



Covid-19 Update on New Zealand situation

FACTS

Border restrictions

- New Zealand's border has now been closed to everyone, except citizens, residents and immediate family of citizens and residents.
- This also means Pacific people will not be able to transit through New Zealand.
- Workers are unable to depart New Zealand at this time due to border restrictions in their home 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 now in 'lock-down.'
- Horticulture, viticulture (RSE) and fisheries workers are considered 'essential' and will continue to work through the lockdown. Construction workers are not considered essential.

Government's Epidemic Management Notice

- This will come into effect on 02 April 2020 and will automatically extend temporary visa holders' visas that were due to expire between 2 April and 9 July (inclusive) until **25 September 2020**. Workers do not need to do anything to get this extension.
- Those with a visa expiring before 01 April have been identified and are being contacted by the RSE Unit to process visa extensions.



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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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

- RSE workers are 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.
- 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 not operating or because their employer cannot afford to pay them due to reduced business.
- Employers are responsible for applying for this wage subsidy to pay their workers if they face financial difficulty. *(At this stage no RSE employers are needing to access this government subsidy.)*
- Workers will still need to cover the costs of their food and accommodation during their employment period, regardless of how they are paid.

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

- If an RSE or other Pacific 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).
 - The Government is considering further options to support sick migrant workers.
 - No RSE workers have been recorded as having contracted or suspected Covid-19.

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.



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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.

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. This payment is likely to be less than what they would have earned if they were working as normal.

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. 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.

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?

- If workers visas are due to expire prior to 01 April 2020 but they are unable to leave New Zealand they will be identified and Immigration New Zealand will work with employers and workers to extend their visas.
- If workers visas are due to expire between 02 April 2020 and 9 July 2020 their visas will be automatically extended till late September.
- There are currently no fisheries workers in New Zealand's Toso Vaka o Manū programmes that have visas expiring before 02 April and thus all will be covered by the automatic extension of visas.



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- If the workers visa expires after 09 July 2020 at this stage, they will be required to return home as per usual. This could change if the epidemic notice is extended.

What happens if your employer has no more work for you but you still have a valid visa? Can you change your visa conditions to work for someone else?

- It will be difficult to vary the conditions of your visa at this time. We will provide more information on what to do in this situation once it is available.

Can I still remit money home during lock-down?

- 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. In person services such as Western Union are operating over the lockdown period, but to keep workers safe, many are not allowed to leave their work sites at this time.

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

- Workers will be educated on their obligations at this time and the importance of staying in their 'bubble'. If they choose to 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.



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