

The Safe Side

Developments in health and safety from New Zealand and around the world

We've all faced significant challenges and changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It's great news that we are now at Level 2, but we're all aware that many businesses will be dealing with multiple pressures and demands as they resume work. To make things a little bit easier, VL has produced this one-page Safe Side COVID-19 Special Issue. It contains basic guidance and links to further information about what businesses need to do to manage their risks of COVID-19 at work. We hope it is helpful.

- The VL Team

Health and safety when resuming work under Level 2 – what businesses need to think about

To meet their duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act, businesses must do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the risks of COVID-19. What is reasonably practicable almost certainly means following the Government's requirements and guidance.

WorkSafe has identified four key controls for safe work and workplaces under Level 2:

- Keeping people with COVID-19 symptoms off the premises
- Maintaining physical distancing
- Enabling good hygiene practices
- Keeping track of people who enter the premises

Keeping people with COVID-19 off the premises includes checking that [workers are well and safe to work](#) and reinforcing that they should stay home if they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or have been in contact with a confirmed case. It might also involve enquiring around the health of others before granting entry. The questions in the [COVID-19 contact tracing register](#) can help with this.

Physical distancing generally means ensuring that, wherever possible, all people (excluding workers) on the premises or using the business' services keep two metres away from each other. Workers must keep one metre away from each other, wherever possible. If physical distances cannot be met or maintained, the risk of spreading COVID-19 must be managed. In addition, groups in the workplace must be limited to 10 people, if the group stays within one metre of each other.

Enabling good hygiene practices includes providing additional ways to wash or sanitise hands, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects (especially door knobs, light switches, stair rails and lift buttons), and reinforcing the



[key messages](#) around hand washing, cough and sneeze etiquette and not touching your face.

All businesses, except retail, are required to maintain [records](#) of all people's movements on their premises. Retail must keep records of all workers and those who carry out work for the business. There is a contact tracing register available [here](#).

As well as its general guidance for businesses, WorkSafe has [specific guidance](#) for some workplaces including restaurants and cafes, retail, and close proximity services like hairdressing. There is also extensive [industry produced guidance](#) endorsed by WorkSafe. This includes guidance for construction, forestry, farming, road transport, retail and education.

The COVID-19 website has many useful [posters and signs](#) that businesses can use to communicate important messages to workers and the public along with further [information](#) on how to do business at Level 2.

Keeping a close eye on all the usual hazards and risks arising from your work

It's understandable that everyone's mind is on COVID-19. But all the routine hazards that kill or injure thousands of people each year remain. In fact, the likelihood of work accidents may be higher than normal due to the effects of the pandemic.

Workers and supervisors are likely to be stressed and distracted by recent events. Plant and site conditions may have degraded during shutdown. There may be staff shortages and changes in teams due to redundancies and absences. There are likely to be increased financial and production pressures. We suggest businesses re-assess their risks and controls by taking these and other changes into account, as well as keeping BAU health and safety top-of-mind as they restart their work.