



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

Version 6 – 25 August 2021

For further information please don't hesitate to contact us at:
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Background

IMPORTANT NOTE – all changes from the previous version of this guide (version 5) are highlighted throughout the document.

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

Seafood processing operations are recognised Alert Level 4 business or service as set out in Schedule 2 of the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order (No 9) 2021 and can continue to operate under alert level 4.

Alert Level 4 businesses or 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 and all operators are encouraged to keep up to date with the latest information provided by the government.

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. In addition, evidence suggests that processing environments can be a heightened risk for the transmission of COVID-19 and have been a source of outbreaks in some countries. This is primarily due to processing environments often being relatively cold environments, having limited air flow, increased noise resulting in close talking and shouting and groups of people working in closely together.

Therefore, it is critical that we take necessary precautions to keep our people and their families safe, and to prevent this from occurring in seafood processing premises in New Zealand.

The following provides a guide to seafood processing operations to continue to operate.

Recommended Protocols and Procedures

COVID-19 Safety Plan

Seafood processors need to have a COVID-19 safety plan that sets out how they'll operate under Alert Level 4.

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.

Vaccination

Vaccination is also another very important tool to minimise spread of the disease and you should encourage your staff to get vaccinated, and if possible, provide an opportunity to do so.

Mask Use

Masks are mandatory for all staff working **on site** 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://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/masks/>

- Visors alone cannot be used as substitutes for facemasks.

Physical Distancing

Physical 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. **Visors can also be used in conjunction with 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-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 be assessed to determine if they should come to site. Vulnerable staff are considered to be:

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

Note that new evidence shows that pregnant women and new-born babies may be at greater risk of poor outcomes if infected with COVID-19. Please see further information here:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-information-pregnant-women-and-those-who-have-recently-given-birth>

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 a 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 service business.
- 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 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 work bubble
- Communal and social spaces used for changing, toilets etc and breaks for eating (e.g. tables and chairs) need to 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
- 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 most common symptoms of COVID-19 include one or more of the following:

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

The less common symptoms include:

Diarrhoea, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, or confusion/irritability.

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. In line with employment contracts, make sure that there are no financial disincentives for staff to stay at home when unwell.

Any staff that has been in a location of interest, is a close-contact or has been exposed to someone who is a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19, must not come to site, and must follow the directions of the Ministry of Health. This will usually be self-isolation for 14 days from the last contact and testing for COVID-19 at various time-points. If after the required self-isolation period they are symptom free and have received the negative tests as required, they can return to work.

If someone in their house bubble is isolating due to being in a location of interest or a close-contact, staff are instructed to also stay home until the person isolating returns a negative result after their day 5 test. If one or more members of the household develop symptoms at any time, the staff must stay home and follow Ministry of Health's directions.

For more information regarding dealing with contacts, see Ministry of Health website:

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

If someone in their house bubble is unwell and showing cold or flu like symptoms, staff are to report this (by phone) to the employer for further instruction, and if there is a risk of COVID-19, staff are to be instructed to stay home and contact their GP or Health-line for further advice.

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

Operators should confirm that staff are not at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 from those in their home bubble e.g. living with air or port border workers, MIQ staff, etc.

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 any product or product storage area and must avoid congregating with other staff.

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 this 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.

Ventilation

Operators should also check and maintain ventilation systems in processing environments to ensure optimal operation (i.e maximise air flow and flowing away from workers where possible).

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 home bubble. However, if they need to travel to work with other members of the workplace, they should be with staff within the same work bubble, keep at least one metre distance between all people in the vehicle and facemasks 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.

When leaving work staff are expected to go straight home, except for stopping for essential supplies only (always wear a facemask and physically distance from others outside their bubble).

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*.

Home Bubbles

When away from work staff will be in their Home Bubble. Operators will need to provide advice to staff about what they can and can't do while they are away from work while in Alert Level 4, including:

- 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
- 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 getting essential supplies or exercising locally where exposure to the public occurs, to wear a facemask and stay at least 2 metres away from people
- Do not go anywhere or do anything that is non-essential

Appendix One: Instructions for Staff (Example)

Seafood Processing is a recognised 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 and can continue to operate under alert level 4

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 most common symptoms of COVID-19 include one or more of the following:

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

The less common symptoms include:

Diarrhoea, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, or confusion/irritability

If you, or anyone in your home bubble:

- feels unwell or has any COVID-19 like symptoms; or
- has been in a location of interest and are self-isolating under the direction of the Ministry of Health; or
- is a close-contact or has been exposed to someone who is a probable or confirmed case of 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 all staff on site wear a facemask and 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), including a facemask and/or visor.

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 than 10 minutes once your shift ends
4. Follow any other instructions given by the supervisor/manager

Procedures for while you are at home

When away from work you need to stay in your Home Bubble. You also need to follow the Alert Level 4 Rules, including:

- 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
- 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 getting essential supplies or exercising locally where exposure to the public occurs, to wear a facemask and stay at least 2 metres away from people
- 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 of, or visitor to, a 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 Public Health Unit representative, who will work with you and advise the necessary actions.

Dealing with the affected staff member and close work contacts

If the employer is notified of anyone testing positive for COVID-19 (including staff and visitors) that has been on-site while infectious (as determined by the Ministry of Health), they must:

- Identify the person's work contacts and ask them to leave site (if they are at work) and return home to isolate, to contact Healthline and follow the Ministry of Health's directions
- The Ministry of Health or local public health unit is likely to have been in contact, but if not contact them and ask for advice regarding the site and follow any directions given, note they may require closure of the site (or partial closure) but this will be on a case by case basis (a 2-4 day closure may be required).
- If the premise is listed for China, advise MPI Market Access by email: marketaccess@mpi.govt.nz
- Initiate a deep clean of all areas where the person/s may have been while they were potentially infectious – see below
- Once the close contact staff have followed the Ministry of Health's direction relating to isolation, completed the required testing, received negative tests, and show no symptoms or signs of the illness they can return to work
- Anyone who is positive from COVID-19 must not return to work until a medical clearance is given

Identifying close-work contacts

The Ministry of Health define a 'Close Contact' as any person who may live or work with or have been in the same place at the same time as someone infectious with COVID-19. The more you can isolate people or groups people in the work environment, the easier it will be to identify close work contacts.

For more information regarding identifying the different types of contacts, see Ministry of Health website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/contact-tracing-covid-19>

Dealing with the 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 survives on surfaces will vary depending on factors such as the strain or variant, 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).
- both Quaternary Ammonium Compound's (QACs) and Chlorine-based sanitisers have been shown to 'kill' the viruses. The usual dosage is 200ppm
- while no specific study has been carried it with regards to Ozone, Ozone is known to be effective in reducing other viruses, including viruses that are considered to be more robust than SARS-CoV-2.
- Fogging (with an approved chemical) may also be used as part of the deep clean/sanitise process.

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 should be cleaned as per normal and then sprayed with an approved sanitiser. Including the normal contact and non-contact surfaces in 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), fridges and other cupboard doors and handles
- All appliances such as microwave, fridges, kettles/jugs, vending machines, their cords and plugs
- Shared items such as tea & coffee jars and lids
- All hand-basins, towel dispensers
- Toilet doors, door handles/locks
- Lockers
- Handrails in stairwells and other areas
- 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)