

Guidelines for Winegrowers operating as an “Essential business”

Version 3: Updated at 3pm on 9 April 2020 to reflect that MPI’s online registration process has closed.

Version 2: Updated at 10:00pm on 26 March 2020 to provide clarifications, renumber the Questions to match the online Registration Form, and insert new initial Q9.

*Amended text in version 3 appears **highlighted in yellow**.*

Purpose

- These guidelines provide advice to vineyards and wineries on the kinds of measures New Zealand Winegrowers believes members ought to have in place, and to enforce, if they are to be granted and maintain “essential business” status under [COVID-19 Alert Level 4](#).
- The registration deadline has passed. All essential businesses (and essential suppliers to essential businesses) should now be registered with MPI. The online registration process has now closed, but people can still register by contacting MPI directly. More information is available [here](#).
- This document is organised in the same order as the questions that were previously set out in the online MPI registration form for essential businesses.
- **This guidance is likely to change:** given the speed of developments, MPI has **not** been able to review or confirm these guidelines. Check the [NZW website](#) for our latest guidance.

“Essential business” exemption

- From 25 March 2020 New Zealand’s COVID-19 Alert Level was raised to **Alert Level 4** for a period of **at least four weeks**.
- Additional restrictions imposed in Alert Level 4 include:
 - People instructed to stay at home
 - Travel severely limited
 - **Businesses closed except for essential businesses** and lifeline utilities

Food production operations are classified as “essential businesses”

The Government has confirmed that:

- Vineyards, wineries and all related parts of the food production supply chain such as distribution of wine **may remain open as “essential businesses”**
- This means essential harvest workers, winery staff, trucking, bottling and related workers may **continue to work**. Cellar doors, restaurants, etc, must close.
- Essential businesses (other than those exempt from registration) must register by 5:00pm on 27 March. Businesses may keep operating until then.
- Compliance will be checked, and defaulting businesses will be closed.

Detailed information on who needs to register, and other related questions, is in our [Q&A on Operating as an Essential Business, here](#).

Operating as an “Essential business”

To register, essential businesses must provide details about the business operation and worksites. You will also be required to answer 11 questions about how you will protect the health of workers and the community. [These questions were numbered 9 through 19 in the original registration form, we have left the numbering unchanged for ease of reference.]

We have provided below **sample** responses that NZW considers would likely satisfy the requirements of those 11 questions. **Not all of these measures will be applicable to all vineyards or wineries**, and each business will need to adapt requirements to its own situation. They are indicative of the level of measures that we consider are likely to be required in order to guarantee low risk of COVID-19 transmission.

You will need to respond to the questionnaire with honest answers of how your business meets the requirements.

Q9 How do your production processes protect your workers and the public by reducing the potential spread of COVID-19?

[**Note:** The following best practices would be easier for larger operators to implement; smaller operators will need to adapt them more to their circumstances]

- New Zealand Winegrowers is providing detailed guidance, answering member questions, and supporting members to understand their obligations and comply.
- Management will relentlessly champion a culture of absolute compliance and violation of compliance rules will result in disciplinary procedures.
- Staff are required to report any non-compliances to the COVID-19 manager. If any problem is not promptly remedied, they should escalate the matter.
- For large wineries (eg over 20 staff) each winery site/viticulture operation has appointed a person to be a dedicated Covid-19 Manager with absolute authority over any procedures involving staff or potential staff interactions. For smaller operations a senior staff member will assume that role.
- Records will be kept for each person working in the winery/vineyard including living arrangements and all people that person comes in close contact with. Where feasible, staff will be living in accommodation in isolation, meaning they either live alone (at home, or on site – eg in campervan), or the others they reside with (such as family members) are in lock down. Where this is not possible (eg shared worker accommodation), a strict set of protocols around achieving separated living arrangements should be followed with individual daily diaries kept that detail any outside interactions. [**Note:** Please see our [Q&A on Operating as an Essential Business](#) for more detailed guidance on living arrangements]
- The Covid-19 Manager will be sent a photograph of the daily diaries for those living off site. Where workers share accommodation, shared transport may be appropriate, so long as those workers do not come into contact with anyone else.
- Where on-site accommodation can be organized, either motor home, cabin or existing accommodation there will be no sharing of rooms except by couples in existing relationships. All food crockery and utensils, will be unique to that person. Linen towels etc will be laundered under MoH guidelines in terms of temperature and disinfecting.

Q10 How are you ensuring that workers and others at work are observing social distancing to and from work, during work and during rest breaks?

- During work hours vineyard and winery processes will be designed around ensuring staff do not break the distancing rules. All staff will be obliged to ensure and record how they did not break the distancing rules outside of work hours.

- For large operators all staff are required to send a photo record of their daily routine outside of work hours to the Covid-19 Manager. For small operators all staff are required to report to their manager at the start of the shift.
- Staff attendance, start and stop times will be recorded should this be required for case tracking.
- Start and knock-off times for workers are being staggered to ensure that separate teams and shifts do not meet.
- No socialising or congregating by employees between changing shifts. When clocking out, move quickly offsite or into their separate accommodation area.
- Rest breaks are staggered (to reduce number of workers in any one place), and workers are encouraged to take them outside, while observing distancing rules (and coloured team separation rules – see Q14 below) wherever they are. For large operators separate areas or tables will be designated for separate teams shifts.
- Smoko room table/chair surfaces are cleaned before and after each break. Cleaning times documented and audited.

Q11 What personal hygiene steps have you put in place for workers to reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?

- Management will relentlessly champion a culture of absolute compliance and violation of compliance rules will result in disciplinary procedures.
- Each shift begins with a daily pre-shift (outdoors) briefing emphasising:
 - Critical importance of personal hygiene (keep 2m distance; cover cough/sneezes; frequent handwashing and equipment sanitising; not touching your mouth, nose or eyes.)
 - Reminder of the other workplace practices (described in this document) and of their critical importance to protect worker and community health
 - “Essential business” operation is a privilege, and ours to lose. Mandatory compliance with all “essential business” rules are required; any non-compliance will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter. Staff in breach may be suspended and sent home immediately to self-isolate.
- We regularly disinfect all surfaces in commonly used areas (Vineyard office/smoko rooms/tables /benchtops /toilet/ door handles/ screens). For large wineries disinfection times are digitally recorded and emailed to the Covid-19 Manager for audit.
- Internal doors, where fire safety rules allow, are wedged open to minimise touching common areas.
- Any meals provided to staff will be prepared and served under MoH guidelines. [Staff canteen has staggered meal service.] [Each team has a designated table.] [Effective cleaning protocols are in place for cutlery and crockery.] [Microwavable, sealed prepared meals may be used if available.]
- Meetings will be conducted digitally, however when necessary to have a group meeting, the groups will only be the pre-arranged teams and conducted outside under cover, whenever possible, and numbers of attendees are kept small.
- Workers are provided spray bottles with sanitiser solution and/or soap and water and must use them regularly.
- Sharing of tools is avoided wherever possible; where not possible shared tools are required to be sanitised after using a sanitiser spray, methylated spirits, anti-viral wipes, a fresh 0.5% hydrogen peroxide/water solution, or a bleach solution.

- Gloves are disinfected and tools post-use using a sanitiser spray, methylated spirits, anti-viral wipes, a fresh 0.5% hydrogen peroxide/water solution, or a bleach solution.
- Equipment and machinery (eg bins; trays; vehicle cabs, steering wheels and door handles) is regularly disinfected (frequency depends on use rate, but always when a different worker uses it) using a sanitizer spray, methylated spirits, anti-viral wipes or a bleach solution.
- Where two drivers need to use the same vehicle whether it be a ute or a grape harvester, the cab will be sanitised between drivers. If the air-conditioning cannot be sanitised it will be disabled.
- All written records to be converted to digital e.g. where previously load information was recorded information on written forms that were handed over (eg truck drivers), photos of the form (which remains with the person who completed it) will be sent.
- Workers asked to keep work clothes separate from your home clothes and wash them frequently. A dedicated and approved laundry service will be identified for those living on site.

Q12 What existing, or additional personal protective equipment could you introduce that would reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?

- Workers have their own, individually named PPE
- Where unavailability of PPE due to shortages may affect virus spread risk, the work process must be redesigned, or stopped.

Q13 What steps are you taking to limit access to your workplaces apart from essential workers?

- Non-essential staff and visitors are forbidden from entering the site (signage on all entrances) without express permission of the designated COVID-19 manager.
- Permission only given if the presence of the person on site is considered essential, and a health questionnaire has been completed for that person.
- To the extent possible, the timing of visit must be arranged to occur at a time when least risk to others is presented.

Q14 How are you isolating staff, or parts of your processing plants, so that virus spread would be contained should it occur?

- Non-essential personnel have been required to stay home.
- Activities that do not need to be completed for the essential business to continue during the Alert Level 4 period will be deferred until after the period.
- Essential personnel have been split into separate teams with functions spread amongst teams.
 - Each team wears a colour vest or other visible identifier (Red / Green / Blue) so they are immediately identifiable. COVID-19 Manager must avoid having contact with multiple teams.
 - Each team's prime focus is on both observing the 2m rule within the team, and limiting interactions with any member of a different team so that if any individual were to become COVID-19 positive and the question were "who at work have you interacted with?" the answer would only be "my Red team";

- Teams use separate vehicles, have breaks and lunch at different times from other teams, and in different places.
- Similar separation is in place between day and night shift personnel.
- In the vineyard, teams are physically separated from each other, and members within a team have significantly increased the normal separation between them when harvesting.
 - Hand-picking: Because it is not possible for a vineyard grape picker to walk past workers in a row of workers without breaching the 2m rule, new practices have been implemented, with all pickers entering and leaving a given row at the same time (so they do not need to pass each other).
 - This is inefficient harvesting, but maintains the 2m separation.
 - If at any particular place sufficient physical separation cannot be maintained for hand-harvesting, hand-harvesting at that place must cease. Machine harvesting may be a viable alternative.

[**Note:** Please see our [Q&A on Operating as an Essential Business](#) for more detailed guidance on the 2metre rule, and what to do if 2m separation cannot be maintained in some circumstances]

- Equipment is assigned to be used by specific shift staff only and all control surfaces sanitised between operator usage.
- Team allocations should take into account any shared living arrangements. For preference, shared accommodation arrangements should match team isolation and eliminate staff from different shifts/teams living together). This may be difficult to arrange, given the diversity of workers' accommodation arrangements. If not possible, heightened separations at home should be encouraged. New Zealand Winegrowers has provided guidance on a range of workers accommodation scenarios, after discussion with MPI.
- Where contract labour force workers (eg Recognised Seasonal Employer workers) are housed in shared accommodation, we are working with the labour providers to explore acquiring more separated alternatives, such as use of campervans (2-3 persons per unit).

Q15 What arrangements have you put in place for staff to report any illness and remove themselves from work?

- All workers have been advised that any staff member feeling at all unwell, for any reason, should stay home, and report to the COVID-19 Manager by phone to a specified number.
- Workers are encouraged to pay careful attention to their wellbeing and that of their colleagues at work, and any worker member feeling unwell while at work **must** leave the site immediately and inform the COVID-19 manager by phone.
- The COVID-19 manager is responsible for follow-up and ensuring that ongoing support is being provided for the worker.
- Any workers who call in sick will be paid sick leave (regardless of entitlements).

Q16 What arrangement have you put in place for staff to report any suspected exposure to COVID-19?

- Any staff member who suspects they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should stay home (or if at work, leave immediately), and immediately report to the COVID-19 manager by phone to a specified number, and to contact Healthline 0800 611 116.

Q17 What actions would you take should a staff member be suspected of or confirmed as having COVID-19?

- See responses to Q15 and Q16.

18 How do you ensure that staff at particular risk of COVID-19 identify themselves and are isolated from work?

- Workers over 70 required to stay home.
- Workers required to disclose any underlying health conditions that make them higher risk asked to self-identify and stay home.
- Workers living with vulnerable relatives/family may also need to stay home.

Q19 How will you ensure that your workers observe 'stay at home' rules at the conclusion of each working day?

- Checklist at shift start that team members all obeyed the rules (peer pressure to comply for everyone benefits the whole team).
- Could require workers to email Google map verification (time date screen shot texted to log); providing internet/cellphone continues.