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Released by: Dom Kalasih

WorkSafe advice on Covid-19 risk assessments

Purpose

The purpose of this Advisory is to inform operators that on Wednesday this week WorkSafe released updated guidance on workplace risk assessments. The guidance is based on current public health advice about Covid-19 and it aligns with the Government's Covid-19 requirements. This Advisory provides a summary of that information.

Summary of WorkSafe advice

- WorkSafe considers few workplaces will be able to justify an employer vaccination requirement for health and safety or public health reasons (outside of sectors covered by Government vaccine mandates)
- Workplaces that can justify a vaccination mandate would likely be for specific roles only
- Employers can and should encourage workers to get their Covid vaccinations or boosters
- The justification for requiring vaccination is stronger when we are more likely to contract and transmit Covid at work than in the community. This is why some Government vaccination mandates remain in place
- Employers may also consider other risk factors that are relevant and justifiable in respect of their workplaces
- Employers and their workers will have a good understanding and tolerance of these factors
- The full guidance can be found at [WorkSafe](#).

Risk assessment under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

- WorkSafe encourages employers to complete or review their risk assessment as New Zealand progresses through the current Covid outbreak
- The focus of a risk assessment must be on the work being done, not the individual who does the work and must be based on health and safety at work
- If an employer wants an employee to be vaccinated for other reasons, such as business continuity, or to meet third-party entry requirements, then that is an employment matter and that is different to managing the risk of harm to the employee.

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WorkSafe enforcement

WorkSafe's expectation is that an employer:

- Follows public health guidance when carrying out a risk assessment
- Engages effectively with workers and their representatives
- Regularly reviews the risk assessment as the situation changes
- Where an employer can demonstrate it has done the above, it is unlikely that WorkSafe will take enforcement action.

For more information

- The Ministry of Health has information about [COVID-19 vaccines](#) and [public health information for employers](#)
- Unite Against COVID-19 has [general information for employers](#).

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