

PC-FAQ-0001 – COVID-19 – FAQs Frequently Asked Questions

People, Culture & Communication



Security Class: PowerNet Employees Only

Version Change Table

VERSION	PAGE	PARAGRAPH	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
4.0	All		Updated by HR Partner
5.0	All		Update to Government Alert Level table. Update to signing in protocols at depots and offices Addition of option to work independently if unable to work from home and vulnerable. Update to Leave Support Scheme criteria to align with Government updates to the scheme

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General

1. Is PowerNet complying with employment legislation, Government COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme criteria and Employment Agreements?

Yes, we believe we are meeting the requirements under each of these.

Self-isolation

2. What happens if PowerNet directs me to self-isolate?

If you are not already working from home, talk to your leader about working from home. Complete a ['Request to Work from Home'](#) form.

If your request to work from home is approved, you will continue to be paid as normal.

If you are unable to work from home, and are unable to complete tasks independently without interaction with other employees or the public, are not already receiving pay as outlined in 5.3.1 of the Pandemic Leave Policy, then up to 10 days special leave will be paid at PowerNet's discretion or alternative options can be discussed.

Government directed self-isolation


3. What happens if I have to Self-isolate as directed by the New Zealand Government COVID-19 alert level system?

PowerNet is classified as a 'lifeline utility' and essential work can continue during all alert levels with controls in place to keep staff safe. These controls are outlined in the Covid-19 Control Framework.

Your leader will advise you what work you should complete and where this should be completed (in the workplace or from home).

4. What do the alert levels look like?

New Zealand COVID-19 Alert Levels Summary



Updated 17 August 2021

- The Alert Levels are determined by the Government and specify the public health and social measures to be taken in the fight against COVID-19. Further guidance is available on [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz).
- The measures may be updated based on new scientific knowledge about COVID-19, information about the effectiveness of control measures in New Zealand and overseas, or the application of Alert Levels at different times (for example, the application may be different depending on if NZ is moving down or up Alert Levels).
- Different parts of the country may be at different Alert Levels. We can move up and down Alert Levels.
- Services including supermarkets, health services, emergency services, utilities and goods transport will continue to operate at any level. Employers in those sectors must continue to meet health and safety obligations.
- Restrictions are cumulative (for example, at Alert Level 4, all restrictions from Alert Levels 1, 2 and 3 apply).

ELIMINATION STRATEGY – New Zealand is working together to eliminate COVID-19		
Alert Level	Risk assessment	Measures that can be applied locally or nationally
Level 4 – Lockdown Likely the disease is not contained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is sustained and intensive community transmission. • Outbreaks are widespread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home in your bubble, other than for essential personal movement. • Safe recreational activity is allowed in your local area. • Travel is severely limited. • All gatherings are cancelled, and all public facilities close. • Businesses close except for essential services (for example, supermarkets, pharmacies, clinics, petrol stations) and lifeline utilities. • Educational facilities close. • Rationing of supplies and requisitioning of facilities is possible. • Reorganisation of healthcare services is possible. • You are encouraged to wear a face covering whenever you leave the house.
Level 3 – Restrict High risk the disease is not contained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are multiple cases of community transmission. • There are multiple active clusters in multiple regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home in your bubble, other than for essential personal movement, including going to work or school if you have to, or for local recreation. • Keep 2 metres apart from people you do not know outside home, or 1 metre in controlled environments such as schools and workplaces. • Stay within your immediate household bubble, but you can expand this to reconnect with close family/wāhānau, enable caregiving, or support isolated people. This extended bubble should remain exclusive. • Schools (years 1 to 10) and Early Childhood Education centres can safely open, but with limited capacity. Children should learn at home if possible. • You must work from home unless it is not possible. • Businesses cannot have customers on site, unless it is a supermarket, bank, primary produce retailer, pharmacy, petrol station or hardware store providing goods to trade customers, or it is an emergency or critical situation. • Other businesses can open premises, but customers cannot enter. • Low-risk local recreation activities are allowed. • Public facilities are closed (for example, libraries, museums, cinemas, food courts, gyms, pools, markets). • Gatherings of up to 10 people are allowed but only for weddings, civil union ceremonies, funerals and tangihanga. Physical distancing and public health measures must be maintained. • Healthcare services should use virtual, non-contact consultations if possible. • Inter-regional travel is highly limited, for example, for critical workers, with limited exemptions for others. • People at high risk of severe illness, such as older people and those with existing medical conditions, are encouraged to stay at home where possible, and take additional precautions when leaving home. You may choose to work.
Level 2 – Reduce The disease is contained, but the risk of community transmission remains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There could be limited community transmission. • There are active clusters in more than one region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can reconnect with friends and family, and socialise in groups of up to 100, go shopping and travel domestically, if following public health guidance. • Keep 2 metres apart from people you do not know in retail stores. Try to keep 2 metres apart from people you don't know when out in public. Keep 1 metre apart in controlled environments like workplaces, where practicable. • No more than 100 people allowed at social gatherings, including weddings, civil union ceremonies, birthdays, funerals and tangihanga. • Businesses can open to the public if following public health guidance, such as physical distancing and record keeping. Alternative ways of working encouraged where possible. • Hospitality businesses must keep groups of customers separated and seated. Maximum of 100 people in a defined space. • Sport and recreation activities are allowed, subject to conditions on gatherings, record keeping, and – where practical – physical distancing. • Public facilities such as museums, libraries and pools can open if they comply with health measures and ensure 1 metre physical distancing. • Event facilities, including cinemas, stadiums, concert venues and casinos, can have more than 100 people at a time, provided that there are no more than 100 in a defined space, and the groups do not mix. • Health and disability care services can operate as normally as possible. • It is safe to send your children to schools, early learning services and tertiary education. There will be appropriate measures in place. • People at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (for example, those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled, and older people) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. You may work, if you agree with your employer that you can do so safely. • Passengers and workers in transport stations must keep 1 metre apart, as far as reasonably practicable.
Level 1 – Prepare The disease is contained in New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 is uncontrolled overseas. • There could be sporadic imported cases. • There could be isolated local transmission in New Zealand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are border entry measures to minimise the risk of importing COVID-19 cases. • Intensive testing for COVID-19 is carried out. • Rapid contact tracing of any positive case is carried out. • Schools and workplaces can open and must operate safely. • There are no restrictions on personal movement, but you are encouraged to maintain a record of where you have been. • There are no restrictions on gatherings, but organisers are encouraged to maintain records to enable contact tracing. • Stay home if you are sick, report flu-like or COVID-19 symptoms. • Wash and dry your hands, cough into your elbow, do not touch your face. • Avoid public transport or travel if you're sick. • There are no restrictions on workplaces or services, but you are encouraged to maintain records to enable contact tracing. • NZ COVID Tracer QR codes issued by the NZ Government must be displayed in workplaces and on public transport to enable use of the NZ COVID Tracer App for contact tracing. • Face coverings are required on public transport and aircraft, but not inter-land ferries and school buses. Children under 12, passengers in taxis or ride-share services, and people with disabilities or mental health conditions do not have to wear face coverings.

5. [What if I need to go into the office or Depot during Governments alert levels three and four?](#)

You will receive a Travel Authorisation letter explaining that you are part of a lifeline utility and therefore have permission to travel for work purposes. You must carry this letter with you when travelling for work purposes when alert levels 3 and 4 are active. You can only come into the office or Depot to pick up the necessary resources to do your job. Your leader may on occasion give you permission to work at the office or depot. This is only granted in exceptional circumstances, and permission must be sought prior to going in.

You should scan in when arriving at the office or depot using the QR code displayed at the entrance and NZ COVID Tracer App as a first preference. If you don't have access to that sign in to the office or depot, if swipe card access is not available.

Scanning or signing in will help us if we are later required to trace staff movements if there were a confirmed COVID-19 case with PowerNet staff.

6. [How am I paid if the Government alert level system is activated and I'm a vulnerable person who is unable to work from home, and unable to complete tasks independently without interaction with other employees or the public?](#)

PowerNet has the ability to apply for the Covid-19 leave Support scheme for eligible team members who are unable to work from home, or unable to work independently and meet the below 'eligible group' criteria:

- Are sick with COVID-19 and must self-isolate until a doctor tells them they can leave isolation
- Are identified as someone who has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 and have been told to self-isolate for a period by a health official through the National Contact Tracing process
- Are a parent or caregiver of a dependent who has been told to self-isolate for a period by a doctor or health official through the National Contact Tracing process and the dependent needs support to do so safely
- Have been directed to self-isolate, or the parent or caregiver of a dependent has been directed to self-isolate, by a Medical Officer of Health in accordance with the [Health Act 1956](#).
- Are considered 'higher risk' if they contract COVID-19, and a doctor has told them to self isolate while there's active community transmission.
- Have household members who are considered 'higher risk' if they contract COVID-19 and a medical practitioner has told them to self isolate, to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to vulnerable household members.

The Covid-19 Leave Support Scheme is a two-week payment to the employer. If the employee is unable to work for longer than two weeks, and the employee continues to be in the 'eligible group', PowerNet can re-apply for the scheme on the employees behalf. The Leave Support scheme payment values are:

- Working less than 20 hours per week, \$359 (before tax) per week.
- Working more than 20 hours per week, \$600 (before tax) per week.

If your usual relevant daily pay (RDP) rate is less than the subsidy value, you will receive your normal fortnightly pay only.

PowerNet will 'Top up' employees pay using PowerNet special paid leave to 80% of the value of the employees relevant daily pay (RDP) rate.

Employees can choose to use annual leave to top up to 100%. This would use two days of annual leave per fortnight. PowerNet employees accrue annual leave at a rate of almost one day per fortnight.

7. [What if I do not meet the eligibility for the Covid-19 Leave Support Scheme?](#)

Discuss with your leader what options are available as you may be able to use other leave types – Annual Leave, Alternative, Long Service or Sick Leave. If none of these options are suitable, discretionary special leave may be granted in exceptional circumstances by the SLT member in consultation with the GM People, Culture and Communications.

8. [What if I'm told to self-isolate by my Doctor or the Ministry of Health?](#)

Follow medical advice and contact your leader in the first instance or the COVID-19 Manager – Faye McLeod 027 809 3464.

[Am I allowed to work from home when directed to self-isolate by my Doctor or the Ministry of Health?](#)

If you are able to work from home, talk to your leader about what options may be available. Complete a ['Request to Work from Home'](#) form.

If you are able to work from home, then you will be paid as normal.

If you are unable to work from home, discuss with your leader what options may be available to you under section 5.3 of the [Pandemic Leave Policy](#).

COVID-19 diagnosis

9. [What if a dependent or I am diagnosed with COVID-19?](#)

Follow medical advice and contact your leader in the first instance or the COVID-19 Manager – Faye McLeod 027 809 3464

If you were unable to work from home, PowerNet can apply for the COVID-19 Leave Support scheme payment and 'Top up' employees pay using PowerNet special paid leave to 80% of the value of the employees relevant daily pay (RDP) rate or normal sick leave entitlements could apply.

School and childcare closures

10. [What happens if I have to stay at home due to schools, or childcare centres being closed?](#)

Talk with your leader about working from home, and if you need to arrange other work arrangements or work alternative hours.

If you cannot work from home, leave will be approved by your leader and may include annual leave or leave without pay.

Your SLT member in consultation with the GM People, Culture and Communications may approve annual leave in advance. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

Self-isolation by choice

11. [What if I choose to self-isolate due to personal or health reasons?](#)

Talk to your leader in the first instance or contact the COVID-19 Manager – Faye McLeod 027 809 3464. Complete a ['Request to Work from Home'](#) form. If it is approved you will work from home using your approved work plan and be paid as normal.

If your request to self-isolate is due to personal health reasons, and you cannot work from home, you should provide medical evidence supporting your request to your leader and leave provisions outlined in question #6 would likely apply.

If you cannot work from home, due to a personal choice, which does not have supporting medical evidence, you will need to use annual leave or leave without pay.

Union

12. Has PowerNet been keeping Gwyn Stevenson, the E tū Organiser, updated on PowerNet's employee communications during the August 2021 lockdown?

Yes, we have been in contact with the Union, and will continue to keep them informed as more information becomes available.