

12 October 2021 | File Ref: 1/19/1 |

Released by: Dom Kalasih

<b>To</b>	Forum Directors, Presidents and Area Executives
<b>From</b>	Dom Kalasih, Manager Policy and Safety

## COVID-19 VACCINATION AND TESTING

This information has been compiled to assist operators looking at their options for COVID-19 vaccination and testing within their companies.

### Why test and vaccinate?

Moving freight is key to driving our economy and advocating to ensure that happens in the safest and most effective way possible is a key reason why La Ara Aotearoa Transporting New Zealand exists.

COVID-19 is a disease that has spread over multiple countries or continents. As of 11 October 2021, more than 237 million cases and 4.85 million deaths have been confirmed, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in history. The pandemic has resulted in severe global social and economic disruption. The main channel for transmission of the disease is people breathing in air contaminated by droplets and small airborne particles and symptoms range from unnoticeable to life-threatening. People remain contagious for up to 20 days, and can spread the virus even if they do not develop symptoms.

It is undeniable that if not well managed COVID-19 will have some impact on our lives now and in the future.

### What can be done?

Currently there are five key methods to manage the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

- **Vaccination:** is deemed by the science community to be highly effective. Studies have shown that about 95% of people who received both doses of the vaccine (where it is a

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double dose vaccine) were protected against getting seriously ill and less likely to transmit the virus to others <sup>1</sup>

- **Testing:** people carrying COVID-19 may show symptoms, for example, respiratory issues, fever, cough and shortness of breath, or they can be asymptomatic. The latter means you have the disease however, you show no symptoms and can still transmit the disease. Testing helps identify infected people so treatment can be initiated and the heightened threat of community transmission for those close to the infected person can be managed.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** good hygiene practices, physical testing and mask wearing will reduce the risk of people breathing in air contaminated by droplets and small airborne particles.
- **Tracing:** will help identify people who are at higher risk of transmission because they may have been close to an infected person.
- **Isolation:** anyone showing symptoms or at higher risk of having been exposed to transmission, such as visiting a location of interest, should get tested and isolate until they get the results of that testing, to reduce the risk of spreading the disease.

## Expectations

To provide some degree of certainty that the workplace is not a place of transmission, we are seeing increasing demand that workers, in particular those normally working in close proximity to others, be vaccinated as well as regularly tested. This demand is across a variety of sectors and includes some customers of freight suppliers. We predict this expectation will continue to increase across the country. As that prevalence increases, it also typically means the likelihood of it becoming mandated by regulation also increases.

## Our advice

We believe that the science is sound and we recommend operators promote vaccination to all staff and where possible, accommodate their vaccination if they work hours that make it difficult for them to get vaccinated.

If not already, we recommend all operators give careful consideration to how they are managing each of the five risk controls above. Consider the level of risk your business is exposed to and be clear on your policy positions and implement any related business processes. As a minimum we suggest you consider:

- If they haven't already, customers may require all drivers coming onto their sites be vaccinated. We recommend you anticipate this, along with any possible future

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-effectiveness-and-protection>

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Government order that requires mandatory vaccination for some or all of your driver force.

- If recruiting, consider requiring that all new staff employed be fully vaccinated or that full vaccination is part of their employment contract.
- COVID-19 and the measures to manage it will affect people differently, and those pressures could come from work or home. How well set up is your business to provide that support? Have you considered engaging and/or directing your people to external expert resource such as, but not limited to:
  - <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/>
  - <https://www.eapservices.co.nz/>

As is a requirement of our Health and Safety at Work legislation, make sure you engage your staff in any consideration of policy development, as they are likely to be directly impacted, and consider any constraints your current employment contracts may present.

Respect that not everyone will want to be vaccinated and think how you will manage that. Regardless of whether people are vaccinated or not, good hygiene practice, physical testing and mask wearing will reduce the risk of COVID-19.

Operators sending people in and out of Auckland will have a testing regime in place. Saliva testing was introduced to make this easier to manage, as drivers have to carry proof of testing within the previous seven days. We are awaiting moves from the Government to allow rapid antigen testing, which will be easier again. We expect that requirements for testing will also become more widespread and suggest operators look at their options.

The legal position of companies around mandating testing and vaccination, and storage of employee data on same, is still being discussed and the Government has yet to issue any clear guidance. Transporting New Zealand is following this and will provide any advice as it comes to hand.

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