

We are not expecting to see much shift in how the majority of government agencies are already working under alert level 4. Agencies' essential services will continue to operate and have already adopted control measures to ensure they can do so safely, and those able to work from home must continue to do so. However, many agencies will now be considering how they will sustain the current control measures and ways of working over a longer period. Employees with a less-than-desirable work setup at home may be feeling discomfort, and other issues such as stress, fatigue, isolation etc. These are also likely to become greater as time goes on. This is also an opportunity for agencies to consider how they will ensure the controls they have in place are working, including controls for other (non-COVID-19) critical risks.

<h2>Planning for alert level 3</h2>	 <h2>Working from home</h2>	 <h2>Mental wellness</h2>	 <h2>Fatigue</h2>	 <h2>Shared workplaces</h2>
<p>WorkSafe NZ have indicated that for all PCBUs operating as an essential service under alert level 4, the controls they have in place should continue as we move to alert level 3. Following engagement with HSRS and unions, a documented version of their plan must be shared with workers.</p> <p>Agencies are encouraged to reflect on practice from the past weeks and implement changes as needed.</p> <p>Agencies may have some operations or services that can be re-introduced under alert level 3, particularly any areas that may provide support to or alleviate pressure on critical services. Complete a risk assessment for these activities.</p> <p>Agencies should also consider their contractor and supplier arrangements that are likely to be re-started under alert level 3. PCBU's have an obligation to co-operate, co-ordinate and consult with other PCBUs about the duties they share in relation to the same matter.</p> <p><b>Some questions for consideration;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has our risk profile changed in the last few weeks and/or do we expect any changes under alert level 3?</li> <li>During alert level 4, have we checked that what we believe is happening is actually happening? If not, what controls do we have in place now and how will we know that these are working?</li> <li>Will we require and/or have access to additional controls under alert level 3?</li> <li>How are we monitoring incidents and events and are we comfortable with how these are being reported and managed?</li> </ul> <p><b>Useful Links</b>  <a href="#">WorkSafe NZ – COVID-19 information</a>  <a href="#">WorkSafe NZ – COVID-19 safety plan info</a>  <a href="#">BLHSF – COVID-19 info for Chief Executives</a>  <a href="#">GHSL – Good practice guide for Chief Executives</a></p>	<p>Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA), agencies have a duty to ensure workers are not put at risk by the work they do or by their workplace. If workers are required to work from home, their home is considered a workplace and agencies have a responsibility to eliminate or minimise the risks so far as <b>reasonably practicable</b>.</p> <p>Given the short timeframes and restrictions posed by alert level 4, agencies have mobilised significant portions of our workforce to work from home, applying a more practical approach to how risks are managed in most cases, as recognised in the <b>GHSL guidance on working from home during COVID-19</b> (reviewed by WorkSafe).</p> <p>Under alert level 3, the Government requires workers to continue working at home if they can. However, with greater access to equipment and services, it may be seen as reasonably practicable for agencies to provide workers with additional equipment at home, especially if this is recommended by a <b>workstation assessment</b>, or if the worker has advised of issues or pain.</p> <p><b>Some questions for consideration;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do we understand the risks, issues and challenges raised by those working from home during alert level 4?</li> <li>How will we decide what is reasonably practicable for our agency in terms of managing these risks and addressing key issues?</li> <li>Is the support and availability of information and resources sufficient or do these require updating?</li> </ul> <p><b>Useful Links</b>  <a href="#">GHSL working from home during COVID 19</a>  <a href="#">GHSL working from home agency guidance</a>  <a href="#">SSC COVID-19 State Services Workforce Guidelines</a></p>	<p>Agencies and workers both have a role in ensuring work is mentally healthy, and that mental health (psychosocial) risks are managed effectively throughout this time.</p> <p>COVID-19 has changed how many workers have to work. These changes may increase the risk of harm to the mental health of workers. When this is paired with feelings of anxiety, fear, or uncertainty about the COVID-19 pandemic, workers may be more at risk of experiencing mental distress while at work.</p> <p>As we move to alert level 3, now is a good time for agencies to review the way mental health related risks are being managed and whether managers or workers require additional support.</p> <p><b>Some questions for consideration;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have we considered the additional mental health related risks created by COVID-19?</li> <li>Have our policies, procedures and guidance and support for workers been altered to reflect the current situation and new ways of working under alert level 3?</li> <li>Will our training, guidance and support for managers be available during alert level 3 and has it been updated to reflect the current situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>Useful Links</b>  <a href="#">GHSL - Mental health at work during COVID-19</a>  <a href="#">MOH - COVID mental health resources</a>  <a href="#">Mental Health Foundation – COVID-19 Info</a></p>	<p>In addition to fatigue caused by the mental stress of the pandemic itself, many public servants including those in lead agencies, agency executives, incident response staff and frontline staff have been working long hours, many through weekends since early March or in some cases even earlier.</p> <p>The drowsiness, distraction and lack of alertness that is associated with fatigue can lead to errors, amplify many workplace risks and an increase in workplace incidents and injuries.</p> <p>Agencies should consider how to manage fatigue related to additional workload and pressures arising from COVID-19.</p> <p><b>Some questions for consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which workers are likely to be at greater risk of fatigue due to additional workload, managing work hours or workload pressures relating to COVID-19 response?</li> <li>How will we engage with those workers to identify practical controls or solutions that to reduce fatigue?</li> <li>Have we identified back-ups or additional support for key people (COVID-19 incident controllers, executives, those in key advisory roles)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Useful Links</b>  <a href="#">WorkSafe NZ – Fatigue guidance</a></p>	<p>Most of the guidance agencies require on managing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace is available on the <a href="#">covid19.govt.nz</a>, WorkSafe and Ministry of Health websites.</p> <p>Agencies must ensure they have controls in place to manage the risk of COVID-19 exposure across all roles, activities and environments. Where agencies have shared workspaces, they must work together with other PCBUs to agree on how the risks will be managed.</p> <p>For government buildings, the Government Procurement and Property Group will shortly release guidance for the sector.</p> <p>Moving into alert level 3, some controls may change especially if your agency has more people working than in level 4. Ensure you also consider how workers will be getting to and from work, and anything different they will need to do once they get to work.</p> <p><b>Some questions for consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does my agency share a workplace with other organisations? If so, how will we work together to ensure we are keeping our workers, service users and members of the public safe?</li> <li>Have we clearly defined the roles and responsibilities for managing health and safety in shared spaces?</li> <li>How will we brief each worker that enters the workplace (induction) for all controls and COVID-19 controls each time advice changes?</li> <li>Where there is contact with the public, what protocols and procedures will you have in place? How will you manage across multiple PCBUs?</li> </ul> <p><b>Useful Links</b>  <a href="#">WorkSafe NZ – transitioning from alert level 4</a>  <a href="#">Govt Property &amp; Procurement Group website</a></p>