

Health and safety during COVID-19

Keeping our courts safe under Delta Alert Level 2

6 September 2021

We have adapted how we work during COVID-19.

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 must scan **the COVID-19 QR code** using their mobile phones. Otherwise, they must

provide their name and contact details (phone number or email address) on the COVID-19 register.

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 will be denied to anyone:

- showing signs of illness, such as new onset of coughing and sneezing or report feeling unwell,
- who has a temperature of 38°C or above,
- who has been at a location of interest, or have a household contact who has been at a location of interest during the relevant timeframes,
- unwilling to wear a mask (unless they have an approved exemption card) and/or
- unwilling to disclose the purpose of their visit,
- unwilling to scan in using the QR Code Tracker or complete the COVID-19 register with 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 or call **0800 COURTS (0800 268 787)** in advance. If granted, this must be supplied to the Court Security Officer at the front entrance.

Alternatively, on the day of the hearing, a Court Security Officer at the front entrance can be asked 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.

Members of the public wishing to attend a hearing at the **Court of Appeal or Supreme Court** should contact the relevant registry.

Physical distancing

Within Courts, Tribunals and secured staff spaces, 1 metre spacing must be maintained.

In public spaces within the court buildings and tribunals (where contact tracing and rigorous hygiene protocols are in place) the physical distancing rules require **people to also keep at least 1 metre apart, more if practicable. In other Ministry sites (like National Office level 2) the required distance is 2 metres in public spaces.**

Participants in queues outside must keep **2 metres apart** from others standing on the marked areas in the line, unless they part of the same household bubble.

Under **Alert Level 2**, there are Perspex screens at counters to protect people from fluid transmission. This means that participants can stand at the counter to ensure a more private interaction.

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

Modifications have been made in each courtroom to allow **jury trials** to proceed safely with appropriate physical distancing in the court, jury assembly and jury retiring rooms. In some courtroom there will be 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 encourage physical distancing to be 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.

Within the Courts, a face covering is to be worn at all times, unless an approved exemption is provided.

MOH has advised that any staff in public facing areas must also wear a mask

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

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