

History of the COVID-19 Alert System

A timeline of Alert Level changes, dates of key events and the duration of the State of National Emergency.

About the COVID-19 Alert System

The Alert Levels are determined by the Government and specify the public health and social measures to be taken in the fight against COVID-19. You can find further guidance on this website (covid19.govt.nz).

The measures may be updated based on:

- new scientific knowledge about COVID-19
- information about the effectiveness of control measures in New Zealand and overseas, or
- the application of Alert Levels at different times, for example, the application may be different depending on if NZ is moving down or up Alert Levels).

Different parts of the country may be at different Alert Levels. We can move up and down Alert Levels.

Services including supermarkets, health services, emergency services, utilities and goods transport will continue to operate at any level. Employers in those sectors must continue to meet health and safety obligations.

Restrictions are cumulative, for example at Alert Level 4, all restrictions from Alert Levels 1, 2 and 3 apply.

Alert Levels

Alert Level 1 – Prepare

The disease is contained in New Zealand.

Risk assessment

- COVID-19 is uncontrolled overseas.
- There could be sporadic imported cases.
- There could be isolated local transmission in New Zealand.

Range of measures that can be applied locally or nationally

- All businesses, facilities, schools, education providers and workplaces can open.
- NZ COVID Tracer QR codes issued by the NZ Government legally must be displayed in workplaces and on public transport.

- The following places legally must have systems and processes to ensure visitors keep a record of where they have been (whether via the NZ COVID Tracer app or otherwise), including healthcare facilities, aged care facilities, close-contact businesses, hospitality venues, public facilities, exercise facilities and social gatherings such as weddings, civil union services, funerals and tangihanga.
- In all other places, we encourage you to keep track of everywhere you have been, as this helps contact tracing to identify any potential spread of COVID-19.
- There are no restrictions on personal movement or gatherings.
- In all other settings you are encouraged to maintain a record of where you have been.

You legally must wear a face mask if you are aged 12 and over when:

- using public transport and airplanes (excluding inter-island ferries and school buses).
- exclusions apply for people with disabilities or mental health conditions

Alert Level 2 – Reduce

Low risk of community transmission within applied area.

Risk assessment

- There could be limited community transmission.
- There are active clusters in more than 1 region.

Range of measures that can be applied locally or nationally

- You can connect with friends and whānau in person, socialise in groups and go shopping and travel domestically, if following public health guidance.
- You can return to the place where you work or learn but alternative ways of working are still encouraged.
- Businesses, schools, early learning services, tertiary education providers and public facilities, such as museums, libraries and pools can now all open with additional health measures in place.
- Gatherings of up to 100 people are allowed in a defined space, including weddings, civil union ceremonies, funerals and tangihanga. Mandatory record keeping (as in Alert Level 1) and physical distancing are legally required.
- Hospitality businesses legally must keep groups of customers separated and seated, with a maximum of 100 people in a defined space.
- Event facilities, including cinemas, stadiums, concert venues and casinos, can open. Physical distancing of 1 metre must be applied — this will determine the maximum capacity of the event.
- Health and disability care services can operate as normally as possible.
- Keep 2 metres apart from people you do not know in public and places like retail stores, libraries, gyms, and museums.
- Keep 1 metre apart from people in other places like office buildings and factories, and in places where there is a cap on numbers, like cinemas and hospitality.
- People at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (for example, those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled, and older people) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home, unless fully vaccinated. You may work, if you agree with your employer that you can do so safely.
- Sport and recreation activities are allowed, subject to conditions on gatherings, record keeping, and – where practical – physical distancing. Gyms — 2m physical distancing; outdoor teams sport — no physical distancing.

You legally must wear a face mask if you are aged 12 and over when:

- using public transport, airplanes (including in departure points such as train/bus stations and airports) and in a taxi or ride-share vehicle
- visiting a healthcare or aged care facility (other than for a patient)
- inside retail businesses, such as supermarkets, pharmacies, shopping malls, indoor marketplaces, takeaway food stores and public venues — such as museums and libraries

- visiting the public areas within courts and tribunals, local and central Government agencies, and social service providers with customer service counters
- providing services while on site in a home or places of residence (except for providing childcare).

You legally must wear a face mask if you work:

- as a driver of a taxi or ride-share vehicle
- at close contact businesses, for example barbers, beauticians and hairdressers
- in a public facing role at a hospitality venue, for example a cafe, restaurant, bar or nightclub
- at retail businesses, such as supermarkets, shopping malls, indoor marketplaces, takeaway food stores
- in the public areas of courts and tribunals, local and central Government agencies, and social service providers with customer service counters
- at indoor public facilities, for example libraries and museums (but not swimming pools).

Alert Level 3 – Restrict

Medium risk of community transmission – active but managed clusters.

Risk assessment

- There are multiple cases of community transmission.
- There are multiple active clusters in multiple regions.

Range of measures that can be applied locally or nationally

- Stay home and keep your bubble small. You can expand to reconnect with close family/whānau, enable caregiving, or support isolated people. This extended bubble legally must remain exclusive.
- Travel is still restricted, so stay local. Inter-regional travel is highly limited with limited permissions. You can travel for work, school, to pick up necessities and goods purchased in a contactless way or undertake low-risk recreational activities. Work and learn from home if you can.
- Only people who cannot work from home should return to businesses that can safely open under Alert Level 3.
- As at Alert Level 2, you legally must wear a face mask in some settings. It is recommended you wear a face mask whenever you leave the house.
- Gatherings of up to 10 people are allowed for weddings and civil union ceremonies, funerals and tangihanga (exclusive of staff). Up to 5 staff may be present. Food and drink can be served to seated guests. Physical distancing and record keeping are legally required.
- When you leave home, keep a 2-metre distance from others when in public or 1-metre in controlled environments like workplaces, where practical.
- Customers are only allowed inside specific businesses: supermarkets, banks, primary produce retailers, pharmacies, petrol stations or hardware stores providing goods to trade customers, or if it is an emergency or critical situation.
- Other businesses can open if they trade in a contactless way.
- Public facilities remain closed. Early childhood centres and schools will open for students up to Year 10 for those who cannot learn from home.
- Healthcare services should use virtual, non-contact consultations where possible.
- People at high risk of severe illness, such as older people and those with existing medical conditions, are encouraged to stay at home where possible, and take additional precautions when leaving home. You may choose to work.

Alert Level 4 – Lockdown

Likely the disease is not contained.

Risk assessment

- There is sustained and intensive community transmission.
- Outbreaks are widespread.

Measures that can be applied locally or nationally

- Stay home in your bubble.
 - No travel is allowed except for necessities or to undertake safe recreational activities. You must work and learn from home.
 - No gatherings are allowed. All public and education facilities close.
 - If you work for an Alert Level 4 business or service and you have no available options for childcare, you can extend your household bubble to include a carer for your children.
 - Businesses must close except for necessities (for example, supermarkets, pharmacies, petrol stations) and lifeline utilities.
 - Green grocers, butchers, bakeries, and fishmongers can sell uncooked food items online and must deliver all orders.
 - As in Alert Level 2, you legally must wear a face mask in some settings. It is recommended you wear a face mask whenever you leave the house.
 - Rationing of supplies and requisitioning of facilities as well as reprioritisation of healthcare services is possible.
 - Members of a household or shared bubble may view or accompany the deceased in a funeral home, cemetery or faith-based institution subject to strict conditions.
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Printable resources

- [Summary table of the COVID-19 Alert Levels \[PDF, 102 KB\]](#)
 - [Detailed table of the COVID-19 Alert Levels \[PDF, 210 KB\]](#)
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Timeline of key events

28 February 2020

First COVID-19 case reported in New Zealand.

14 March 2020

The Government announces anyone entering New Zealand must self-isolate for 14 days, except those arriving from the Pacific.

19 March 2020

All indoor gatherings of more than 100 people are to be cancelled.

Borders close to all but New Zealand citizens and permanent residents.

21 March 2020

The Government introduces the 4-tiered Alert Level system to help combat COVID-19. The Prime Minister announces that New Zealand is at Alert Level 2.

23 March 2020

At 1:30pm the Prime Minister announces New Zealand has moved to Alert Level 3, effective immediately. In 48 hours, New Zealand will move to Alert Level 4.

25 March 2020

At 11:59pm, New Zealand moves to Alert Level 4, and the entire nation goes into self-isolation. A State of National Emergency is declared at 12:21pm.

29 March 2020

New Zealand reports its first COVID-19-related death.

31 March 2020

The State of National Emergency is extended at 9:27am. Further extensions are made at:

- 9:25am on 2 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 8 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 15 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 22 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 29 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 5 May 2020.

20 April 2020

The Prime Minister announces New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 4 for an additional 5 days. New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 3 for 2 weeks, before the status is reviewed.

27 April 2020

New Zealand moves to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm.

4 May 2020

No new cases of COVID-19 are reported in New Zealand.

11 May 2020

The Prime Minister outlines the plan to move to Alert Level 2.

13 May 2020

New Zealand moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm. The State of National Emergency expires at 12:21pm.

8 June 2020

The Ministry of Health reports that there are no more active cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand. At 11:59pm, New Zealand moves to Alert Level 1.

11 August 2020

4 new cases of COVID-19 are recorded in the community.

12 August 2020

At 12 noon, Auckland region moves to Alert Level 3. The rest of New Zealand moves to Alert Level 2.

14 August 2020

The Prime Minister announces that Auckland will remain at Alert Level 3 and the rest of New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 2 for 12 more days.

30 August 2020

Auckland moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm, with extra restrictions on travel and gatherings. The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

21 September 2020

All regions except Auckland move to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm.

23 September 2020

Auckland moves to Alert Level 2 without extra restrictions on travel and gatherings at 11:59pm.

7 October 2020

Auckland moves to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm. All of New Zealand is now at Alert Level 1.

14 February 2021

3 new cases of COVID-19 are recorded in the community.

Auckland moves to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm. The rest of New Zealand moves to Alert Level 2.

17 February 2021

Auckland moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm. The rest of New Zealand moves to Alert Level 1.

22 February 2021

Auckland moves to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm. All of New Zealand is now at Alert Level 1.

28 February 2021

Auckland moves to Alert Level 3 at 6am. The rest of New Zealand move to Alert Level 2.

7 March 2021

Auckland moves to Alert Level 2 at 6am. The rest of New Zealand moves to Alert Level 1.

12 March 2021

Auckland moves to Alert Level 1 at midday. All of New Zealand is now at Alert Level 1.

23 June 2021

Wellington moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm. The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 1.

29 June 2021

Wellington moves to Alert Level 1 at 11:59pm. All of New Zealand is now at Alert Level 1.

17 August 2021

All of New Zealand moves to Alert Level 4 at 11:59pm.

31 August 2021

All of New Zealand south of Auckland moves to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm.

Auckland and Northland remain at Alert Level 4.

2 September 2021

Northland moves to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm. All of New Zealand (except Auckland) is now at Alert Level 3.

Auckland remains at Alert Level 4.

7 September 2021

New Zealand (except Auckland) moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm.

Auckland remains at Alert Level 4.

21 September 2021

Auckland and Upper Hauraki move to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

25 September 2021

Upper Hauraki moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm.

Auckland remains at Alert Level 3. The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

3 October 2021

Raglan, Te Kauwhata, Huntly, Ngāruawāhia, Hamilton City and some surrounding areas move to Alert Level 3 for 5 days from 11:59pm.

Auckland remains at Alert Level 3. The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

5 October 2021

Alert Level 3 restrictions in Auckland are eased from 11:59pm.

Raglan, Te Kauwhata, Huntly, Ngāruawāhia, Hamilton City and some surrounding areas remain at Alert Level 3.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

7 October 2021

Waikato Alert Level 3 boundary is extended from 11:59pm to include Waitomo District, including Te Kuiti, Waipa District and Ōtorohanga District.

Auckland remains at Alert Level 3 with some restrictions eased.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

8 October 2021

Northland moves to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm.

Auckland and parts of Waikato remain at Alert Level 3.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

19 October 2021

Northland moves to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm.

Auckland and parts of Waikato remain at Alert Level 3.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

27 October 2021

The parts of Waikato at Alert Level 3 move to Step 1 of Alert Level 3.

Auckland remains at Step 1 of Alert Level 3.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

2 November 2021

Upper Northland moves to Alert Level 3.

The parts of Waikato at Alert Level 3 Step 1 move to Alert Level 3 Step 2 from 11:59pm.

Auckland remains at Step 1 of Alert Level 3.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

9 November 2021

Auckland moves to Alert Level 3 Step 2 at 11:59pm.

Upper Northland remains at Alert Level 3.

Parts of Waikato remain at Alert Level 3 Step 1.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

11 November 2021

Upper Northland moves to Alert Level 2.

Auckland and parts of Waikato remain at Alert Level 3 Step 2.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

16 November 2021

Parts of Waikato move to Alert Level 2.

Auckland remains at Alert Level 3 Step 2.

The rest of New Zealand remains at Alert Level 2.

2 December 2021

All of New Zealand moved to the COVID-19 Protection Framework, also known as the traffic lights, at 11:59pm on 2 December 2021.

[COVID-19 Protection Framework \(traffic lights\)](#)

This marks the end of COVID-19 Alert System.

State of National Emergency

A State of National Emergency was declared due to COVID-19. It was in force between 12:21pm on 25 March 2020 and 12:21pm on Wednesday 13 May 2020.

It covered all of New Zealand including the Chatham Islands, Stewart Island and other offshore islands.

The declaration was made by the Minister of Civil Defence Hon Peeni Henare in consultation with the Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern following advice from the Director of Civil Defence and Emergency Management.

The State of National Emergency was distinct from the COVID-19 Alert System.

Extensions to state of emergency

Under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002, a state of emergency expires 7 days after it's declared unless it is terminated or extended.

The State of National Emergency was extended at:

- 9:27am on 31 March 2020
- 9:25am on 2 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 8 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 15 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 22 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 29 April 2020
- 12:21pm on 5 May 2020.