

Health and safety during COVID-19

Keeping courts safe at Alert Level 3

Updated 31 August 2021

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

We follow 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 a 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.

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

Bio-cleans are conducted when necessary in response to positive 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 the **Ministry of Health** guidelines.

Court participants are strongly encouraged to download 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 at the doorway is limited to one person at a time 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 those:

- showing signs of illness, such as new onset of coughing and sneezing, or report feeling unwell,
- who have a temperature of 38°C or above,
- who have been, or had household contact, who have been at a location of interest, during the relevant timeframes,
- unwilling to wear a mask, and/or
- unwilling to disclose the purpose of their visit or their personal information.

Those who are denied access will be referred to the pandemic signage and advised to contact the Ministry on “**0800 COURTS**” (**0800 268 787**).

The Ministry has a **protocol to manage cases of COVID-19** in any of our buildings.

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

Access to 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 Officers at the front entrance.

Alternatively, on the day of the hearing, you can ask the Court Security Officers 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

Under **Alert Level 3** all public counters are closed. Drop boxes are set up in District Courts open to the public to allow any hard copy documents to be lodged safely without requiring direct contact with staff.

Participants in queues **outside** must keep **two metres apart** from others, standing on the marked areas in the line, unless they are in the same 'bubble'. Those in the same bubble can stand together.

Participants in **controlled public spaces** (where contact tracing and rigorous hygiene protocols are in place) must **keep at least one metre apart**.

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

Security staff will help ensure physical distancing is maintained in public areas.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

The Ministry of Health has mandated that **face coverings** are to be worn in businesses and places where a service is provided, including Courts.

Face masks will also be made available at the front entrance for all court participants who need them.

Everyone attending court must wear face masks in public spaces and courtrooms. Jurors should always wear face masks. Counsel, defendants, parties, and witnesses may be required to remove masks when speaking in court by judicial direction.

All Court Security Officers and private security guards are provided with **disposable gloves, face masks, and goggles**.

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

Face coverings are also **required** on public transport and **highly recommended** out and about in **Alert Level 3**.
