

ALERT LEVEL 4/3: COVID-19 Guidance for Transport Operators

Last updated: 1030 hrs, 31 August 2021

1. This guidance is applicable to operators for the provision of all transport services, including public transport, aviation, maritime and other land-based passenger services. To the extent that it is relevant, it may also be used by organisations transporting passengers without hire or reward.
2. It is intended to be read in conjunction with official information about COVID19 Alert Level 4 contained on, or linked from, the [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) webpage and on the [Ministry of Transport website](https://www.transport.govt.nz).
3. Community transmission remains under investigation in Auckland. At 11.59pm on 31 August 2021, all of New Zealand (except Auckland and Northland) will move to Alert Level 3. Auckland and Northland will remain at Alert Level 4, the Alert Level areas are described at schedule 4 and 5 of the Order.
4. This guidance subject to change as the response develops.

Executive summary

- Community transmission remains under investigation in Auckland. At 11.59pm on 31 August 2021, all of New Zealand (except Auckland and Northland) will move to Alert Level 3. Auckland and Northland will remain at Alert Level 4.
- The [COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Alert Level Requirements\) Order \(No 10\)](#) gives effect to these changes.
- The Alert Level 3 and 4 areas are defined by the [Order](#).
- Only [Alert Level 4 businesses and services](#) can operate at Alert Level 4. Transport entities that are able to operate at Alert Level 4 include: passenger transport services (including micromobility), freight transport services, airports and ports, essential vehicle safety and recovery services (subject to specified conditions), the transport Crown Entities (subject to specified conditions), the transport State Owned Enterprises (subject to specified conditions).
- Travel remains severely restricted within the Alert Level 4 area.
- Businesses and services can operate at Alert Level 3 with [restrictions](#).
- Interregional travel between the Alert Level 4 Area (Auckland and Northland) and the Alert Level 3 area (rest of New Zealand) is restricted.
- At both Alert Levels, physical distancing needs to be observed on public transport services, and at terminals, stations, and airports.
- Face coverings are required to be worn (with some exceptions) on public transport services and at arrival and departure points (for example bus stops, train stations and airports).
- Operators are required to support contact tracing. Most transport operators are required to display QR codes. Public transport services that require passengers to provide their name and a contact phone number (in order to use the service) do not need to display QR codes.
- Operators should continue to clean vehicles, vessels, aircraft and facilities (e.g terminals) in line with Ministry of Health guidance.

Advice for traveling safely under either Alert Level 3 or Alert Level 4

5. We all need to remain vigilant in the battle against COVID-19. We recommend travellers:
 - Note that travel restrictions are in place, please check <https://covid19.govt.nz/> before travelling.
 - Be kind and patient with each other and transport staff, especially your driver or crew.
 - Observe physical distancing measures on board public transport services, at terminals, at stations, and at airports.
 - Wear a face covering while on public transport, and while waiting for a service
 - Keep a record of where they go and their interactions on the NZ COVID Tracer App; including scanning QR codes (where available), or manually recording travel information in the NZ COVID Tracer App (where QR codes are not available); OR keep a manual record if you do not have a smartphone.
 - Practice good hygiene and follow Ministry of Health advice. This includes washing and drying their hands thoroughly with soap and water (or hand sanitiser if soap and water not available), coughing and sneezing into their elbow, and not touching their face.
 - Plan ahead, and allow extra time to ensure their journey is as comfortable as possible.
 - Stay home if they're unwell, or may have COVID-19. They should also not travel if they: have been requested to self-isolate/quarantine, have symptoms of COVID-19, or are awaiting COVID-19 test results.

6. We recommend operators encourage their passengers and users to follow the safe travel tips (list above) and by publicly displaying COVID-19 educational posters on site, and through social media and public announcements (e.g. in terminals and on-board).

About this guidance

7. This guidance outlines key information for transport service operators under the current alert level settings. Specifically, the following matters are covered:

Section 1: Workplace health and safety

Section 2: Alert Level 4 businesses

Section 3: Alert Level 3 businesses

Section 4: Travel restrictions

Section 5: Physical distancing

Section 6: Face coverings

Section 7: Supporting contact tracing efforts

Section 8: Cleaning practices

Section 9: Customer compliance

8. If you require further information or advice, please email the Ministry of Transport at: essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz. We will do our best to address your questions as soon as we can.

Section 1: Workplace health and safety

9. When considering workplace health and safety arrangements, transport operators should consider:
 - any advice or guidance issued by Worksafe <https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/>
 - advice or guidance issue by the Ministry of Health <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus> (where this may be relevant to their health and safety arrangements).

Section 2: Alert Level 4 businesses

10. Only designated Alert Level 4 businesses and services can operate at Alert Level 4.
11. Transport entities that are able to operate at Alert Level 4 include: passenger transport services (including micromobility), freight transport services, airports and ports, essential vehicle safety and recovery services (subject to specified conditions), the transport Crown Entities (subject to specified conditions), the transport State Owned Enterprises (subject to specified conditions).
12. For the full list of Alert Level 4 businesses and services (including the conditions) see [Schedule 2](#). Also please note the entities specified in [clause 23](#) are fully exempt from the Order.

Section 3: Alert Level 3 businesses

13. Designated Alert Level 4 businesses and services acting in accordance with the conditions, can continue to operate at Level 3.
14. All other businesses and services are permitted to operate at Alert Level 3. However, unless they are specifically listed in [Schedule 3](#), no customers or clients may enter the workplace and there is to be no close personal contact with or between customers. While workers are in the workplace, they must also comply with the 1 metre physical distancing rule so far as reasonably practicable.
15. For more information about businesses that can operate at Alert Level 3 please see the [Unite Against Covid Website](#).

Section 3: Travel restrictions

Travel within the Alert Level 4 Area (Auckland and Northland)

16. Travel within the Alert Level 4 area remains severely restricted. Travel is only permitted for the reasons [listed](#).
17. Transport operators should not carry passengers who are not travelling for a permitted reason.
18. Passengers are recommended to provide documentary evidence to support their reason for travel (where possible). Recommended documents, which the passenger should provide to support their reason for travel, can be found at Appendix A.

Interregional travel between Alert Level 4 (Auckland and Northland) and Alert Level 3 (South of Auckland)

19. Interregional travel between the Alert Level 4 Area (Auckland and Northland) and the Alert Level 3 Area (the rest of the country) will be restricted.
20. Everyone should work remotely if they can. Travel across an Alert Level Boundary will be very limited. Maintaining public health is paramount as we move down Alert Levels. Travel is only permitted for the reasons listed:
 - Link: [Personal Travel](#);
 - Link: [Business Travel](#).
21. Businesses must have systems and processes in place to minimise travel across the boundary or between regions within an alert level area.
22. Transport operators should not carry passengers, between the Alert Level 4 Area (Auckland and Northland) and the Alert Level 3 Area (rest of New Zealand), who are not travelling for a permitted reason. Passengers are required to provide documentary evidence to support their reason for travel.
23. If you are carrying out a permitted Alert Level 4 activity listed in the Alert Level Order, you are allowed to cross the boundary provided you have evidence that your activity is permitted.
24. Required documents can be found at Appendix A and include but may include a document issued by MBIE. If you are uncertain about the situation with respect to permitted movements, please email essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz

Travel within the Alert Level 3 Area (rest of the country)

25. Travel within the Alert Level 3 Area (rest of the country) is also restricted. Travel is only permitted for the reasons [listed](#).
26. Passengers are recommended to provide documentary evidence to support their reason for travel (where possible). Recommended documents, which the passenger should provide to support their reason for travel, can be found at Appendix A.

Section 4: Physical distancing

Public transport services at Alert Level 3 and 4

27. Air passenger services and small passenger vehicle services are required to maintain physical distancing to the extent practicable (please see guidance on previous seating configurations):
 - [air passenger services](#), please refer to previous guidance which advises to leave the middle seat, or the aisle seat, vacant (depending on the seating configuration of the aircraft).
 - [small passenger services](#) in accordance with previous guidance the passenger(s) should be seated as far from the driver as practicable, and the front passenger seat should be unoccupied; passengers can travel together in the back seats if they are part of the same bubble.
28. On board other public transport services physical distancing is generally required at a distance of 1 metre to the extent practical (taking into account the nature of the service) –

for trains and buses, please see Appendix B with regards to further guidance.

29. Regional authorities (in the case of public transport) and transport operators should also issue public messaging that discourages people who are unwell from using their services.

Airports, bus stations, train stations, and ferry terminals

30. 1 metre distance between people and passengers at the airport, station, or terminal is required (unless they are travelling together within their 'household bubble').

Section 5: Face coverings at Alert Levels 3 and 4

Who needs to wear a face covering?

31. Face coverings must be worn on all public transport services and any public transport arrival or departure points, this includes train stations, bus stations and airports.

32. However, there are some exemptions, these include:

- persons on Cook Strait ferry services
- the following specific services:
 - school buses (meaning dedicated school services contracted by: the Ministry of Education, or Local Authority, or School Board, or Auckland Transport), or
 - a ship that has no enclosed space for passengers
 - charter services and tours.

What kind of face covering can be used?

33. Any face covering that adequately covers the mouth and nostrils can be used, these include: single use disposable masks, washable reusable masks (whether purchased or homemade), or other types of face coverings (e.g. a scarf wrapped around the face).

Is anybody exempt from wearing a mask?

34. Yes. Transport operators should be aware that the following persons are not required to wear face coverings:

- persons under the age of 12, and
- persons who have a medical condition or disability that make it unsuitable to wear a face covering (*please note it might not always be clear why someone may need to be exempt from wearing a face covering*); and
- drivers or staff, if:
 - they are in a space separated from passengers (e.g. pilots in a cockpit, or train drivers in a train cab), or
 - wearing a face covering could make it unsafe to operate the vehicle (e.g. wearing a face covering means drivers or staff are unable to properly communicate, or causes the eyeglasses of the driver to fog).

35. In addition, transport operators should note that the use of face coverings is not required in the following situations:

- if it is unsafe to wear a face covering (e.g. if the person's only face covering is wet, or wearing

- a face covering means a driver cannot safely operate the vehicle),
- if there is an emergency that requires the face covering to be removed (e.g. to perform CPR),
 - if removal of the face covering is required to prove identity,
 - if visibility of the mouth is required for communication (e.g. when communicating with someone who is deaf),
 - if there is a need to remove the face covering to take medicine,
 - if there is a need to remove the face covering to eat or drink (if eating or drinking is permitted by the conditions of carriage), (Please note: the Ministry of Health advises that the eating of food and drink should be discouraged on services at Alert levels 3 and 4).

36. Information from the Ministry of Health, regarding the use of face coverings in the community, is available [here](#).

What about enforcement?

37. The obligation to wear a face covering on public transport is the responsibility of the individual.
38. Operators, drivers and staff are not expected to assume the role of enforcement officer; but they still have their usual customer relations role to remind people about face coverings. The role is to educate and encourage passengers to do the right thing, but not be the enforcer.
39. Staff are not expected to refuse boarding to people who do not have a face covering. This kind of issue should be dealt with as you would normally manage a difficult passenger situation.
40. Passengers and staff should not be encouraged to call Police if someone is not wearing a face covering. As per normal procedures, if the situation is dangerous or a passenger is displaying threatening behaviour, for example, Police should be called.

Should operators be encouraging and educating passengers about wearing face coverings?

41. Yes, the support of operators and staff in encouraging and educating passengers about the wearing of face coverings is appreciated. A range of collateral is provided with this guidance including posters which operators are asked to display across their fleets, terminals, stations and other facilities.
42. The government will continue to remind people to follow the instructions of the public transport workforce regarding face coverings.
43. These messages will be reinforced through a major All of Government public communications campaign, including COVID-19 TV advertising.

Section 6: Supporting contact tracing

What is contact tracing and why is it important?

44. The purpose of contact tracing is to prevent potential onward transmission, raise awareness about the disease and its symptoms and support early detection of suspected cases.
45. It is important that everyone undertakes practicable actions to support a quick and robust contact tracing process. Contact tracing (coupled with testing and quarantine/isolation measures) is a critical pillar in supporting New Zealand's goal to eliminate COVID-19.

Who undertakes contact tracing?

46. Contact tracing is undertaken by Public Health Units (in the DHB where the confirmed or probable case was diagnosed), or by the Ministry of Health's National Close Contact Service.

What should regional authorities and transport operators do to support contact tracing?

47. Under Alert Levels 3 and 4, transport operators are required to support contact tracing.
48. Regional authorities, and transport operators, are required to display QR codes that are compatible with the NZ COVID Tracer App for their transport assets. Those QR codes need to be displayed in an easily accessible prominent place.
49. Public transport services are not required to obtain and display QR codes if they require all passengers to provide their name and a contact telephone number (in order to use the service); these may include services, such as:
- air passenger services,
 - interregional bus services,
 - interregional passenger train services.
50. In addition the following services do not need to obtain and display QR codes:
- school buses (meaning dedicated school services contracted by: the Ministry of Education, or Local Authority, or School Board, or Auckland Transport), or
 - car sharing services and carpooling services.
51. Regional authorities (in the case of public transport) and transport operators should also take steps to promote and enable users and passengers to keep records for contact tracing purposes. We recommend transport operators issue public messaging (e.g. through posters, announcements, social media) to encourage users and passengers to:
- use the NZ COVID Tracer App by scanning the QR code (where display of the QR code is available) or recording the trip manually in the NZ COVID Tracer App (if the QR code is not available); OR keep a manual record if you do not have a smartphone.
 - use public electronic ticketing cards where these are available (e.g. AT HOP, Snapper, Metrocard or Bee Card) and make sure those cards are registered with the passenger's contact information.

What can regional authorities and operators expect if there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 on their transport service?

52. If there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 on a transport service, a health official will notify the regional authority (in the case of public transport) and/or operator and request your support with identifying the contacts of that person. The health official will be particularly interested in details you might have of any people who were in 'close contact' with the COVID-19 case on the bus/train/ferry they are investigating.
53. For example, you may be asked to review CCTV footage, or online passenger registers (e.g. public transport electronic ticketing card registration details).
54. The health official may also ask you to provide any contact information you might have for people who were in 'casual contact' with the COVID-19 case on the bus/train/ferry/aircraft they are

investigating. This is so they can ask these ‘casual contacts’ to get tested if they have (or develop) symptoms of COVID-19.

55. If you do not have this information (but are not certain that there were no ‘close contacts’) the health official will discuss with you what action should be taken. For example, they may request that you undertake public messaging asking people that travelled on the service to contact the COVID-19 Healthline.
56. If you are certain that there were no ‘close contacts’ (e.g. CCTV footage shows no ‘close contacts’ were established), then you should advise the health official of this and ask if there is anything more that you should do.

Section 7: Cleaning

57. Transport operators should apply cleaning practices consistent with Ministry of Health guidance.
 - Ministry of Health general guidance on cleaning can be found [here](#)
 - Ministry of Health cleaning FAQs can be found [here](#)
58. Cleaning regimes should include:
 - cleaning the vehicle/vessel/aircraft regularly with particular attention to high-touch surfaces (where possible, at the end of each shift/sailing/flight, but at least at the end of each day).
 - as far as practicable, frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces throughout the day.

Section 8: Customer compliance

59. Transport operators are not legally required to enforce passenger compliance with:
 - the [COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Alert Level Requirements\) Order \(No 10\) 2021](#), or
 - Ministry of Health guidelines.
60. Transport operators, however, may choose to stop passengers boarding, where it is lawful to do so on health and safety grounds as per their standard operating procedures. Transport operators should encourage potential passengers to check what the current restrictions are prior to making a booking or using their services.
61. Transport operators may also provide advice to passengers for travelling safely for example by displaying public information posters.

Appendix A: Evidence for travel

Evidence is required for travel across the Alert Level Boundary

People may only cross the Alert Level Boundary if that travel is [legally permitted](#), or if they have a current travel exemption granted by the Director-General of Health. If people are travelling across the Alert Level Boundary, they are required to have evidence of that permitted reason.

Business Travel Across Alert Levels –

Businesses with workers needing to cross the Alert Level boundary can apply for Business Travel Documents if they meet the criteria for permitted travel. Getting the official Business or Personal Travel Document will make the process of crossing a boundary much quicker and easier. The eligible business categories, types of travel permitted and link to start an application through Business Connect are available on the business.govt.nz website.

Businesses won't be able to re-use the travel documents that they were granted for during previous Alert Level changes and will need to reapply for new documents.

Businesses who have previously applied for travel documents will find that when they log in to their Business Connect account, their details will be saved from the previous application. Businesses are responsible for reviewing and updating this information to ensure that it is current before they submit their new application.

Personal Travel Across Alert Levels -

If you are travelling for permitted personal reasons across Alert Levels will also need to illustrate evidence for that travel.

Evidence is recommended for travel within Alert Level 3 or 4

If you are leaving home for a permitted reason to travel within the Alert Level 4 or 3 area, you do not need any other form of approval. It is recommended that you carry some evidence of your reason to leave your home, for example proof of address for both households if you are maintaining a shared childcare arrangement. You should be prepared to show evidence of your reason for travel. For examples of evidence please see the Unite Against COVID website:

[Permitted reasons for travel and recommended documentation - Level 3](#)

[Permitted reasons for travel and recommended documentation - Level 4](#)

Appendix B: further physical distancing guidance for bus and train operators

Regional authorities and operators should put in place measures that promote and enable passengers to maintain 1m physical distancing. This could include:

- markings on the ground where people can stand at bus or train stops.
- seating configurations on vehicles that indicate appropriate seating distances.

However, it is understood that in some circumstances, fully adhering to the 1m physical distancing requirement may not be practical. In particular, we are aware that achieving a 1m physical distancing seating configuration may be problematic in some public transport vehicles.

To address this, the seating configuration below could be used (where people are seated in the green dots only, and the blue squares are vacant – additionally their should be no standing passengers).

