Contents

<b>Purpose .....</b>	<b>4</b>
When is this guidance applicable from? .....	4
We will keep you updated as Alert Levels change.....	4
<b>COVID-19 and Alert Level 3 .....</b>	<b>5</b>
What is COVID-19?.....	5
What is the COVID-19 Alert Level system.....	5
What does COVID-19 Alert Level 3 look like .....	5
<b>Keeping whānau and staff safe as you work.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Tikanga and supporting whānau Māori .....	7
Information that helps you support whānau Māori .....	7
Maintain the health and safety practices you developed when at Alert Level 4 .....	7
Work in Partnership with Government and the Wider Sector .....	8
Physically distance at Alert Level 3 .....	8
Physical distancing and safety in shared accommodation .....	8
Where a provider needs to transport whānau .....	9
Contact Tracing .....	9
Residents in shared facilities and bubbles under Alert Level 3 .....	10
If whānau or staff are unwell they must self isolate .....	10
Planning to protect whānau and staff who are more likely to experience complications associated with COVID-19.....	11
Known high risk whānau .....	11
Some whānau may not have disclosed conditions.....	11
Staff members that are high risk .....	11
Family violence .....	12
Health and safety in the workplace .....	12
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).....	13
<b>Operating your service at Alert Level 3 .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Moving whānau into accommodation safely.....	14
Tenanting vacant properties.....	14
Safe relocation .....	15
Ensure the property is clean before you tenant it.....	15
Furnishing properties.....	15
Property Maintenance .....	16

Consider if maintenance needs to happen now .....	16
Construction and housing developments .....	16
<b>MSD at Alert Level 3 Locations .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Emergency housing:.....	18
Transitional housing referrals .....	18
Public Housing Placements .....	18
Public housing assessments .....	18
Fast-tracked Income Related Rent reviews for decreased income .....	18
<b>Business continuity and working with HUD.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Recommended business continuity practices .....	19
Assurances from HUD .....	19
Community Housing Regulatory Authority.....	19
Contact us .....	19

## Purpose

This document provides guidance to housing and support service providers on how to operate safely during the COVID 19 Alert Level 3 response period. This includes guidance on:

- keeping whānau and staff safe as you work
- operating your service safely at Alert Level 3 (activities that can recommence and activities that should remain on hold)
- Business continuity and working with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

## When is this guidance applicable from?

This guidance is only applicable from the date the government dictates that New Zealand, or individual regions within New Zealand, moves to COVID-19 Alert Level 3. Please note that this may not be the same date that the announcement itself was made.

To find out what Alert Level New Zealand is currently at, visit the [covid19.govt.nz](https://covid19.govt.nz) website; the current Alert Level will be clearly displayed on the landing page of the website.

## We will keep you updated as Alert Levels change

A change in Alert Level will also be heavily reported across social media channels, radio, television and print media. If you have a contract with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) you will also receive an email from us notifying you of any change to Alert Level.

We worked with Community Housing Aotearoa and Te Matapihi to develop guidance for housing providers at all Alert Levels. All updates to provider guidance will also be distributed to you via these peak body organisations.

If you remain unclear about what Alert Level New Zealand, or any region within New Zealand, is in at any given time; please reach out to your contact at HUD.

## COVID-19 and Alert Level 3

### What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new virus that can affect your lungs and airway. Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to a range of other illnesses, such as influenza commonly referred to as the flu. Like the flu, it can be transmitted from person-to-person and is reportedly more dangerous to the elderly, the immune compromised and those with underlying health conditions.

Visit the [covid19.govt.nz](https://covid19.govt.nz) website for more information on the disease and what you can do to stop the spread. You can find more information on vulnerable people and how to keep them safe [here](#).

### What is the COVID-19 Alert Level system

New Zealand has a 4 level COVID-19 alert system. Each Alert Level tells us what measures to take to keep ourselves and others safe. It also provides us with guidelines about how we need to work at each Alert Level including any changes we may need to make to our business model and the way we operate our business.

Visit the COVID-19 website to find out more about New Zealand's 4 Level COVID-19 Alert System.

### What does COVID-19 Alert Level 3 look like

Under Alert Level 3 we will have significant restrictions on our day-to-day lives and will not operate as business as usual. However, essential services and connections can occur with restrictions.

You can find detailed information about what is and is not allowed at Alert Level 3 [here](#), but key things to note are:

- We must keep to a household [bubble](#), but this bubble can include:
  - Close family / whānau
  - Caregivers
  - Isolated people who need support
- Keep your bubble exclusive and only include people where it will keep you and them safe
- Many, but not all businesses can be open under Alert Level 3. They must take health measures to keep their workers safe
- Workplaces must operate safely – keeping one metre between workers, displaying QR codes, recording who is working together, limiting interaction between groups of workers, disinfecting surfaces, and maintaining high hygiene standards
- People who can work at home should do so
- People are encouraged to stay at home as much as possible
- People must observe physical distancing of 2 metres outside the home, including on public transport, when buying the groceries or exercising
- Masks are highly recommended when out and about and may become mandatory in Alert Level 3; being prepared for mandatory mask use by having an appropriate store of masks is recommended
- People can move to a new house (subject to the restrictions detailed in the section on *Movement between regions with different Alert Levels*). Removal companies are able to

operate providing they are able to ensure workplace safety protocols are maintained (e.g. keeping one metre between workers, recording who is working together, limiting interaction between groups of workers, disinfecting surfaces, and maintaining high hygiene standards) at all times.

- Other in-home services like contracting tradespeople for repairs or installations can occur so long as these activities can be delivered in a way that complies with the health and safety requirements outlined at [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz).
- Retail outlets are also permitted to operate if they can provide contactless pre-ordered pick up or delivery services (customers cannot enter the stores). This means furniture, whiteware and other household items can be purchased.

### **Movement between regions with different Alert Levels**

- Travel between regions with differing alert levels is restricted to returning to your principal home/residence.
- People who are permitted to leave a region that is at Alert Level 3 on aircraft to return to their principal home/residence in another part of NZ must wear a face covering while on the aircraft (with certain exemptions such as children under 12 years etc). This ability to fly between regions may be time bound so please check [here](#) for more information.
- Travel within regions at Alert Level 3 is restricted and is only allowed for permitted movement in your local area – e.g. for going to work or school, shopping, or getting exercise.
- HUD recommends applicants should only be matched with vacant properties in the same region. This aligns with the approaches of both the Ministry for Social Development and Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities.

These restrictions impact on the services you can provide at Alert Level 3; further guidance on activities you can deliver safely during this period are included in this document.

## Keeping whānau and staff safe as you work

### Tikanga and supporting whānau Māori

Given the severe impact of the 1918-19 pandemic on Māori and the increased susceptibility of Māori to the influenza A (H1N1) 2009 pandemic, consideration of the specific needs of Māori, cultural sensitivity and the impact of a pandemic on traditional Māori protocols (tikanga) should be an integral aspect of pandemic preparedness planning at local and national levels.<sup>1</sup>

Many iwi, hapū, whānau and Marae implemented changes to tikanga when meeting and greeting. The use of hongī, harīru and kīhi have been discouraged and whānau have been asked to practice virtual or contactless greetings such as “the east coasts wave”<sup>2</sup> or the long-distance hongī “hā mamao”<sup>3</sup>.

Reporting may not be capturing the true impact on many whānau Māori where the impact of the crisis is being more harshly felt. This (in part) is due to starting from a place of inequity in health, housing and economic outcomes prior to the epidemic. As such, whānau may feel whakamā (shame and shyness) and choose to suffer in silence or feel frozen by the cumulative strain of their current situation compounded by the impacts of COVID-19.

All housing providers and housing support service providers are encouraged to work closely with whānau and connect them with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), HUD, and other essential support services to identify all support channels for the whānau.

### Information that helps you support whānau Māori

There are a number of resources available to support you as you work with whānau Māori in the COVID-19 pandemic response:

- [Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā \(National Māori Pandemic Group\) have provided more guidelines for whānau and iwi.](#)
- [Te Puni Kōkiri \(Ministry of Māori Development\) have provided COVID-19 information for Māori](#)

### Maintain the health and safety practices you developed when at Alert Level 4

The safety of whānau and your staff should not be compromised at Alert Level 3. Many of the health and safety practices you put in place when at Alert Level 4 should be implemented in Alert Level 3:

- Deliver your support services by telephone or internet if possible;
- If you have to meet a customer face-to-face ensure you follow workplace safety protocols which include practicing physical distancing (keep two metres apart) and washing or sanitising your hands before and after a visit

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/influenza-pandemic-plan-framework-action-2nd-edn-aug17.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/major-steps-taken-protect-new-zealanders-covid-19>

<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/formerlydaniels/status/1240051706697666562>

- Implement increased cleaning regimens, particularly in shared spaces like kitchens and laundries
- If you are transporting whānau to essential services or new accommodation observe physical distancing practices (including following up-to-date mask use guidance) and follow workplace safety protocols
- Close shared spaces like playgrounds or games rooms; prevent large gatherings from occurring on your premise.
- Gatherings of up to 10 people can continue, but only for:
  - wedding services
  - funerals and tangihanga
 and physical distancing and public health measures must be maintained.

## Work in Partnership with Government and the Wider Sector

All housing providers and housing support service providers are encouraged to work closely together with Ministry of Social Development (MSD), HUD, each other and other essential support services to identify appropriate local solutions for people who don't have anywhere to self-isolate (i.e. rough sleepers).

We recommend that you develop links with your local Public Health teams and District Health Boards (DHB's), if these are not already in place.

## Physically distance at Alert Level 3

At Alert Level 3 there is a risk of community transmission of COVID-19, and it is possible that new clusters of COVID-19 may emerge. Maintaining a physical distance as you work with each other, and with whānau, remains essential to minimising the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

- Where possible you must deliver community-based support work (e.g. Sustaining Tenancies, Housing Placement) remotely, i.e. over the telephone or online.
- Where remote support is not possible (e.g. where whānau do not have access to the internet or a mobile phone), support should be provided from the doorstep with no physical contact, keeping two metres apart at all times.
- Ministry of Health guidelines continue to suggest that washing your hands with soapy water for 20 seconds (as a rough guide sing Happy Birthday twice in your head) is the best defence against COVID-19. We recommend the even where physical contact does not occur that all parties wash their hands before and after a visit as an extra precaution.
- The COVID-19 website provides [guidance](#) for essential workers for situations where physical distancing is difficult, or if you come into contact with infected material or whānau.
- The Ministry of Health offers [guidance](#) for workplaces that have a case of COVID-19

## Physical distancing and safety in shared accommodation

At Alert Level 3 physical distancing must continue. If you run a facility with shared kitchen or laundry spaces encourage whānau to stagger use of this space, as well as to maintain [good personal hygiene practices](#) like washing your hands for 20 seconds with soapy water, not touching your face, and coughing and sneezing into your elbow where possible.

To support safe hygiene practices in shared space we encourage you to supply liquid hand soap (or bar soap if liquid soap is not available), paper towels that can be disposed of in a rubbish bin, and

hand sanitiser in shared space. Posters promoting safe hygiene practises and explaining physical distancing can also be downloaded and printed from [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz).

Where whānau are unwell they should be discouraged from using these spaces and supported to find alternate solutions. This could include food and supplies being taken directly to their room.

We recommend that you also maintain an increased cleaning regimen; washing down hard surfaces frequently with soapy water or disinfecting agents.

### Where a provider needs to transport whānau

We understand that there may be instances where you need to transport whānau to new accommodation, to the supermarket, or to medical or other appointments. In these instances, we recommend the following practice:

- For your safety, it is important that you ask whānau if they have been exposed to COVID-19, if they have been sick or are currently experiencing [symptoms of sickness consistent with COVID-19](#).
- If whānau report being unwell, or if you have concerns call Healthline (0800 358 5453) for advice before you travel.
- Where there are no concerns of COVID-19 only transport one individual at a time. The passenger must agree to sit in the back-passenger seat on the passenger side, not behind the driver to provide as much physical distance as possible.
- If the passenger does not agree to the above; we strongly recommend you do not transport them.
- It is permitted to use taxi and ride share services where there are no concerns of COVID-19. Prior to using these services please wash your hands for 20 seconds with soapy water or use hand sanitiser. The physical distancing practices outlined above also apply for this mode of transport. If the taxi or rideshare service requests information for contact tracing, please comply.
- HUD will continue to fund the costs of utilising taxi or rideshare services for essential transport for its contracted providers during Alert Level 3.

Public transport will still be available but be aware there will be limited capacity and passengers need to sit two metres away from other people on public transport.

[For more detailed information about transport during the COVID-19 pandemic visit the Ministry of Transport's website.](#)

### Contact Tracing

In line with the WorkSafe safety protocol (e.g. keeping one metre between workers, recording who is working together, limiting interaction between groups of workers, disinfecting surfaces, and maintaining high hygiene standards), we recommend that you:

- Maintain records of all people who you come into contact with throughout the course of your working day (e.g. all whānau you have visited – maintaining physical distancing protocols)

- Where it is not possible to record the individual's details (e.g. during a visit to the supermarket), keep a record of all facilities or services you have been in contact with. The Ministry of Health has developed the NZ COVID Tracer app to help you keep a record of your movements and assist with contact tracing. Find out more about the app at: [tracing.covid19.govt.nz](https://tracing.covid19.govt.nz)
- We also recommend that you encourage individuals and whānau you are working with to keep contact tracing records. Educate those you support to mirror the contact tracing expectations you have of your staff or volunteers.
- There is now a new mandatory requirement for all business and services who are operating in level 3 to “ensure that a copy of the QR code for the business or service is displayed in a prominent place at or near the main entrances to the workplace”
- Find out more about getting a QR poster at: [qrform.tracing.covid19.govt.nz](https://qrform.tracing.covid19.govt.nz)

This will assist the Ministry of Health (MoH) with contact tracing should an individual or group or cluster contract COVID-19 that you may have been in contact with.

### Residents in shared facilities and bubbles under Alert Level 3

The key requirements of Alert Level 3 and bubbles are:

- Bubbles must remain exclusive
- Usual household bubbles can only be extended by a small amount and only for specific reasons, such as to provide care or to reduce isolation for individuals living alone

The nature of shared facilities means that it is not possible for the above restrictions to be maintained and so for those living in accommodation with shared facilities, it will not be possible for them to extend their bubbles beyond the one in which they already live. For example, if each of 20 residents of accommodation with shared facilities extended their bubble by just one other household, all of those 20 households would now be within the same bubble and so it would be neither small nor exclusive. It is important that you educate the individuals and whānau you are working with in accommodation with shared facilities, so that they fully understand the restrictions of physical distancing and maintaining bubbles under Alert Level 3.

### If whānau or staff are unwell they must self isolate

If whānau or staff are unwell at Alert Level 3 the recommendations remain the same - stay home, self-isolate and get well.

You don't have to move out of your home if you live with others to self-isolate but you should limit contact with others (even in your household) and maintain [good personal hygiene practices](#) like washing your hands for 20 seconds with soapy water, not touching your face, and coughing and sneezing into your elbow where possible. Ask for support to get essential items like groceries and medicines.

If you are unable to self-isolate safely in your current accommodation, support can be provided via Emergency Housing through the [Ministry of Business and Employment's Temporary Accommodation Services unit](#).

If you are concerned about COVID-19 please call Healthline (0800 358 5453)

[Visit covid19.govt.nz for information on self-isolating when you are unwell.](https://www.covid19.govt.nz)

## Planning to protect whānau and staff who are more likely to experience complications associated with COVID-19

We know that some groups of people are at a higher risk of experiencing complications associated with contracting COVID-19. [Covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) identifies the following groups as vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- People with respiratory diseases – e.g. moderate to severe asthma, chronic lung disease
- People with serious heart conditions
- People with immunocompromised conditions, or compromised immune systems due to other medical treatment – e.g. cancer treatment, smoking related illnesses
- People who are severe obesity — a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
- Diabetics
- People with chronic kidney disease and/or undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease
- Pregnant women
- The elderly – people over 70, or Māori over 60.

### Known high risk whānau

You may have already identified whānau who are at higher risk of experiencing severe illness because of COVID-19.

Connect with these individuals to make sure they understand the steps they can take to keep themselves safe during the COVID-19 pandemic including taking additional precautions when leaving home, avoiding contact with people who are unwell, and asking for support to get essential supplies like groceries and medicines.

[For more information on how whānau can keep themselves safe visit covid19.govt.nz.](https://www.covid19.govt.nz)

### Some whānau may not have disclosed conditions

It is possible you may not be aware of the health conditions of some of the whānau you work with. As a precaution we recommend that you ask the whānau you are supporting about their health and any conditions they may not have told you about. If you identify a person who is at risk, please follow the guidance outlined for 'know high risk whānau'.

### Staff members that are high risk

You may have staff or volunteers that are at high risk of experiencing complications associated with contracting COVID-19. You may also have staff or volunteers that have partners or whānau in their bubble that are classified as vulnerable.

We encourage you to take the time to talk to your staff and or volunteers and understand their risks and needs.

Care should be taken to reduce or eliminate their exposure to COVID 19 in all instances where a staff member or volunteer self identifies as at risk, or in close proximity to an at risk individual. What this looks like will depend on their age and the severity of their condition.

[WorkSafe](#) has developed comprehensive health and safety guidance that support businesses and employees to:

- manage workplace risks together,
- create safe working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Financial support for high risk employees that cannot work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial support is available for people working in essential services who may be in situations where they need to stay away from work and cannot work from home.

[Visit Employment New Zealand to find out more about this support package.](#)

## Family violence

Services to support whānau subjected to violence and sexual abuse are essential services and will remain available, even if services need to be delivered in different ways.

The Government and the Police continue to take family violence and sexual violence very seriously. Whānau who are subject to violence or sexual abuse continue to be at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. Violence is a crime at any time.

Remain aware of this risk as you go about your work. Where you are concerned family violence may be occurring ensure that you follow your organisations policies and protocols for working with this level of risk. If these processes are not in place within your organisation, we strongly recommend that these are developed. Community Housing Aotearoa or Te Matapihi may be able to assist you to access sample documents from other similar providers.

[Visit covid19.govt.nz to find out more about Family Violence prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic response.](#)

## Health and safety in the workplace

The health and safety of your staff and volunteer workers should not be compromised. Continue to remind them about personal hygiene and the steps they can take to keep themselves safe. Staff, volunteer workers and whānau should be reminded to maintain good personal hygiene practices like washing your hands for 20 seconds with soapy water, not touching your face, and coughing and sneezing into your elbow where possible, and helped to understand the basic rules of self-isolation.

You may have already changed the way you interact face-to-face by providing doorstep services – talking away from an open door and not entering premises. You may have already changed your service offering including removing face-to-face services by using technology to support individuals and whānau during this time.

You may want to consider a staggered approach to your services including shift-based work, staggered breaks and continue physical distancing. You may also want to consider aspects around staff security at this time due to peoples heightened anxiety and stress.

[WorkSafe](#) has developed comprehensive health and safety guidance that support businesses and employees to:

- manage workplace risks together,
- create safe working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Workplaces should have their own PPE protocols in place and training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to use effectively and how to properly dispose of PPE.

The government has developed a series of videos and posters you can share with your staff to help them understand when and how to use PPE in your workplace:

- [Hand washing and PPE videos](#)
- [PPE requirements for essential non-health workers](#)
- [PPE equipment for workers](#)

Further guidance on when and how to use PPE in your workplace can be found at [WorkSafe](#).

## Operating your service at Alert Level 3

There are some key differences between Alert Levels 4 (lockdown) and Alert Level 3 (restrict) that enable housing providers and housing support service providers to operate differently at Alert Level 3:

- Whānau can move house
- Removal companies can operate (under workplace safety protocols)
- If a property is vacated, landlords and property managers can undertake end-of-tenancy inspections
- Whānau can be placed in public housing and transitional housing routinely
- Furniture and appliance can be ordered online for contactless delivery or pick up (people cannot enter the store)
- Vacant homes can be cleaned by commercial cleaners between tenancies
- Tradespeople can work on and in whānau homes so long as physical distancing and public health recommendations are adhered to

We have contextualised this information for you, to support you to reactivate key provider activities safely when we enter Alert Level 3.

### Moving whānau into accommodation safely

At Alert Level 3 you can tenant vacant properties. You must always maintain workplace safety protocol that include maintaining physical distancing and personal hygiene practices.

### Tenancing vacant properties

Placements for public and transitional housing can occur if it can be done safely and efficiently by following the Ministry of Health Guidelines for physical distancing and personal hygiene.

Movement between regions remains largely restricted in an Alert Level 3 scenario. In this situation we recommend applicants should only be matched with vacant properties in the same region. This aligns with the approaches of both the Ministry for Social Development and Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities.

- Travel between regions with differing alert levels is restricted to returning to your principal home/residence
- People who are permitted to leave a region that is at Alert Level 3 on aircraft to return to their principal home/residence in another part of NZ must wear a face covering while on the aircraft (with certain exemptions such as children under 12 years etc). This ability to fly between regions may be time bound so please check [here](#) for more information.
- Masks are highly recommended when out and about and may become mandatory in Alert Level 3; being prepared for mandatory mask use by having an appropriate store of masks is recommended
- Travel within regions at Alert Level 3 is restricted and is only allowed for permitted movement in your local area – e.g. for going to work or school, shopping, or getting exercise.
- People can move to a new house (within the restrictions detailed above)

Check [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) for latest self-isolation guidance for inter-regional travel and relocation

## Safe relocation

For the safety of whānau, your staff and removal companies (if being used), you must ensure that physical distancing and personal hygiene can be maintained.

We know at times this may be challenging; where space is tight, you could consider innovative ways to keep physical distancing. For example:

- Whānau limit their movement in the house to one room while removal support is working in other parts of the house
- On a nice day, whānau be outside
- Whānau could split across old and new accommodation to reduce density and continue to limit their movement in the house to one room while support is working in other parts of the house.

At Alert Level 3 we must also maintain our household bubble. This means that whānau cannot get groups of friends and or their extended whānau to support them to move.

Before relocation occurs, check in with whānau to ensure nobody is unwell. If you are concerned about COVID-19 please phone Healthline (0800 358 5453) for advice before you travel.

If you are transporting whānau as they relocate the prior recommendations “Where a provider needs to transport whānau” should be applied here.

## Ensure the property is clean before you tenant it

Even though the property may have been empty for several weeks, we recommend ensuring the property is cleaned by a commercial cleaning prior to tenanting. This is particularly important if you have undertaken maintenance on that property within the three days of that property being tenanted. This is because evidence suggests that COVID-19 can live on hard surfaces for up to three days meaning contamination remains a risk.

## Furnishing properties

At Alert Level 3 retailers can return to work as long as they provide contactless services for purchasing, pick up and or delivery. Where goods are being delivered to the property physical distancing requirements must be maintained.

Where possible, we recommend that a property is furnished three days before tenanting occurs; this is because evidence suggests COVID-19 can live on hard surfaces for up to three (3) days. Where this is not possible, we recommend that all furniture – new or second hand- is cleaned with soapy water, or a disinfecting agent. This is because soapy water and agitation are proven to penetrate COVID-19’s membrane and supports us to destroy the virus if is on a surface.

## Property Maintenance

Tradespeople are permitted to work at Alert Level 3 provided they maintain workplace safety protocols that include physical distancing requirements. This is to protect both the whānau and the tradespeople.

### Consider if maintenance needs to happen now

At Alert Level 3 we are trying to limit person-to-person contact to support New Zealand to stamp out COVID 19 across the country. Whilst there may not be any restrictions on the frequency and type of maintenance that can occur at Alert Level 3, we recommend that you minimise maintenance activity to essential only to limit person-to-person contact if possible.

Where possible only undertake maintenance that is essential to maintaining the physical integrity of the building, or repairs that if not undertaken will compromise the health, safety and comfort of whānau living in the property. Workplace safety protocols must also be maintained in carrying out the services.

Essential repairs could include (for example):

- Fixing a leaky roof or plumbing leak
- Fixing sewerage system related problems
- Cladding issues that may contribute to the development of rot and damp.

Repairs that contribute to maintaining the health, safety and comfort of whānau could include (for example):

- Repairing broken windows
- Issues impacted the supply of electricity or water
- Repairs to or replacement of hot water cylinders or heaters (particularly as the weather gets cooler).
- Healthy Homes work.

Repairs you may want to consider delaying could be:

- Updating décor that is not connected to essential maintenance (e.g. repainting after a plumbing leak)

Deciding what is and is not an essential repair will ultimately rely on you making some decision in your business; if you need some support undertaking this process we are here to help.

This information provided at [Building.govt.nz](https://www.building.govt.nz) for home and building owners may also assist you.

## Construction and housing developments

During Alert Level 3 most work can be carried out in the building and constructions sector so long as the appropriate health and safety measures are in place and workplace safety protocols are maintained.

CHASNZ (Construction Health and Safety NZ), in conjunction with the joint government/industry Construction Sector Accord, have developed and published detailed construction health and safety standards and protocols for the residential, civil and vertical sectors. These protocols give the construction sector guidance on how to work in Alert levels 2 and above.

If you have a housing development that has been on pause, or is scheduled to start shortly, we recommend connecting with your developer and tradespeople to put measures in place that meet the health and safety guidelines and workplace safety protocols required to work at Alert Level 3.

[Visit the Building Performance website to find out up to date information on the working and health and safety requirements that have been put in place for the construction and building industry.](#)

## MSD at Alert Level 3 Locations

In locations at COVID-19 Alert Level 3, MSD offices will be closed to the public, but we will continue to support clients online or by phone. During this time regular payments will continue, and we'll help you over the phone and through MyMSD in most cases. Whether our doors are open or not, we're working and available to clients and providers.

You can find out more on the [Work and Income website](#).

### Emergency housing:

- MSD will continue to provide emergency housing support to people with an urgent housing need.
- People with an immediate housing need should test their eligibility for emergency housing assistance on-line before contacting Work and Income.
- See here for more information:  
<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/eligibility-criteria-for-emergency-housing.html>

### Transitional housing referrals

- MSD will continue to refer clients to transitional housing providers, except those with shared facilities, where that can be done safely and efficiently.
- For property inspections and interviews, providers and clients need to comply with Ministry of Health guidelines for social distancing and hygiene. We encourage as much phone or video-based interaction as possible.

### Public Housing Placements

- MSD will continue to support placements into public housing as long as those can be done safely and efficiently.
- Staff, providers, tenants and contractors will need to comply with Ministry of Health guidelines for social distancing and hygiene at Alert Level Three.
- Movement between regions is restricted at Alert Level Three, so applicants can only be matched to public housing in their current region. We ask providers to match the highest priority local applicants to their available properties.

### Public housing assessments

- MSD will continue phone-based public housing assessments at Level Three. People may need to wait a bit longer for their appointment as we support the immediate needs of people in the most-affected areas.

### Fast-tracked Income Related Rent reviews for decreased income

- Where a public housing tenant has suffered a decrease in their income, we want to ensure their rent reflects their new circumstances.
- Please email MSD directly if a tenant's income has reduced so we can adjust their Income Related Rent. Community housing providers should email these details to [GNL\\_Provider\\_Support@msd.govt.nz](mailto:GNL_Provider_Support@msd.govt.nz) with the subject line *COVID 19 Reduced Income*.

## Business continuity and working with HUD

### Recommended business continuity practices

As part of your own Business Continuity Plan measures, we recommend as a minimum that you have:

- An up to date list of staff, key contacts and healthcare facilities and you are making regular contact with these people and places to check in work through any matters.
- You have contingency plans in place for the potential reduction in staffing due to illness (self or family members) or child-care responsibilities. For example, cross training current employees, extending part-time workers hours or hiring temporary employees.
- You develop a way to trace contacts and interactions with whānau and other essential service providers in case you or whānau come in contact with COVID-19.

### Assurances from HUD

Below is a list of assurances provided by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

- HUD will ensure that contracted funding will continue to be paid uninterrupted.
- Payment of Income Related Rent Subsidies (IRRS) to Community Housing Providers (CHPs)
- HUD recognises that there may be occasions where contractual breaches occur and there is no intention to penalise providers in instances where this is a result of COVID-19 circumstances. Where a breach is significant please ensure that you contact your HUD Relationship Manager as soon as possible to discuss.

### Community Housing Regulatory Authority

During heightened alert levels the Community Housing Regulatory Authority (CHRA) advises it will take a flexible approach to monitoring of registered CHPs.

This may will involve extending timeframes for annual monitoring returns and the provision of any additional information previously requested by CHRA and deferring work on certain issues to allow you to focus on the provision of housing services to your tenants.

The Authority will be guided by individual provider's workloads and ability to comply with regulatory requirements.

Please contact the Authority to discuss any information requests that have been made to date, if these are an issue for you.

### Contact us

We will be actively monitoring our emails, and centrally responding where appropriate through guidance and FAQ's.

HUD are working very closely with Te Matapihi and Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) as sector peak bodies to both gather and disseminate information and quickly and efficiently as possible. Please continue to contact these bodies if you have any questions or concerns.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of both Te Matapihi and Community Housing Aotearoa in the development of this document.