

# ALERT LEVEL 1: COVID-19 Guidance for Transport Operators

***Last updated: 0815hrs, 23 February 2021***

1. This guidance is applicable to operators for the provision of all transport services, including public transport, aviation, maritime and other land-based passenger services. To the extent that it is relevant, it may also be used by organisations transporting passengers without hire or reward.
2. It is intended to be read in conjunction with official information about COVID19 Alert Levels 1 contained on, or linked from, the [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) webpage and on the [Ministry of Transport website](https://www.transport.govt.nz).
3. **Since this guidance was last published** (at 0835 hrs on 18 February 2021):
  - at 11.59pm on 22 February 2021, Auckland moved to Alert Level 1, and the rest of New Zealand remained at Alert Level 1;
  - the Director-General of Health has issued a gazette notice exempting certain services from the face covering requirements;
  - information has been added on how individuals exempt from the face covering requirements (for medical or disability reasons) can apply for an exemption card.

## Executive summary

1. At 11.59pm on 22 February 2021, Auckland moved to Alert Level 1, and the rest of New Zealand remained at Alert Level 1.
2. There are no physical distancing requirements at Alert Level 1.
3. Drivers, staff, and passengers are required to wear face coverings (with some exceptions). Passengers of small passenger vehicle services will not need to wear masks, but drivers of these services will. Exemptions also apply to pre-booked bus and train services (that meet certain conditions), and jet boat services.
4. Operators are required to support contact tracing. Most transport operators are required to display QR codes. Public transport services that require passengers to provide their name and a contact phone number (in order to use the service) do not need to display QR codes.
5. Operators should continue to clean vehicles, vessels, aircraft and facilities (e.g terminals) in line with Ministry of Health guidance.
6. With regards to workplace health and safety, operators should consider advice and guidance from Worksafe and the Ministry of Health.
7. Transport operators are not expected, or required, to enforce passenger compliance with the Order or Ministry of Health guidelines; but may provide advice to passengers for travelling safely for example by displaying public information posters. Passengers and staff should not be encouraged to call Police if someone is not complying with the requirements. As per normal procedures, if the situation is dangerous or a passenger is displaying threatening behaviour, for example, Police should be called.

## **ALERT LEVEL 1**

8. At 11.59pm on 22 February 2021, Auckland moved to Alert Level 1, and the rest of New Zealand remained at Alert Level 1.

### *Advice for traveling safely under Alert Level 1*

9. We all need to remain vigilant in the battle against COVID-19. Travellers:
- Should be kind and patient with each other and transport staff, especially your driver or crew.
  - Should, where it is possible to do so, keep their distance from other passengers on board public transport services.
  - Must wear a face covering while on public transport (unless exempted).
  - Should keep a record of where they go and their interactions on the NZ COVID Tracer App; including scanning QR codes (where available), or manually recording travel information in the NZ COVID Tracer App (where QR codes are not available); OR keep a manual record if you do not have a smartphone.
  - Should practice good hygiene and follow Ministry of Health advice. This includes washing and drying their hands thoroughly with soap and water (or hand sanitiser if soap and water not available), coughing and sneezing into their elbow, and not touching their face.
  - Should plan ahead, and allow extra time to ensure their journey is as comfortable as possible.
  - Should stay home if they're unwell, or may have COVID-19. They should also not travel if they: have been requested to self-isolate/quarantine, have symptoms of COVID-19, or are awaiting COVID-19 test results.
10. We recommend operators encourage their passengers and users to follow the safe travel tips (list above) and by publically displaying COVID-19 educational posters on site, and through social media and public announcements (e.g. in terminals and on-board).

*About this guidance*

11. This guidance outlines key information for transport service operators under Alert Level 1. Specifically, the following matters are covered:

**Section 1:** Workplace health and safety

**Section 2:** Physical distancing

**Section 3:** Face coverings

**Section 4:** Supporting contact tracing efforts

**Section 5:** Cleaning practices

**Section 6:** Customer compliance

12. If you require further information or advice, please email the Ministry of Transport at:  
[essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz](mailto:essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz).
13. If you would like access to collateral, including posters for your transport assets (e.g. buses, trains) or facility (e.g. terminals, platforms), please email the Ministry of Transport at:  
[essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz](mailto:essentialtransport@transport.govt.nz).

## Section 1: Workplace health and safety

14. When considering workplace health and safety arrangements, transport operators should consider:

- any advice or guidance issued by Worksafe <https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/>
- advice or guidance issue by the Ministry of Health <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus> (where this may be relevant to their health and safety arrangements).

## Section 2: Physical distancing

### Public transport services

15. Physical distancing does not need to be observed on board public transport services at Alert Levels 1; however, passengers are still encouraged to physically distance where possible.
16. Regional authorities (in the case of public transport) and transport operators should issue public messaging that discourages people who are unwell from using their services.
17. Additionally, it is recommended that some physical separation of the passengers from the driver compartment is maintained.

### Airports, bus stations, train stations, and ferry terminals

18. Physical distancing does not need to be observed at the airport, bus station, train station, or ferry terminal.

## Section 3: Face coverings

### *Who needs to wear a face covering?*

19. Drivers, staff, and passengers on public transport services are required to wear face coverings. However, there are some exemptions, these include:
- passengers of small passenger services (but drivers of small passenger services are required to wear face coverings);
  - persons travelling on a pre-booked bus or train service, where:
    - the service requires all passengers to provide their name and a contact telephone number (in order to use the service); and
    - there is a seat allocated to individual ticket holders of that service;
  - persons travelling on a jet boat service;
  - the following specific services:
    - Cook Strait ferry services (see letter from the Director-General of Health (dated 16 September 2020));

- school buses (meaning dedicated school services contracted by: the Ministry of Education, or Local Authority, or School Board, or Auckland Transport), or
- charter services and charter tours.

*What kind of face covering can be used?*

20. Any face covering that adequately covers the mouth and nostrils can be used, these include: single use disposable masks, washable reusable masks (whether purchased or homemade), or other types of face coverings (e.g. a scarf wrapped around the face).

*Is anybody exempt from wearing a mask?*

21. Yes. Transport operators should be aware that the following persons are not required to wear face coverings:

- persons under the age of 12, and
- persons who have a medical condition or disability that make it unsuitable to wear a face covering (*please note it might not always be clear why someone may need to be exempt from wearing a face covering - even though exemption cards are available, they are not mandatory*); and
- drivers or staff, if:
  - they are in a space separated from passengers (e.g. pilots in a cockpit, or train drivers in a train cab), or
  - wearing a face covering could make it unsafe to operate the vehicle (e.g. wearing a face covering means drivers or staff are unable to properly communicate, or causes the eyeglasses of the driver to fog).

22. In addition, transport operators should note that the use of face coverings is not required in the following situations:

- if it is unsafe to wear a face covering (e.g. if the person's only face covering is wet, or wearing a face covering means a driver cannot safely operate the vehicle),
- if there is an emergency that requires the face covering to be removed (e.g. to perform CPR),
- if removal of the face covering is required to prove identity,
- if visibility of the mouth is required for communication (e.g. when communicating with someone who is deaf),
- if there is a legal requirement to remove, or not to wear, the face covering,
- if there is a need to remove the face covering to take medicine,
- if there is a need to remove the face covering to eat or drink (if eating or drinking is permitted by the conditions of carriage),
- if there is a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering.

23. Information from the Ministry of Health, regarding the use of face coverings in the community, is available [here](#).

*How can people demonstrate they are exempt?*

24. People that are exempt from the face covering requirements because they have a medical condition or disability that makes it unsuitable to wear a face covering, can request an exemption card. Requests can be made by contacting Healthline (0800 358 5453) or Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (04 801 9100 or at [info@dpa.org.nz](mailto:info@dpa.org.nz)).

25. Please note that people that are exempt from the face covering requirements, do not need to have an exemption card.

*What about enforcement?*

26. The obligation to wear a face covering on public transport is the responsibility of the individual.

27. Operators, drivers and staff are not expected to assume the role of enforcement officer; but they still have their usual customer relations role to remind people about face coverings. The role is to educate and encourage passengers to do the right thing, but not be the enforcer.

28. Staff are not expected to refuse boarding to people who do not have a face covering. This kind of issue should be dealt with as you would normally manage a difficult passenger situation.

29. Passengers and staff should not be encouraged to call Police if someone is not wearing a face covering. As per normal procedures, if the situation is dangerous or a passenger is displaying threatening behaviour, for example, Police should be called.

*Should operators be encouraging and educating passengers about wearing face coverings?*

30. Yes, the support of operators and staff in encouraging and educating passengers about the wearing of face coverings is appreciated. A range of collateral is provided with this guidance including posters which operators are asked to display across their fleets, terminals, stations and other facilities. A script to support social media messaging and PA announcements is attached at Appendix 1 to this guidance.

31. The government will continue to remind people to follow the instructions of the public transport workforce regarding face coverings.

32. These messages will be reinforced through a major All of Government public communications campaign, including COVID-19 TV advertising.

#### **Section 4: Supporting contact tracing**

*What is contact tracing and why is it important?*

33. The purpose of contact tracing is to prevent potential onward transmission, raise awareness about the disease and its symptoms and support early detection of suspected cases.

34. It is important that everyone undertakes practicable actions to support a quick and robust contact tracing process. Contact tracing (coupled with testing and quarantine/isolation measures) is a critical pillar in supporting New Zealand's goal to eliminate COVID-19.

*Who undertakes contact tracing?*

35. Contact tracing is undertaken by Public Health Units (in the DHB where the confirmed or probable case was diagnosed), or by the Ministry of Health's National Close Contact Service.
36. When there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, a contact tracing process will occur to:
- identify all 'close contacts' of the confirmed or probable case – so that these people can be quarantined/isolated (and tested if required); and
  - identify 'casual contacts', of the confirmed or probable case, and ask them to get tested if they have (or develop) symptoms of COVID-19.

*What's the difference between a close contact and a casual contact?*

37. Generally, a 'close contact' is someone who has been within 2 metres for more than 15 minutes of a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19. The full definition of 'close contact' is available on page 13 of this factsheet: <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/advice-for-health-professionals-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-27aug2020.pdf>
38. A 'casual contact' is someone who may have been in contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, but more than 2m apart or for less 15 minutes.

*What should regional authorities and transport operators do to support contact tracing?*

39. At all Alert Levels, transport operators are required to support contact tracing.
40. Regional authorities, and transport operators, are required to display QR codes that are compatible with the NZ COVID Tracer App for their transport assets. Those QR codes need to be displayed in an easily accessible prominent place.
41. Public transport services are not required to obtain and display QR codes if they require all passengers to provide their name and a contact telephone number (in order to use the service); these may include services, such as:
- air passenger services,
  - interregional bus services,
  - interregional passenger train services.
42. In addition the following services do not need to obtain and display QR codes:
- school transport services (meaning dedicated school transport services contracted by: the Ministry of Education, or Local Authority, or School Board, or Auckland Transport), or
  - car sharing services and carpooling services.
43. Regional authorities (in the case of public transport) and transport operators should also take steps to promote and enable users and passengers to keep records for contact tracing purposes. We recommend transport operators issue public messaging (e.g. through posters, announcements, social media) to encourage users and passengers to:

- use the NZ COVID Tracer App by scanning the QR code (where display of the QR code is available), or recording the trip manually in the NZ COVID Tracer App (if the QR code is not available); OR keep a manual record if you do not have a smartphone.
- use public electronic ticketing cards where these are available (e.g. AT HOP, Snapper, Metrocard or Bee Card) and make sure those cards are registered with the passenger's contact information.

*What can regional authorities and operators expect if there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 on their transport service?*

44. If there is a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 on a transport service, a health official will notify the regional authority (in the case of public transport) and/or operator and request your support with identifying the contacts of that person. The health official will be particularly interested in details you might have of any people who were in 'close contact' with the COVID-19 case on the bus/train/ferry they are investigating.
45. For example, you may be asked to review CCTV footage, or online passenger registers (e.g. public transport electronic ticketing card registration details).
46. The health official may also ask you to provide any contact information you might have for people who were in 'casual contact' with the COVID-19 case on the bus/train/ferry/aircraft they are investigating. This is so they can ask these 'casual contacts' to get tested if they have (or develop) symptoms of COVID-19.
47. If you do not have this information (but are not certain that there were no 'close contacts') the health official will discuss with you what action should be taken. For example, they may request that you undertake public messaging asking people that travelled on the service to contact the COVID-19 Healthline.
48. If you are certain that there were no 'close contacts' (e.g. CCTV footage shows no 'close contacts' were established), then you should advise the health official of this and ask if there is anything more that you should do.

## **Section 5: Cleaning**

49. Transport operators should apply cleaning practices consistent with Ministry of Health guidance.
  - Ministry of Health general guidance on cleaning can be found [here](#)
  - Ministry of Health cleaning FAQs can be found [here](#)
50. Cleaning regimes should include:
  - cleaning the vehicle/vessel/aircraft regularly with particular attention to high-touch surfaces (where possible, at the end of each shift/sailing/flight, but at least at the end of each day).
  - as far as practicable, frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces throughout the day.

## Section 6: Customer compliance

51. Transport operators are not expected, or required, to enforce passenger compliance with:
- the Order, or
  - Ministry of Health guidelines.
52. Transport operators, however, may choose to stop passengers boarding, where it is lawful to do so on health and safety grounds as per their standard operating procedures.
53. Transport operators may also provide advice to passengers for travelling safely for example by displaying public information posters.

# Appendix 1: Public Announcement Scripts

## **Public Transport Operators – Bus / Train (excluding exempt pre-booked services)**

Face coverings help us protect ourselves and others from the spread of COVID-19.

You are required to wear a face covering on public transport during alert level 1.

Everyone should wear a face covering while on the bus / train, unless you are under 12 years old, or have a health reason for not wearing one.

Your driver may not be wearing a face covering because of safety/medical reasons. Please be respectful.

We also encourage you to track your journey using the QR codes provided, or record it manually.

Please keep your face covering on until you exit the bus / train, and if you need to dispose of it, please do so safely.

If you are sick, please don't use public transport.

Thanks for your cooperation.

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## **Ferry Operators (excluding the Cook Strait ferries)**

Face coverings help us protect ourselves and others from the spread of COVID-19.

You are required to wear a face covering on public transport during alert level 1.

Everyone should wear a face covering while on the ferry, unless you are under 12 years old, or have a health reason for not wearing one.

Your captain or crew may not be wearing a face covering because of safety/medical reasons. Please be respectful.

We also encourage you to track your journey using the QR codes provided, or record it manually.

Please keep your face covering on until you exit the ferry, and if you need to dispose of it, please do so safely.

If you are sick, please don't use public transport.

Thanks for your cooperation.

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## **Airlines / Airports**

Face coverings help us protect ourselves and others from the spread of COVID-19.

You are required to wear a face covering while on board the aircraft and until you enter the terminal during alert level 1.

Everyone should wear a face covering while on the aircraft, unless you are under 12 years old, or have a health reason for not wearing one.

Your pilot or members of the cabin crew may not be wearing a face covering for safety reasons. Please be respectful.

Please keep your face covering on until you enter the terminal, and if you need to dispose of it, please do so safely.

If you are sick, please don't fly.

Thanks for your cooperation.

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