



Briefing

IMPLEMENTING ADDITIONAL TESTING REQUIREMENTS AT ALERT LEVEL BOUNDARIES

To: COVID-19 Ministerial Group

Date	14/09/2021	Priority	High
Deadline	15/09/2021	Briefing Number	DPMC-2021/22-341

Purpose

This paper outlines operational considerations associated with implementing additional testing requirements for personal movement across an Alert Level 4/2 or Alert Level 3/2 boundary and seeks your agreement to testing and evidence requirements for personal travel across Alert Level boundaries.

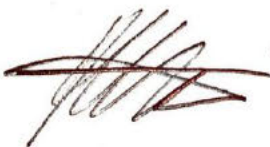
Recommendations

1. **Note** that Cabinet has agreed in-principle that people travelling across the Alert Level 4/2 boundary and a future Alert Level 3/2 boundary be required to carry evidence of having a COVID-19 test within seven days of travel, and in some instances, evidence of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of travel.
2. **Note** that all people traveling across an Alert Level boundary for personal reasons will be required to have had a nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal PCR test and saliva testing will not be permitted for this purpose.
3. **Agree** the testing and evidence requirements for personal travel outlined in Appendix 1.
4. **Note** for people travelling to visit the dying, exiting detention or a Corrections facility, accompanying a tūpāpaku or deceased person or attending a tangihanga or funeral, and travelling to attend a judicial institution they are required or permitted to attend, the proposed requirement is a test within seven days rather than a negative test result.

YES / NO

5. **Note** that this contrary to the Director-General of Health's advice but requiring a negative test result in these circumstances could unduly constrain a person's ability to travel which in many instances would be time critical.

6. **Agree** that these requirements will come into force at 11.59pm 21 September 2021. **YES / NO**


Graham MacLean
Head of System Readiness and Planning
COVID-19 Group, DPMC
14 / 09 / 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response
...../...../.....

This briefing was used as a Cabinet Paper and therefore is unsigned

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Contact for telephone discussion if required:

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Graham MacLean	Head of System Readiness and Planning COVID-19 Group	s9(2)(a)	✓
Katie Reid	Senior Policy Advisor	s9(2)(a)	

Minister's office comments:

- Noted
- Seen
- Approved
- Needs change
- Withdrawn
- Not seen by Minister
- Overtaken by events
- Referred to

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IMPLEMENTING ADDITIONAL TESTING REQUIREMENTS AT THE ALERT LEVEL BOUNDARY

Background

1. On 6 Monday September 2021, Cabinet agreed that workers at Alert Level 4 businesses and services (and any workers doing necessary work at any premises) be required to carry evidence of a COVID-19 test within the last seven days when crossing an Alert Level boundary [CAB-21-MIN-0360 refers]. The requirement for workers to carry evidence commences from 11:59pm Thursday 16 September.
2. In addition, on Monday 13 September, Cabinet agreed in principle that people who move across an Alert Level 4/2 or Alert Level 3/2 boundary for:
 - a) permitted personal reasons on “a regular basis”, be required to carry evidence of having had a COVID-19 test within seven days of crossing the boundary; and
 - b) permitted personal reasons that involve undertaking “a single trip”, be required to carry evidence of a negative COVID-19 test received within 72 hours of crossing the boundary.
3. Cabinet further agreed that people transiting through or across Auckland, those travelling for emergencies or to provide urgent care of child/support or care to person in critical/terminal condition, and people departing Managed Isolation and Quarantine are exempt from these testing requirements.
4. These expanded testing requirements are subject to further advice being provided to COVID-19 Ministers.

There are limited permissions for people moving across the Alert Level boundary for personal reasons

5. There are limited permissions for individuals cross across the Alert Level 4/2 boundary. These include accessing health services, leaving or relocating hospital or residential care, attend a judicial institution, leave or change home after a period of detention, and care for pets or other animals. The full list of permitted reasons is attached at Appendix 1.
6. Cabinet has agreed in principle to move Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland to Alert Level 3 from 11.59 pm Tuesday 21 September 2021, subject to further public health advice and review at Cabinet on Monday, 20 September 2021. Under an Alert Level 3/2 boundary, Cabinet has agreed to expand the permitted movements to include visit the dying, accompanying a tūpāpaku or deceased person to a tangihanga or funeral, and attending a tangihanga or funeral. Testing requirements under an Alert Level 4/2 boundary would be extended to those permitted to travel under an Alert Level 3/2 boundary [CAB-21-MIN-0370 refers].
7. Permitted movements under an Alert Level 3/1 boundary are yet to be determined. Officials consider that the permissions are largely driven by the risk in the area with the higher Alert Level – in this instance, Tāmaki Makaurau. Accordingly, we indicatively consider that the testing requirements in place under an Alert Level 4/2 and Alert Level 3/2 boundary could be extended under an Alert Level 3/1 boundary. If permissions are expanded substantially, additional consideration will need to be given to the ability for appropriate checking and

enforcement to be undertaken at checkpoints, as well as the ability of the health system to deliver on the tests required.

Surveillance and pre-departure testing will be required for people moving across the boundary for personal reasons

8. Requiring people to carry evidence of having been tested before moving for personal reasons will mitigate the risk associated with these movements. As with permitted workers, it will enable the early identification of a COVID-19 case in asymptomatic individuals. This may become more frequent as the vaccine roll-out reduces the impact of COVID-19 on some people who are vaccinated, increasing the likelihood of asymptomatic infection. The earlier that community cases are identified, the greater chance we have of limiting community transmission and another outbreak.
9. The Director-General of Health (the Director-General) has recommended, and Cabinet has agreed in principle (subject to this advice), that testing for personal movements should be considered differently for people who are likely to move across the boundaries once, and those moving across regularly.
10. People moving across the boundary regularly for work can provide evidence of having had either a single saliva test or a nasopharyngeal/oropharyngeal polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test in the past seven days. However, all people traveling across the Alert Level boundary for personal reasons will be required to have had a nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal PCR test (and negative test result in most situations) and saliva testing will not be permitted for this purpose.

Surveillance testing

11. For people who are likely to be moving across the boundaries on a regular basis (e.g. to care for pets or animals), the Director-General recommends that they are subject to surveillance testing. This would require people travelling to carry evidence that they have been tested for COVID-19 within seven days of crossing a boundary. They will not be required to provide evidence that a negative result has been returned prior to being permitted to cross.
12. This requirement is in line with permissions for individuals crossing the boundaries for business movements. The rationale is that as these individuals are likely to be crossing the boundary regularly, they will be subject to testing regularly, and a positive result will be picked-up quickly. Requiring a negative test result prior to being able to cross boundaries will be logistically difficult.

Pre-departure testing for other trips for personal reasons

13. The Ministry of Health has also recommended a specific requirement for individuals who may only be required to move across a boundary once (e.g. to access a health service), the Director-General has recommended that they be required to carry evidence of a negative result, returned within 72 hours of their planned travel. This higher threshold is due to the individuals not being subject to regular testing, and that lining up the test, negative result and travel movement within 72 hours is logistically achievable once, but not on a regular basis. This requirement is in line with testing requirements for individuals travelling overseas, both into New Zealand and in many international jurisdictions.
14. Appendix 1 provides further detail of the testing requirements for those moving across the boundary for personal reasons.

Differentiating between types of evidence required

15. Appendix 1 details a range of permitted movements across the Alert Level boundaries, and whether these will be subject to the requirement to carry evidence of having had a test within 7 days, or the additional requirement to also carry evidence of having a negative test result within 72 hours of travel.
16. In the majority of cases, these align with the Ministry of Health's advice as to whether they should be subject to surveillance testing or pre-departure testing. However, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet recommends four amendments to this regime, in instances where the Director-General has recommended that people would normally be required to provide evidence of a negative test taken within 72 hours of travel:
 - a) People travelling to visit the dying: test within seven days. This amendment would allow for more consistency with the ability for people to travel to provide assistance to people who are terminally ill, who are exempt from evidence of a test requirements. It would also more readily enable travel if it was time critical.
 - b) People exiting detention or a Corrections facility: test within seven days. This amendment would allow Corrections to have testing providers visit facilities or otherwise test inmates in the week before they are released, whilst ensuring that people remain able to cross the boundaries if needed to get to their bail or parole address.
 - c) People accompanying a tūpāpaku or deceased person or attending a tangihanga or funeral: test within seven days. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet consider that the logistical challenges inherent in lining up a test, negative result and movement all within 72 hours, whilst grieving, would be logistically very challenging. It is likely to diminish social licence to an extent that is not commensurate with the risk that these individuals pose.
 - d) People travelling to attend a judicial institution that they are required or permitted to attend: test within seven days. This amendment would ensure that those who have been summonsed to attend court are more likely to be able to arrange for their test and travel as required.
17. Accordingly, Ministers are asked to agree with the evidence of testing requirements for all permitted travel under Alert Levels 4/2 and 3/2, as outlined at Appendix 1.

Sufficiency of evidence of testing

18. Evidence of having undertaken a test will, in the majority of instances, be via a text message from the testing supplier. A specific 0800 phone number has been established, that Police are able to use to confirm details of testing, should there be doubts as to the validity of the message.
19. For individuals without access to a cell phone, a paper-based system is also being established. This will provide an individual with a form confirming their details and the date, time and location of the test, as well as the person or organisation who undertook the test.
20. A flowchart showing how the approvals process will be undertaken, from the perspective of an individual, is attached at Appendix 2.

There are challenges in implementing this regime

21. Officials have identified three core challenges to implementing the new testing requirements, some of which could be mitigated by Ministerial decisions.

Ability of the health system to undertake additional testing

22. The additional testing requirements, both under the current Alert Level 4/2 boundary, and more acutely as permissions increase under potential Alert Level 3/2 and 3/1 boundaries, will require that individuals are able to access both tests (and in many case testing results) in a timely manner, and at a place and time that is convenient for them. This will be most acute in Auckland.
23. The Ministry of Health have confirmed that there is an appropriate capacity within the system to undertake these tests. Capacity within the system is monitored on an ongoing basis, and Ministers will be provided with updates if there is a lack of capacity to undertake the tests, or to turn results around in a manner that enables the permitted travel movements. If there is a further surge in cases, and an accompanying surge in testing, the capacity within the health system may not be able to support testing at the speed sought.

Ability to check evidence at road boundaries

24. Individuals travelling into and out of Tāmaki Makaurau via road will be checked at existing Police checkpoints at both the northern and southern boundaries. There is a high volume of traffic flowing through these checkpoints; between 11:59pm 6 September and 11.59 13 September, 102,000 vehicles travelled the checkpoints, 1,267 of which were not permitted through.
25. As of 23:59 on Thursday 16 September, the obligation on workers will come into force and Police will begin checking workers are carrying evidence of having been tested within the past seven days, in line with Cabinet's decision on 6 September 2021. Police intend to check 10 percent of heavy trucks and light vehicles to confirm compliance. As this requirement has not yet come into force, we do not yet have evidence of the additional time taken to proceed through the checkpoints under this regime.
26. Police have indicated that checking the people in every vehicle passing through a checkpoint has the permission to travel across the boundary, whether they are subject to surveillance testing or pre-departure testing, and confirming that a sample of them have the required evidence, is likely to increase the time taken to progress through the checkpoint. Across 100,000 vehicles, even a small increase in the time taken can have implications for overall traffic management and traffic flows. Officials further anticipate that the numbers authorised to travel will increase under lower Alert Levels, further increasing the likelihood of impeding traffic flows if movements through checkpoints are slowed.
27. Police have discretion to determine which proportion of individuals are asked for evidence under these new settings, with decisions taken in line with the level of compliance seen and the overall implications for traffic flows. Police have indicated that they intend to check evidence in approximately 10 percent of vehicle movements. The Ministry of Health's preference would be that every vehicle is checked.

Ability to check evidence at air boundaries

28. As currently agreed, both surveillance and pre-departure testing would be required for individuals travelling into and out of Tāmaki Makaurau by air, with evidence checked by Avsec supported by Police at airports, before individuals were permitted onto planes.

29. The ability to confirm this evidence is manageable at New Zealand's tier 1 airports; Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Queenstown and Invercargill, where both Avsec and Police have a regular presence.
30. At smaller, regional airports, without a regular Avsec and Police presence, checking evidence of peoples' ability to travel will be challenging. The majority of these airports are not currently undertaking flights to Auckland an Alert Level 4/2 boundary, but we anticipate that this will change at an Alert Level 3/2 or lower boundary.
31. Police have indicated that requiring the checking of evidence at regional airports will require frontline Police Officers to be redeployed from existing roles in order to be placed at regional airports to check this paperwork. This is unlikely to be commensurate with the risk of COVID-19 transmission from individuals travelling from regions into Auckland, and from a lower Alert Level into a higher one.

Additional testing requirements can take effect from 11.59pm on Tuesday 21 September

32. Adequate lead in time is needed to implement the additional testing requirements and to ensure that they are understood. This includes ensuring that:
 - a) clear communications can be developed and people traveling across the boundary have time to understand and prepare for the new requirements;
 - b) people planning to move across the boundary have time get a pre-departure test and test result where this is required; and
 - c) Police are able to prepare and train staff to monitor and enforce the changes.
33. When the rules and requirements at the boundary are clear, compliance with those rules is generally strong. Introducing new rules and requirements for movement across the boundary for personal reasons will add complexity to the boundary process, particularly where there are different requirements for those travelling for personal reasons.
34. Clear communications are required so that those travelling across the boundary have time to understand and prepare for travel. For those who are moving across the boundary for many of the personal permissions, time is also required to obtain evidence of a negative pre-departure test.
35. We recommend that in order to allow sufficient time for clear public communications and for people to obtain a negative pre-departure test, that the additional testing requirements for personal movement come into force at 11.59pm on Tuesday 21 September. This implementation date would be consistent with any potential change in Alert Level settings made by Cabinet on Monday 20 September.

Police consider that a longer lead-in time is more appropriate

36. Police have indicated that implementation by 11:59pm on Thursday 23 September is preferred. This timeframe allows for the embedding of the checking of worker documentation, the public to understand the rules for crossing the boundary and to obtain the requisite evidence, including negative test results where required, and police to implement appropriate processes. Police consider that an earlier implementation time is likely to generate confusion and delays at the checkpoints.

37. However, on balance, DPMC consider that when weighing this against the risk of ongoing COVID-19 transmission across the boundary, an earlier implementation date is recommended.

Consultation

38. This paper was drafted by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (COVID-19 Group). Public health advice was provided by the Ministry of Health.
39. New Zealand Police, Ministry of Justice, Department of Corrections and the Ministry of Transport were consulted on elements relating to operation at road and air boundaries, and where possible their feedback incorporated. Agencies continue to have concerns about the complexity involved in the different evidentiary regimes for different types of personal travel.

Communications

40. Communicating the new requirements, and the difference between the requirements on people travelling once and those travelling regularly is crucial to ensuring compliance with this regime.
41. The Ministry of Health is responsible for public communications regarding testing. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will support this through existing channels.

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APPENDIX 1 – PERMITTED MOVEMENTS AND REQUIRED EVIDENCE AT ALERT LEVEL 4/2 BOUNDARY

Permission	Requirement to carry evidence	What evidence is required
Permitted work	Yes	Test within 7 days
Necessary work	Yes	Test within 7 days
Exempt workers	No	N/A
Urgent care of child/support or care to person in critical/terminal condition	No	N/A
Access health service with appointment/receive Pfizer vaccine if nearest	Yes	Negative test in past 72hours
Leave or relocate hospital/residential care	Yes	Negative test in past 72hours
Attend judicial institution	Yes	Test within 7 days (inconsistent with Ministry of Health advice)
Leave or relocate home on court order	Yes	Negative test in past 72hours
Leave or change home after period of detention	Yes	Test within 7 days (inconsistent with Ministry of Health advice)
Collect a person leaving or relocating home on court order or after detention	Yes	Negative test in past 72hours
Leave NZ	Yes	Negative test in past 72hours
Go to MIQ	No	N/A
Emergency	No	N/A
Go home after MIQ	No	N/A
Go home after QFT travel	No	N/A
Collect a person going home after MIQ or QFT travel	Yes	Negative test in past 72hours
Care for pets or other animals	Yes	Test within 7 days
Travel home from alert level 2 to alert level 4	No	N/A
Transit Auckland	No	N/A
Accompany others for reasons above	Mirror above	Mirror above

PERMITTED MOVEMENTS AND REQUIRED EVIDENCE AT ALERT LEVEL 3/2 BOUNDARY

In addition to permissions at the Alert Level 4/2 boundary

Permission	Requirement to carry evidence	What evidence is required
Visiting the dying	Yes	Test within 7 days (inconsistent with Ministry of Health advice)
Accompanying a tūpāpaku or deceased person to a tangihanga or funeral	Yes	Test within 7 days (inconsistent with Ministry of Health advice)
Attending a tangihanga or funeral	Yes	Test within 7 days (inconsistent with Ministry of Health advice)

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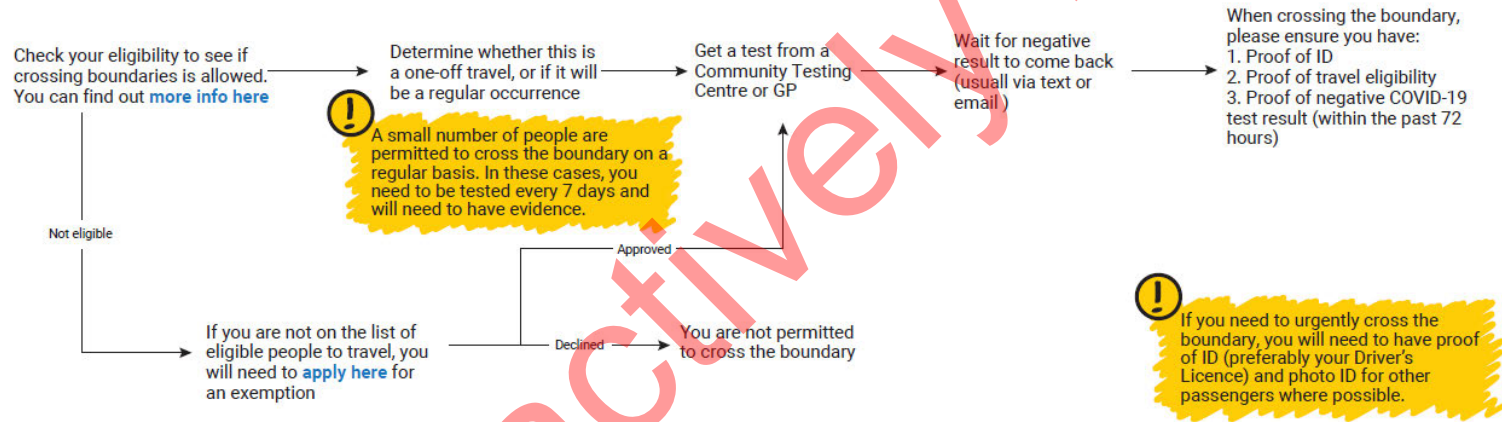
APPENDIX 2: TESTING AND EVIDENCE PERMISSIONS FOR PERSONAL TRAVEL

COVID-19



To safeguard areas of New Zealand and minimise the transmission of COVID-19 across Alert Level boundaries, surveillance testing of permitted travelers is being implemented. There are provisions to allow travel for certain circumstances

Crossing alert level boundaries for personal reasons



Checklist

- Confirm eligibility
- Get a COVID-19 test done. [Click here](#) to find a location
- Receive text or email confirming negative test (within 72 hours of travel)



Cabinet Business Committee

Minute of Decision

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Implementing Additional Testing Requirements at Alert Level Boundaries

Portfolio **COVID-19 Response**

On 15 September 2021, the Cabinet Business Committee:

- 1 **noted** the advice from officials on implementing additional testing requirements at Alert Level boundaries;
- 2 **invited** the Minister for COVID-19 Response to submit a paper to Cabinet on 20 September 2021, reflecting discussions at the meeting.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern (Chair)
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Dr Megan Woods
Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Hon Andrew Little
Hon David Parker
Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Hon Poto Williams
Hon Stuart Nash
Hon Kris Faafoi
Hon Peeni Henare
Hon Michael Wood
Hon Aupito William Sio

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Ministry of Health



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report of the Cabinet Business Committee: Period Ended 17 September 2021

On 20 September 2021, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Business Committee for the period ended 17 September 2021:

CBC-21-MIN-0107 **Implementing Additional Testing Requirements at Alert Level Boundaries** CONFIRMED
Portfolio: COVID-19 Response

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
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Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

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