

Health and safety during COVID-19

Keeping courts across Auckland safe at Alert Level 2

Updated 22 September 2020

We have adapted how we work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are following Ministry of Health guidelines to protect the health and safety of all court participants and staff.

Hygiene and cleaning

Good hygiene is a critical defence against contracting COVID-19. **Hand sanitiser** is available in all buildings, including at main entrance points, and **soap** is available in bathrooms.

Cleaning products are provided at entrance points for everyone to wipe down items placed in screening trays. Staff regularly wipe down trays with antibacterial cleaning products.

Courthouses are **cleaned every night** with an increased focus on **high touch points** throughout public spaces, horizontal surfaces in court and hearing rooms, public counters (including bail counters), and all publicly accessible interview rooms. In addition, **a midday cleaning regime** at larger sites focuses on high touch points and jury areas.

Bio-cleans are conducted when necessary in response to close contact cases of COVID-19.

Coming to court

We are performing appropriate checks on people entering our buildings, and monitoring physical distancing requirements, in line with **Ministry of Health** guidelines.

Court participants are encouraged to download the NZ COVID Tracer app and **scan the COVID-19 QR**

code using their mobile phones. Otherwise, they must provide their name and contact details (phone number or email address) in the paper registration form.

Signage tells everyone who feels unwell with cold or flu-like symptoms, including fever, coughing, and difficulty breathing, not to enter the court building.

Entry is limited to one person at a time at the doorway to help maintain physical distancing.

Thermal scanners are used at many locations and entry will be refused to those registering a body temperature of 38°C or above.

Access is denied to anyone:

- showing signs of illness, such as a new onset of coughing and sneezing, or report feeling unwell
- who has a temperature of 38°C or above
- who has had close contact with someone displaying symptoms or a confirmed case of COVID-19, or
- who is unwilling to disclose the purpose of their visit or their personal information.

Anyone who is denied access will be referred to the pandemic signage and advised to contact the Ministry on **0800 COURTS (0800 268 787)**.

The Ministry has developed a **protocol to deal with anyone displaying symptoms of or confirmed cases of COVID-19** in any of our buildings.

We also have a detailed process for **managing the movement** of people who are being held in custody, to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Access for members of the public

Members of the public (including whānau and support persons) whose presence is not required at court **will not be permitted to enter unless granted permission from the presiding judge**. This restriction is necessary to protect others and allow courts to conduct business.

Permission should be sought in the first instance by emailing the registrar in advance. If granted, this must be supplied to the Court Security Officer at the front entrance.

Alternatively, on the day of the hearing, you can ask a Court Security Officer at the front entrance to convey an application via the registrar to the presiding judge.

All applications need to identify why permission is sought and will be determined on a case by case basis.

Physical distancing

In controlled public spaces (where contact tracing and rigorous hygiene protocols are in place) the physical distancing rules require **people to keep at least one metre apart**.

Participants in queues **outside** must keep **two metres apart** from others standing on the marked areas in the line, unless they part of the same group.

At **Alert Level 2**, there are plastic shields at counters to guard people against fluid transmission. This means that participants can stand at the counter instead of one metre away to ensure a more private interaction.

To manage the numbers of people, some **areas have been marked off** in court buildings, including in lifts, to help maintain physical distancing.

We have made modifications in each courtroom to allow **jury trials** to proceed safely with appropriate physical distancing in the court and jury retiring room.

In some courtrooms there are additional **screens between rows of jurors**, where possible.

Meeting and interview rooms have maximum capacity limits and cleaning products are available for use before and after meetings.

Security staff will ensure physical distance is maintained in public areas.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

The Ministry of Health recommends that **face coverings** be worn where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

All Court Security Officers and private security guards are provided with **disposable gloves, face masks, and goggles**. Face masks and gloves are also available for all court participants who need them at the end of the screening point.

People in the custody of Police, Corrections or Oranga Tamariki will be provided with face masks by those respective agencies for use.

Because of concerns about community transmission of COVID-19, the Chief Justice has advised that **everyone** attending courts in the **Auckland region** should wear face masks in public spaces and courtrooms. Jurors should wear face masks at all times. Counsel, defendants, parties, and witnesses may be required to remove masks when speaking in court or otherwise by judicial direction.

If you have any questions about health and safety at court, please ask the court manager.