



Seafood New Zealand Guidance for the Seafood Industry COVID-19 Alert Level 4

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Background

This document provides advice to the seafood industry at Alert Level 4 of the Government's response to COVID-19.

Seafood production (aquaculture and fishing) and processing operations are considered an essential service and can continue to operate under alert level 4. Essential services also include businesses transporting freight, pest management services and services involved in diagnostics for critical businesses (e.g. laboratories) or services like biosecurity, food safety, or public health.

However, strict protocols must be implemented to prevent the transmission of the virus.

Operators must make whatever changes necessary to keep their people safe from transmission. This is likely to require significant changes including the scaling back of operations to just that which is necessary to operate.

The following provides a guide to seafood industry businesses and operations to continue to operate as an essential business. The COVID-19 Delta variant has been found to be easily transmitted and therefore you must do all you can to make your workplace safe.

However, this is just guidance, it is a continually evolving situation and all operators are encouraged to keep up to date with the latest information provided by the government.

Recommended Protocols and Procedures

Mask Use

Masks are mandatory for all staff working at essential service businesses.

In communal areas such as smoko rooms, amenities (any place people gather or mingle), facemasks can be removed for short periods of time when eating or drinking.

- Facemasks are to be replaced immediately and disposed of if become worn, damaged, wet or contaminated.
- Staff must be given instruction on the use of facemasks including how to put them on and take them off. Information can be found at the following links:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/hp7353-ppe-donning-and-doffing-guidance-28mar20.pdf> or

<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/masks/>

- Visors alone cannot be used as substitutes for facemasks.

Physical Distancing

Social distancing is critical. A two-metre distance separation between staff is to be maintained. If that is impossible then you must maintain at least one-metre distance and put in place other risk mitigation including providing staff with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and masks.

It is to be noted that separation less than a metre apart is not permitted at alert level 4, except where workers might be briefly passing one another, and appropriate PPE is used (based on MPI advice).

Other procedures for physical distancing include (where possible):

- staggered breaks and shift changeover times for different teams
- creation of “walkways” for staff when moving through and around their work area
- people not facing each other when passing in narrow passageways; instead passing “side-by-side” or “back-to-back”
- separate entry and exit zones – with the view of maintaining a 2-metre distance where possible.

The key to identifying the distance between staff is the distance between people’s faces. If they are standing side by side – it is the distance between their faces when the two staff turn their heads to face each other and not the distance between their shoulders.

Further guidance from MPI

All establishments should strive for a minimum social distancing of 2 metres at all times.

In exceptional circumstances, work-stations spaced between 1 and 2 metres are permitted, commensurate with additional safety measures to minimise the possibility of airborne transmission.

Minimum requirements for work-stations between 1 and 2 metres

- *Separation distance should maximise the available distance in front of the face (related to how far a sneeze can travel), with side-by-side distance of lower importance.*
- *Floor supervisors allocate specific run time to monitoring worker hygiene and recording results.*
- *Protective clothing must be provided.*
 - *Use of gloves (for Covid-19 purposes) is not mandatory i.e. are only required if there is a level of common contact (food, surfaces, equipment) with neighbouring workers that is significantly above that for workers with greater than 2 metre separation*
 - *Workers must use face masks*
- *One-on-one instruction of workers on hygiene requirements, including putting on and taking off protective clothing, handwashing and coughing etiquette*

Work-stations spaced less than a metre apart are not permitted.

Business/site Requirements

You need to consider what parts of the business/operation are essential and only continue with essential operations. Any part of the business that is non-essential should shut down.

Essential Staff

Ban all non-essential staff from coming on-farm/on-board or on-site, that includes contractors unless required to complete essential or emergency repairs. Any staff that can work from home must do so. Only staff essential to the operations are allowed on-site.

All vulnerable staff, or staff that may have vulnerable family members living with them, should not come to site. Vulnerable staff are considered to be:

- Staff who are over the age of 70 or
- Staff who have health conditions (e.g. respiratory disease, heart conditions, diabetes or are immune-compromised)

Contact Tracing

Contact tracing procedures for all staff, contractors and visitors is required, in case it is needed by the Ministry of Health.

- For all staff working on site ensure you have a register of contact information that includes their full name and two forms of contact (e.g. phone number, email address, physical address).
- You also need to record the areas of the site that each staff member works in, date for each day they are at work and the time on-site/left site.
- For any contractors or on-site visitors, set up a register to record their full name, and two forms of contact, e.g. contact phone number, email address (you could consider taking a photo of their business card), the date, time on-site and time left site, and the areas they have or will work in.
- Businesses must also have the COVID Tracer App QR Code printed and available for use at points of entry.
- Staff should also be encouraged to keep their own contact tracing information when outside of the work environment.

Ensure you have contact information, including home contact for each staff and record the areas of work that each staff member works in.

Contractors and Deliveries

You need to implement procedures to assess all contractors that may need to come on-site to conduct essential services or emergency repairs. This will include things like:

- Carrying out risk assessment, checking:
 - Are they in the high-risk group (age or have health conditions)?
 - Have they had close-contact with or been exposed to someone who is a probable case or who has COVID-19?
 - Have they monitored their own personal health and can confirm they do not have temperature or any other flu like symptoms and have been observing the isolation requirements when not on essential services.
- Record contact details and the areas they have or will work in.
- Confirm they agree to follow the requirements including distancing, sneezing and cough etiquette (into elbow), hand washing, and all other workplace rules, protocols and measures, and especially those measures related to preventing the transmission of Covid-19.

You need to implement procedures for receiving deliveries – ensuring distancing between the delivery staff and receiving staff.

Workplace Bubbles

- Identify, isolate or group staff in small teams or ‘workplace bubbles’ by activity or spatial area (e.g. by farm, vessel, process line, packing line, stores, cleaning teams etc). These staff should operate as their own group in terms of starting and finishing work and breaks so they maintain their bubble at work
- Communal and social spaces used for changing, toilets etc and breaks for eating (e.g. tables and chairs) can be rearranged so that staff can be one metre apart while using the space, if this is not practical implement other risk mitigation screens or physical barriers
- For land-based operations, minimise the time before and after shifts that staff can be on-site
- If possible, stagger shift start/finish times and meal breaks to minimise the number of staff able to congregate in any one area

Health & COVID-19

Operators need to be alert to signs of COVID-19. The symptoms of COVID-19 are one or more of the following:

- a new or worsening cough
- a high temperature (at least 38°C)
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- sneezing and runny nose
- temporary loss of sense of smell

Health and wellness checks are to be carried out of all staff before each day they start work. Any staff showing any signs of illness is to be sent home immediately and further instructions provided.

Any staff that has had close-contact with or been exposed to someone who is a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19, must not come to work and must self-isolate in accordance with the Ministry of Health requirements (this will usually be 14 days from the last contact). If after the required self-isolation period they are symptom free, they can return to work.

If staff or someone they live with are unwell or show any signs of fever, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath are instructed to stay home and to report this (by phone) to the employer.

Any staff showing any signs of illness on entry to or while they are at work, must be sent home immediately.

Any staff who is unwell or show any COVID-19 symptoms, must be instructed to contact their GP or Health-line to seek advice regarding being tested for COVID-19 and must act on that advice. If a test is required, they must get a test, must follow Ministry of Health directions, and must not enter the site until a negative test result is received.

Employers should keep records of any staff that has been instructed to seek further advice, and a record of the outcome of that advice.

All staff must be provided with verbal and written instructions to make sure they fully understand their responsibilities to ensure safe operations, including what they need to do if they are unwell or have any symptoms. **See Appendix One** for an example that can be adapted for your staff and site requirements.

If there is any doubt about someone who feels ill in anyway, they should stay home until they have been symptom free for 48 hours. **See Appendix One and Two** for dealing with staff health and those who are tested for COVID-19.

Temperature Checks

It is recommended that you implement temperature checks of staff before they enter the vessel, or any product area. Any person who has a temperature of 38 °C or above, must not enter the vessel, any product or product storage area.

They must leave site and contact their GP or Health-line to seek advice regarding being tested for COVID-19 and must act on that advice. If a test is required, they must get a test, must follow Ministry of Health directions, and must not enter the site until a negative test result is received.

Employers should keep records of any staff that has a temperature of 38 °C or above and has been instructed to seek further advice, and keep a record of the outcome of that advice.

Please note that requirement is mandatory for those listed for China.

Hygiene

All staff follow their normal workplace hygiene and protective clothing routines as well as the following additional measures:

- All staff must use regular hand washing (wash with hand-soap and running water for a minimum of 20 seconds, dry thoroughly with disposable paper towels), and use hand-sanitiser, including:
 - After visiting the toilet
 - Before eating
 - After smoking/vaping
 - Before putting on and after removing protective clothing, including face mask and gloves
 - Before handling any product
 - Before and after cleaning, particularly after cleaning high contact surfaces.
- Staff must be reminded not to touch their face and eyes, if it occurs, to wash hands as per the above.
- Staff must be reminded to use of cough/sneeze etiquette (cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues, place in rubbish or cough/sneeze into elbow and then wash hands, as above).
- Gloves are recommended if common contact surfaces are used by adjacent workers. Normal glasses are not considered PPE.
- Implement rigorous cleaning and sanitation regimes in high touch/contact surface areas.

Cleaning

- Implement a minimum 4-hourly cleaning and sanitation protocol (these are additional to normal food production related cleaning procedures), for all contact surfaces, particularly hand-contact surfaces in any social or amenity areas, including doors, door handles, handrails, switches, bathroom fixtures, toilets (for sites with larger staff numbers, implement 2-hourly). Ensure staff conducting cleaning of social spaces have suitable PPE.

Supervision and Checks

- Implement supervision and additional checks confirm the procedures are being followed. The frequency of these checks will depend on your operation, but it is important to make sure staff are following the procedures you have put in place, particularly distancing and handwashing and sanitising after touching high-touch contact areas. It is suggested you do this after every break.

Travelling to and from Work

When travelling to work staff are to try to travel alone or only with others from their house. However, if they need to travel to work with other members of the workplace, keep at least one metre distance between all people in the vehicle. Face masks must be worn when travelling. It is also important to regularly clean any high touch or hand-contact surfaces, such as seats, door handles etc, and practice regular handwashing and sanitising.

Public transport will still be available and can be used to travel to work, but staff should sit 2 metres away from other people on public transport and wear facemasks.

Letter for Travel

You will need to provide a letter for staff to carry that confirms they are working for an essential service. This should detail the business name and physical address and state that your staff are employees of an “Alert Level 4 business or service” as set out in Schedule 2 to the *COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order (No 9) 2021*.

Procedures for while Staff are at Home

While New Zealand is at Alert Level 4

- We are all instructed to stay at home and only see those that live in our house, we are not to visit other people or have them visit us, and if we are out of our house, to stay at least 2 metres away from people (other than those who live in the same house)
- We are all instructed to limit travel to only that which is considered essential. This includes:
 - Travelling to and from work in a business providing essential services (that is us) – when travelling to work travel alone or only with others from your house
 - Going to the supermarket or pharmacy to buy essential supplies
- Do not go anywhere or do anything that is non-essential

When you leave work, you are expected to go straight home, unless you are stopping for essential supplies only.

Appendix One: Instructions for Staff (Example)

Food production including harvesting, fishing, processing, storage and transport are currently essential services, as a business we are in a privileged position to be able to keep operating, but you must follow all instructions and company procedures. These are designed to protect you, your families and other staff members from being infected with the virus.

There will be company checks and MPI checks to make sure these procedures are being followed. **Non-Compliance will not be tolerated.**

If you have any concerns or questions, please talk to one of the following people:

- Manager, contact phone number _____
- Supervisor, contact phone number _____

Some information on the virus and how it spreads:

The Ministry of Health website provides details about COVID-19.

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a new or worsening cough
- a high temperature (at least 38°C)
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- sneezing and runny nose
- temporary loss of sense of smell

These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have COVID-19. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu.

COVID-19, like the flu, can be spread from person to person. When a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or talks, they may spread droplets containing the virus a short distance, which quickly settle on surrounding surfaces.

You may get infected by the virus if you touch those surfaces or objects and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes. If you:

- Feel unwell or have any symptoms; or
- You suspect, you or someone who lives with you may have COVID-19, or
- You or someone who lives with you may have been exposed to COVID-19

Then you must not go to work, you must stay home. You must ring your Manager to let them know. They will tell you what you need to do.

You can ring them by contacting: _____ on _____

If COVID-19 is suspected, you must ring the dedicated Healthline 0800 358 5453. It is free and available 24 hours per day for every day of the week. They will give you advice on what to do and you must follow that advice. They have access to interpreters if you need one.

Procedures while you are at work

We are required to ensure that a distance of at least 2 metres is maintained between staff at all times. If that is not possible, staff must maintain a minimum of 1 metre and have other risk mitigation such as wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). It is to be noted that separation less than a metre apart is not permitted, except where workers might be briefly passing one another, and appropriate PPE is used (based on MPI advice).

You must wear a facemask.

This includes when you are working and when you are in any of the social areas, including the café/smoko/break room, changing rooms and amenities – you must spread out so you are at least 2 metres apart.

We have changed the way we operate so that you can continue to work and meet this requirement. You must follow these instructions:

1. Arrive to work no earlier than 10 minutes before your shift starts.
2. All personnel use normal health and hygiene procedures, as well as the following:
 - Wash your hands regularly with hand-soap and running water for at least 20 seconds, then dry them properly with disposable paper towels, do this each time:
 - After visiting the toilet
 - Before eating
 - After smoking/vaping
 - Before putting on your protective clothing, including face mask and gloves and after removing your face mask and gloves
 - Before handling any product
 - Before and after cleaning, particularly after cleaning high hand-contact surfaces.
 - Use hand-sanitiser after washing your hands
 - Change or sanitise your gloves regularly
 - Please try not to touch your face or eyes, if it occurs, wash hands as per the above
 - Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with a disposable tissue, and place it in the rubbish or cough/sneeze into your elbow and then wash your hands
 - Wear a face mask –at all times, only removing it to eat/drink. Remove the face mask by only touching the straps/ loops (not the front)
 - Don't share your PPE
3. Do not stay at work any longer that 10 minutes once your shift ends
4. Follow any other instructions given by the supervisor/manager

Procedures for while you are at home

While New Zealand is at Alert Level 4

- We are all instructed to stay at home and only see those that live in our house, we are not to visit other people or have them visit us, and if we are out of our house, to stay at least 2 metres away from people (other than those who live in the same house)
- We are all instructed to limit travel to only that which is considered essential. This includes:
 - Travelling to and from work in a business providing essential services (that is us) – when travelling to work travel alone or only with others from your house
 - Going to the supermarket or pharmacy to buy essential supplies
- Do not go anywhere or do anything that is non-essential

When you leave work, you are expected to go straight home, unless you are stopping for essential supplies only.

Staff Declaration:

I _____ have had these procedures fully explained to me and I understand what my responsibilities are and the procedures I must follow both at work and outside of work and while I am at home.

I _____ agree to comply with all of these requirements.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Company Representative: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix Two: Dealing with a COVID-19 Positive Result

The following is guidance should a staff member, particularly in processing premises, be infected with COVID-19. In this situation, the Ministry of Health will take the lead and each situation is acted on a case-by-case basis.

Cases are handled by the local MOH representative. These will be put in place for any person who tests positive for COVID-19.

Dealing with the affected staff member and close work contacts

- If anyone starts to feel ill with COVID-19 (or cold/flu like) symptoms at home before they come to work – they must stay home, if they start to feel unwell on the way to or while at work, they need to go home immediately
- They need to ring Healthline or their GP, they will give instructions on what to do and/or if they need a test for COVID-19
- If it is determined they need a test for COVID-19, they need to stay at home in isolation until they receive the results of the test
- They also need to inform the employer that they are being tested for COVID-19
- At that point the employer should identify that person's team/ close work contacts and consult with Ministry of Health or a medical professional to determine if it is necessary to also isolate these close contacts
- The employer should give the site, including any high contact areas (e.g. door handles etc in communal spaces) a thorough clean (see below)
- If the results come back negative, see note below regarding the person who returned the negative test
- If the results come back positive – the person with COVID-19 will be required to isolate and follow Ministry of Health instructions, and that person's team/ close work contacts will also be required to isolate according to the Ministry of Health's instructions if not already)
- Advise your local MPI verifier (if appropriate)
- If any of the close work contacts develop symptoms, they need to ring Healthline or their GP and follow their advice
- Once staff have been at home and in isolation for the time required by the Ministry of Health's instructions and show no symptoms or signs of the illness they can return to work.

Notes:

If there is any doubt about someone who feels ill in anyway, they should stay home until they have been symptom free for 48 hours.

The advice to people who have negative results is:

- they still need to complete the full 14-day quarantine period if they have returned from overseas or have had close contact with someone with the virus
- if they are still sick with the same illness at the end of the 14-day isolation period, they will need to stay in isolation until they have been symptom-free for 48 hours
- if they are well, have been symptom free for 48 hours, they can return to normal activity.

Identifying close-work contacts

The Ministry of Health define a 'Close Contact' as any person with the following exposure to a suspect, confirmed or probable case during the case's infectious period, without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE):

In terms of a workplace the following are examples of what might be considered close contacts:

- anyone living in the same household or household-like setting
- face-to-face contact in any setting within two metres of a case for 15 minutes or more (e.g. people working opposite each other, sitting opposite each other in the smoko room)
- having been in a closed environment (e.g. a processing area, smoko/break room or communal space, amenity areas, travelled in the same vehicle, etc) within 2 metres of a case for 15 minutes or more

The more you can isolate people or groups people in the work environment, the easier it will be to identify close work contacts.

Dealing with the vessel or site

As this virus is new, there is limited research to date, but some work has been undertaken, either on this virus or other coronaviruses. The current information indicates:

- the length of time that SARS-COV-2 (the cause of COVID-19) survives on surfaces will vary depending on factors such as the number of contaminated droplets present and environmental temperature and humidity.
- coronaviruses can survive on inanimate surfaces for many hours and possibly days but are readily inactivated by cleaning and sanitation (disinfection).
- Chlorine-based sanitisers have been shown to 'kill' viruses.

It is highly likely that the site, especially a processing premise, will have been cleaned and sanitised several times since the affected staff member had been on-site, assuming they remained at home at the on-set of symptoms.

However, a full and thorough clean and sanitise of all areas that the affected person and their close work-place contacts have been, is to be undertaken. This should occur when no other processing/product staff (except for the cleaning crew) are on-site. The company is to follow the advice of MOH representative dealing with the positive case, with regards to site closure time-frames –this is likely to be between 2 and 4 days.

The cleaning-crew must wear facemasks and should ensure they are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as disposable gloves and eye protection or a face shield. They need to wash and sanitise their hands before putting on and after taking off, their PPE.

Areas to focus on during the cleaning and sanitation. All the normal contact and non-contact surface sin any work area, as well as amenities, smoko rooms and other communal areas including:

- All high touch contact surfaces
- Doors and door handles
- Break/communal areas, benches, tables and chairs (including seats and legs)
- Any appliances such as microwave, fridges, kettles/jugs, vending machines
- All hand-basins, towel dispensers
- Toilet doors, door handles/locks
- Lockers
- Handrails in stairwells
- Hallway and corridor walls
- Outside smoking areas
- Offices (reception areas, desk fronts, keyboards, door handles, etc)
- Any items handled by the affected person and their close-work contacts (e.g., utensils, pens, control panels or equipment)