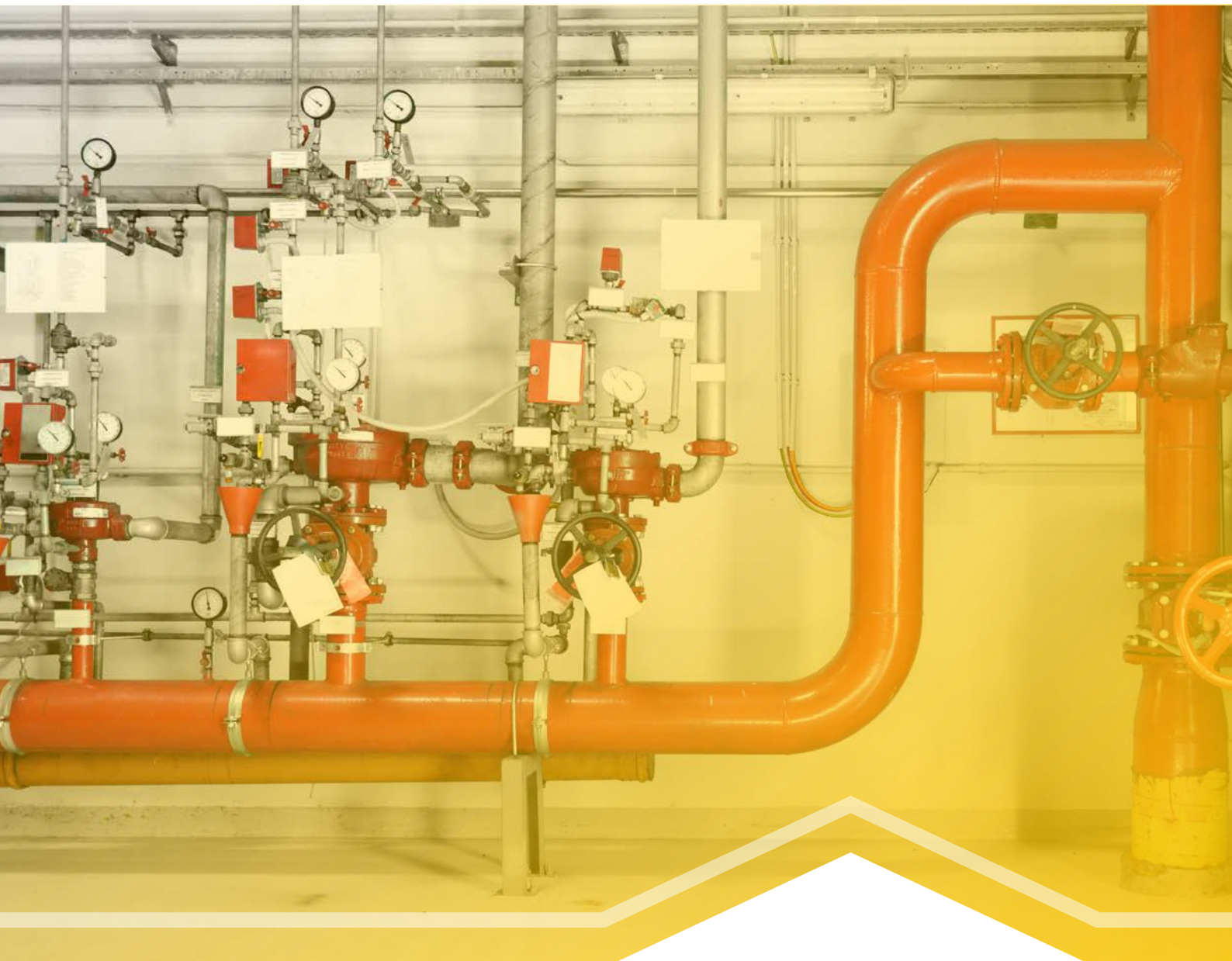




Position Statement PS-03 Version 1.0

COVID-19 Level 2 Alert

Issued: 12/5/20



NOTE: Please check <http://www.fireprotection.org.nz/online-resources/position-statements> to ensure you are using the latest version of this document



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Significant changes from the previous version

- › This is the first release of a position statement for Alert Level 2.
- › Previous position statements (PS-01 and PS-02) applied to COVID-19 Alert Levels 4 and 3 respectively. Both remain valid for those Alert Levels.

Scope

This Position Statement applies to all Fire Protection Association New Zealand (“FPANZ”) member activities conducted under COVID-19 Alert Level 2 restrictions (“restrictions”) as defined at <https://covid19.govt.nz/>. This document represents the position of FPANZ on the subjects described as at the time of writing.

This is a fluid situation. A conservative approach has been taken based on the presumption that the Level 2 restrictions will apply for significant periods and that the Alert Levels may be applied selectively to different regions of the country. If the official advice pertaining to Level 2 restrictions changes, the advice in this document may need to be revised.

All general instructions and advice at <https://covid19.govt.nz/> should be followed, in addition to the member-specific provisions of this document.

Background

The threat of the COVID-19 pandemic to our collective health and wellbeing is unprecedented in modern times.

In response to requests from FPANZ members, this series of documents has been prepared to assist with the specific application to the fire protection industry of the official guidance that has been published.

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared in good faith by FPANZ on a best-efforts basis, considering the situation and officially supplied information as at the time of writing. The contents of this document may be overtaken or rendered obsolete by subsequent events and/or official instructions.

Please check <http://www.fireprotection.org.nz/online-resources/position-statements> to ensure you are using the latest version of this document, or to access documents that may be applicable to other Alert Level restrictions.

This document should not be relied upon as legal advice, nor should it be taken as permission to do anything that is obviously contrary to either the spirit or the letter of the restrictions.

Position of FPANZ

The position of FPANZ is as follows:



Follow Official Advice

All official advice published by the Government and its delegated agencies (MBIE, FENZ, Ministry of Health, Civil Defence etc.) should be followed by members. This advice changes regularly and can be found in the following places (this is not an exhaustive list):

<https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/alert-level-2/>

<https://www.business.govt.nz/covid-19/workplace-operations-covid-19-alert-levels>

<https://www.building.govt.nz/covid-19/inspection-and-maintenance-of-specified-systems/>

<https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/>

<https://onlineservices.fire.org.nz/Home/EvacuationSchemes>

<https://www.building.govt.nz/covid-19>

<https://covid19.govt.nz/>

FPANZ recommends that members check the official advice regularly. These websites change often, so it is advisable to print or save copies of any advice considered relevant to your business. The Internet Archive <http://web.archive.org/> is also useful.

Underlying Principles – doing things “safely”

The COVID-19 Level 2 restrictions are aimed at reducing the spread of disease, either directly from person to person or via contaminated surfaces.

FPANZ members should take all practicable steps to minimise the health risk to their staff, themselves, their families, and the public. Steps

should particularly be taken to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spread from or to client or member premises, the public, or to the homes and families of staff.

The basic theme of the Alert Level 2 restrictions is permission for a moderate level of public interaction while continuing to do things “safely”.

The Government’s official COVID-19 website describes Alert Level 2 for business as follows (direct quotation, abridged):

At Alert Level 2 businesses can operate if they’re able to do so safely.

Engaging with customers

At Alert Level 2 businesses can have customers on their premises if they can meet public health requirements. This means businesses should:

- ▶ *have good contact registers, or contact tracing records, in place to record everyone who you interact with on your premises*
- ▶ *maintain physical distancing of 1 metre between groups of customers.*

Services can also be provided on customers’ premises...

Doing business safely

The key public health requirements stay the same at Alert Level 2. Businesses should maintain hygiene measures, including physical distancing, hand washing and regularly cleaning surfaces.

All businesses are encouraged to use alternative ways of working if possible. This means businesses that don’t normally

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have customers on their premises could continue to have staff work from home.

If workers are sick with symptoms of COVID-19, they should stay home.

Golden rules for business at Alert Level 2

Do everything you can to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission at work — we all have a part to play in keeping each other safe.

- 1. COVID-19 is still out there. Play it safe.*
- 2. All businesses can operate if they can do so safely. Alternative ways of working are still encouraged where possible.*
- 3. Talk with your workers to identify risks and ways to manage them.*
- 4. Ask everyone, workers, contractors and customers, with cold or flu-like symptoms to stay away from your premises.*
- 5. Keep groups of customers 1 metre apart.*
- 6. Keep contact-tracing records of anyone who will have close interaction (workers, contractors or customers).*
- 7. Reduce the number of shared surfaces, and regularly disinfect them.*
- 8. Wash your hands. Wash your hands. Wash your hands.*

In order to do things “safely” FPANZ endorses and expects its members to follow the *NZ COVID-19 Construction Protocols* published by SiteSafe at <https://www.sitesafe.org.nz/guides--resources/covid-19-protocols/>. These protocols are a practical implementation of the unified construction sector CHASNZ (Construction Health and Safety NZ) *COVID-19 Standard for Construction Operations* found at <https://www.chasnz.org/covid19>.

Particular practices contained in these protocols include (not a complete list): planning, risk assessment, management, physical distancing, personal hygiene, use of PPE, limiting personnel numbers, limiting contact, attendance and travel registers, signage, cleaning of surfaces, and training.

Any activities undertaken at Alert Level 2 need also to be given due consideration against the responsibilities of PCBUs to both their staff and the public under the *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015*. Some guidance is available from Worksafe at <https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/>. Members are also reminded of their undertaking to follow the *FPANZ Code of Ethical Conduct*. In the context of the current situation the following aspects are particularly relevant: Compliance, Responsibility to the Community, Health and Safety, Responsibility to the Industry and Association, and Integrity. Our collective professional reputation is at stake.

Collaborate to Work “Safely” on Customer Sites

Fire industry contractors should contact client site owner representatives to discuss the infection risk posed by on-site activities to both fire industry workers and the building occupants. Together you should establish safe and appropriate procedures which address and reduce these risks to an acceptable level.

“High-risk Occupancies”

Official advice considers the elderly and people with certain underlying medical conditions to be of “*higher risk of severe illness should they contract COVID-19*”.

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<https://covid19.govt.nz/individuals-and-households/health-and-wellbeing/at-risk-people/>

Certain occupancies also present a higher health risk to fire industry workers, particularly where disease may be present and/or it is difficult to maintain adequate physical distancing from building occupants.

Each situation should be assessed on its merits, in consultation with the building owner or site representative, however as a general guide FPANZ considers the following types of occupancies to present a significantly higher risk to either building occupants or fire industry workers under Alert Level 2 restrictions.

- › Aged care facilities
- › Apartments accommodating high-risk or self-isolating occupants
- › Community housing with high-risk occupants
- › Accommodation being used for quarantine or self-isolation
- › Healthcare premises treating COVID-19 patients

Members should take particular care with risk assessment and mitigation around any activities that require access inside such areas. This may result in some areas being deemed “no-go” in the short-term. Particular care should be taken with personal hygiene and cleaning measures when entering, working in, and departing high-risk occupancies.

General Approaches and Considerations

FPANZ takes the view that personal contact should be avoided by fire industry workers at all Alert Levels. Physical distancing in excess of the official minimum is encouraged wherever possible.

For premises where significant numbers of occupants are present, consideration should be given to conducting routine work outside of peak occupancy hours.

Members need to maintain a time log of all sites visited, all individual interactions, and all training participants, to ensure you can rapidly provide authorities with a record for contact tracing purposes.

“Virtual” Inspections

For “high-risk occupancies” and premises where maintaining physical distance may be difficult, members are encouraged to explore options with their clients for conducting “virtual” inspections via an audio-visual link (tablet, smartphone) to somebody (e.g. a staff member) who is already present inside the building and can walk around on your instruction.

Fire alarm and Sprinkler System Maintenance – General

General fire alarm and sprinkler system repair and maintenance may be undertaken under Level 2 restrictions, provided it can be conducted “safely”.

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Weekly/Monthly Testing

Routine testing may be undertaken under Level 2 restrictions, provided it can be conducted “safely”.

Annual/Biennial Surveys

Annual and biennial surveys are a higher risk activity because they require all areas of the premises to be accessed. These may be undertaken under Level 2 restrictions provided protocols and procedures are put in place so that they can be conducted “safely”.

Alarm and Sprinkler System Activations and Defects

Members may respond to alarm or defect notifications from fire alarm or sprinkler systems in any building provided the response is conducted “safely”.

Building Construction Sites

New construction work may be undertaken provided protocols and procedures are put in place so that it is conducted “safely”. Members should follow the NZ COVID-19 Construction Protocols published by SiteSafe at <https://www.sitesafe.org.nz/guides--resources/covid-19-protocols/>.

Fire Alarm and Sprinkler System Commissioning Inspections

On-site commissioning inspections may be undertaken provided protocols and procedures are put in place so that they are conducted “safely”.

Site Visits

Site visits, including those for assessments of evacuation procedures and training, should be conducted in accordance with the client's internal procedures for Level 2, which will vary depending on risk.

Fire Drills and Fire Safety Training

Carrying out fire evacuation drills and face-to-face fire safety training (e.g. extinguisher) are particularly high-risk activities because they involve direct interaction with and between members of the public.

Some of these activities in smaller workplaces may be possible under Level 2 restrictions, however the following particular risks need to be carefully managed: gathering numbers; physical distancing during training; physical distancing before, during, and after an evacuation; unintended breach of maximum gathering numbers in an assembly area open to the public; and disease transmission via common touch surfaces (e.g. door handles, handrails, HOFFE).

Where a building is exclusively occupied by staff, they can reasonably be expected to know their workplace safety procedures for Level 2. However, any members of the public present may not be aware of or be able to follow such safety procedures. This is particularly true with the added distraction of a fire alarm activation, which several media articles have highlighted.

The view of FPANZ is that unless all participants and any consequential public interaction can be managed “safely” throughout a fire drill, the drill should be deferred.

Quoting from the FENZ website: “FENZ is taking a pragmatic and risk-based approach to its

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enforcement of the [regulatory] duty to carry out regular trial evacuations and training and assessment of permanent building occupants. We are working to urgently resolve tensions between the requirement to conduct these and COVID-19 Alert Level restrictions.” The status of this work will be advised by updates at <https://onlineservices.fire.org.nz/Home/EvacuationSchemes>

Hand-operated Firefighting Equipment (HOFFE) Maintenance and Service

HOFFE maintenance and service work may be undertaken provided it is conducted “safely”.

Routine Inspections of Fire Extinguishers and Other HOFFE

Routine HOFFE inspections are a higher risk activity because they require all areas of the premises to be accessed. These may be undertaken under Level 2 restrictions provided protocols and procedures are put in place so that they can be conducted “safely”.

Inspections for Passive Fire Protection, Means of Escape, Emergency Signage

Routine inspections are a higher risk activity because they require all areas of the premises to be accessed. These may be undertaken under Level 2 restrictions provided protocols and procedures are put in place so that they can be conducted “safely”.

Fire Product Manufacturing and Supply

Manufacturing and distribution of fire products may be undertaken. Members should follow official guidance regarding safe workplace practice.

Communication with Clients

Members should communicate proactively with their clients so that they are fully informed about the implications of the above restrictions for both their premises and their Health and Safety responsibilities.

BWoFs for Specified Systems

Please refer to the following MBIE webpage for detailed advice regarding the management of disrupted BWoF responsibilities: <https://www.building.govt.nz/covid-19/inspection-and-maintenance-of-specified-systems/>

This website contains links to templates for Building System and Specified System Status Reports (BSSR and SSSR) that can be issued in lieu of a Form 12A where COVID-19 restrictions have prevented scheduled maintenance, inspection, or reporting being carried out.

Note also MBIE’s advice about the need to inspect and test specified systems in unoccupied buildings prior to their reoccupation.

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