



COVID-19 Protection Framework

The government has announced a new traffic light-style system that is intended to replace the COVID-19 alert levels and end nationwide lockdowns.

The system will become operative once Auckland and the wider country achieve vaccination targets of 90 per cent. The government predicts Auckland will reach that target before Christmas, meaning relative freedoms could return by the summer.

The country will be assessed on levels of vaccination by each DHB, so larger cities like Auckland may have differing levels of vaccine compliance depending on the DHB applicable to a particular geographical area.

There are three stages, **Green**, **Orange** and **Red** but all three allow relatively high rates of freedom compared to the current alert level system. However, they will require the use of vaccine certificates for nearly everything apart from essential retail and services.

Green is when there are some COVID-19 cases in the community and sporadic imported cases. Community transmission will be limited and COVID-19 hospitalisations will be at a manageable level. The health system will be ready to respond, including primary care, public health, and hospitals.

Within the Green classification record keeping and scanning will still be required, with face coverings mandatory on flights and encouraged indoors. The public will be permitted to visit public facilities, retail outlets, workplaces, ECEs, schools, kura and tertiary providers and specified outdoor community events. Regional boundary restrictions will not apply.

Orange will apply when there is increasing community transmission that is putting pressure on our health system. The whole of health system will focus its resources, but can continue to manage primary care, public health, and hospitals. There may also be an increasing threat from COVID-19 for at-risk people.

Within the Orange classification record keeping and scanning will be required, with face coverings mandatory on flights, public transport, in taxis, retail, public venues, and encouraged elsewhere. Public facilities will be open with capacity limits based on 1m distancing, retail outlets will be open with capacity limits based on 1m distancing, education facilities will be open with public health measures in place as will workplaces and specified outdoor community events. Regional boundary restrictions will not apply.

Red will apply when action will be needed to be taken to protect both at-risk people and to protect our health system from an unsustainable number of hospitalisations.

Within the Red classification record keeping and scanning will be required, with face coverings mandatory on flights, public transport, in taxis, retail, public venues and recommended

whenever leaving one's house. Public facilities will be allowed to open with up to 100 people, based on 1m distancing. Retail outlets can open with capacity limits based on 1m distancing but people will be encouraged to stay away from workplaces, working from home where that is possible. ECEs, schools, and kura can open with public health measures and specified outdoor community events will be allowed, with capacity limits. Regional boundary restrictions will apply.

Vaccination Certificates

Requiring a vaccination certificate will be optional for many locations. There will be some higher-risk settings where they will be a requirement in order to open to the public. At all levels, businesses, retail, and public facilities will generally be able to remain open for vaccinated people.

Businesses, events, organisations, community, and a range of sectors may choose, legally, to implement a vaccination entry requirement for customers. If a business, organisation or service does not wish to request proof of vaccine, they will have to operate with strict limits on capacity and space requirements. They may need to close in Orange and/or Red levels.

Under **Green**, if entry to a venue or event is via a vaccination certificate, there will be no limits. If not, certain limits will apply at hospitality venues, gyms, public gatherings, event and in close contact businesses.

Under **Orange**, the rules around vaccination certificates are similar to Green rules but if there is no vaccination certificate, admission to gyms, events and close contact businesses will not be permitted.

Under **Red**, where a vaccination certificate is produced entry will be allowed to hospitality venues, gatherings, events and gyms but with capacity limits and social distancing in place. Also, close contact businesses with public health requirements in place and on-site delivery at tertiary education facilities with capacity limited and social distancing will be open to vaccine certificate holders.

If a business, organisation or service does not request proof of vaccine restrictions will apply. Hospitality will be contactless only with gatherings limited to only 10 people. Tertiary education will be via distance learning only. Events, close contact businesses and gyms will not be able to operate without a vaccine certificate requirement.

Financial Support

Today an increase to the Resurgence Support Payment (RSP) was announced, as we transition to the new COVID-19 Protection Framework.

From 12 November 2021, the RSP will be paid fortnightly (presently it is paid on a 3-weekly basis). It has effectively been doubled and businesses can receive \$3000 per business plus \$800 per full-time employee (FTE), up to 50 FTE's.

The maximum fortnightly payment is \$43,000. Those who are self-employed and or a sole traders can receive a payment of \$3,800.

The eligibility criteria remain the same.

The RSP will continue to be available to businesses anywhere in New Zealand until Auckland moves to the new COVID-19 Protection Framework.

The Wage Subsidy Scheme also continues to apply, but there have been no changes to the amounts that may be claimed.

Applications for the fifth round of the August 2021 Wage Subsidy are now open and businesses can apply until 11:59pm 28 October 2021. The payment rates and eligibility criteria remain the same. The Wage Subsidy will continue to be available to businesses anywhere in New Zealand while any part of the country is in Alert Levels 3 or 4.

Hardship assistance for workers on low incomes has also been extended. Income limits for workers receiving hardship support will be lifted temporarily, for four months, to make it easier to get help for food and other emergency costs.

The temporary income limit increase applies to the Special Needs Grant and Advance Payment of Benefit, which in most cases does not have to be repaid, and to the Recoverable Assistance Payment, which does have to be repaid.

The income limits for assistance will increase to 40 hours at the minimum wage, or \$800 per week and \$1600 per week for a couple with or without children.

Up to 25,000 additional grants are expected to be made for items such as food and clothing and for power bills to people not currently getting assistance from the Ministry of Social Development.

At Ecovis KGA we have a dedicated team to help you through these times and are well placed to assist in exploring what options are available and other measures to help protect your business.