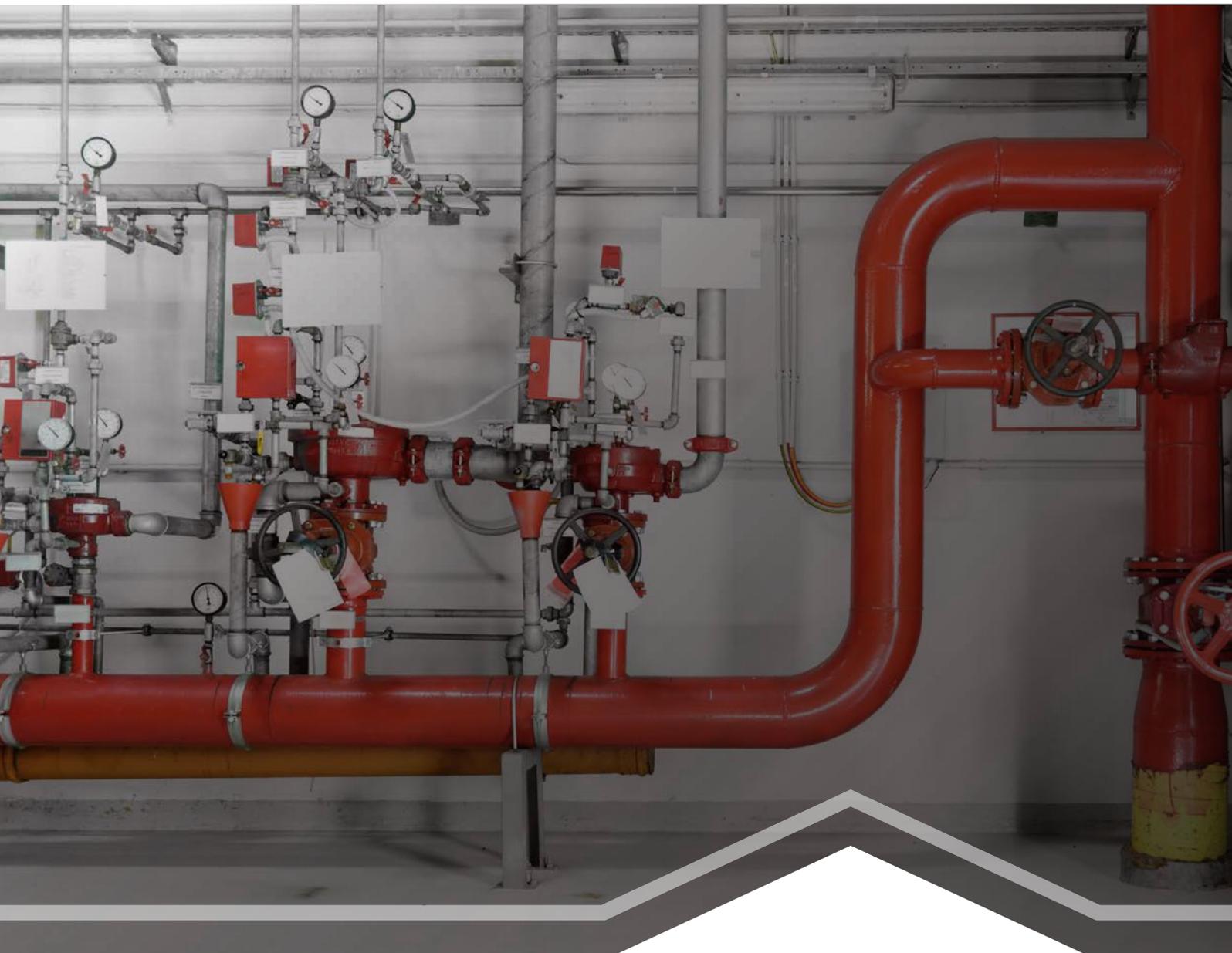




Position Statement PS-02 Version 1.0

COVID-19 Level 3 Alert

Issued: 20/4/20



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Significant changes from the previous version

- ▶ A previous release (PS-01) applied to COVID-19 Alert Level 4 and remains valid for that Alert Level.

Scope

This Position Statement applies to all Fire Protection Association New Zealand (“FPANZ”) member activities conducted under COVID-19 Alert Level 3 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 3 restrictions will be reassessed at approximately 2-week intervals but may last for up to six weeks at a time and may be applied selectively to different regions of the country. If the Level 3 restrictions persist, or the official advice 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 document 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-3/>

<https://www.building.govt.nz/covid-19/alert-level-3/>

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

<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.

Underlying Principles – doing things “safely”

The extraordinary COVID-19 Level 3 restrictions are aimed at preventing the loss of lives and livelihoods through the reduction of person-to-person disease transmission (either directly 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, or to the homes and families of staff.

The basic theme of the Alert Level 3 restrictions is doing things “safely” which the Government’s

official COVID-19 website defines as follows (direct quotation, abridged):

“Most, but not all businesses can start to open under Alert Level 3. They must take health measures to keep their workers safe.

- 】 *Workers must work from home if they can*
- 】 *Workplaces must operate safely – keeping one metre between workers, recording who is working together, limiting interaction between groups of workers, disinfecting surfaces, and maintaining high hygiene standards*
- 】 *Businesses cannot offer services which involve face-to-face contact or sustained close contact...*
- 】 *Most workers will not require PPE to stay safe at work. Incorrectly used PPE can create more risk. Good hygiene measures like hand washing with soap and water, physical distancing, sneeze and cough etiquette, and wiping down surfaces is the best defence against COVID-19.”*

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>.

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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 3 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*. These have not changed. Official advice from MBIE is as follows:

“If you are carrying out essential work, or are able to attend work under Level 3, it is important to follow Ministry of Health guidelines for COVID-19, to ensure work is carried out safely. If building and construction work cannot be carried out safely, staff must not go to work and premises should remain closed.”

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.

Essential Businesses and Services

From the MBIE website: *“Remember, essential services operating at Alert Level 4 can operate in the same way at Alert Level 3.”*

The focus of Alert Level 4 was “essential businesses” and “essential services”. Such activities remain essential under Alert Level

3, and the FPANZ position on them remains unchanged (as described in the *FPANZ Position Statement PS-01 – COVID-19 Level 4 Alert*).

The focus of Alert Level 3 is to allow additional business activity, provided it can be undertaken “safely” as described above. FPANZ agrees with this cautiously progressive approach.

Collaborate to Manage Infection Risk 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 underlying medical conditions to be of “*higher risk of severe illness*” from the effects of COVID-19.

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 occupants or fire industry workers under Alert Level 3 restrictions.



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- › 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
- › Detention facilities

Members are encouraged to avoid any activities that require access inside such areas, except in an emergency (e.g. FENZ call-out instructions, leaking sprinkler). Activities that can be conducted solely from outside such premises, or just in a foyer with no face-to-face contact are acceptable. Particular care should be taken with personal hygiene and cleaning measures when entering, working in, and departing high-risk occupancies.

General approaches

For the construction sector, the MBIE website states: *“interaction with the public is not permitted until level 1”* and also for all sectors *“at Alert Level 3, there are to be no uncontrolled physical interactions with the public.”* FPANZ takes the view that personal contact should be avoided by fire industry workers at all Alert Levels.

FPANZ strongly recommends at Alert Level 3 for members to prioritise routine work (e.g. annual testing) in unoccupied or sparsely occupied premises, particularly facilities that are temporarily closed to the public (e.g. retail, malls, libraries, museums, pools, gymnasiums). For premises where significant numbers of staff/occupants are present, consideration should be given to conducting routine work outside of normal working hours.

“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. Contactless exchange of fire extinguishers, for example, should also be possible in such situations.

Fire alarm and Sprinkler System Maintenance – general

General fire alarm and sprinkler system repair and maintenance may be undertaken under Level 3 restrictions, provided it can be conducted “safely”. Repair and maintenance work inside “high-risk occupancies” should be avoided unless a system is at imminent risk of failure.

Weekly/Monthly Testing

Routine testing may be undertaken under Level 3 restrictions in most buildings, provided it can be conducted “safely” and the considerations for “high-risk occupancies” are observed.

Annual/Biennial Surveys

Annual and biennial surveys are a high-infection-risk activity because they require all areas of the premises to be accessed. These should be deferred for “high-risk occupancies” and premises where maintaining physical distance may be difficult, and prioritised for unoccupied or sparsely occupied premises (see “General Approaches”). See also “Communication with Clients”.



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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” and the considerations for “high-risk occupancies” are observed.

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”.

Maintenance of Evacuation Schemes and Fire Safety Training

Carrying out fire evacuation drills and face-to-face training are considered high-infection-risk activities and should continue to be temporarily suspended. Training delivery online or via video conference may be considered in consultation with your client. See also “Communication with Clients”.

Hand-operated Firefighting Equipment (HOFFE) Maintenance and Service

HOFFE maintenance and service work may be undertaken provided protocols and procedures are put in place so that it is conducted “safely” and the considerations for “high-risk occupancies” are observed.

Routine Inspections of Fire Extinguishers and Other HOFFE

Routine HOFFE inspections are a high-infection-risk activity because they require all areas of the premises to be accessed. These should be deferred for “high-risk occupancies” and premises where maintaining physical distance may be difficult, and prioritised for unoccupied or sparsely occupied premises (see “General Approaches”). If such inspections are undertaken, protocols and procedures should be put in place so that they are conducted “safely”. See also “Virtual Inspections” and “Communication with Clients”.

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

Routine inspections are a high-infection-risk activity because they require all areas of the premises to be accessed. These should be deferred for “high-risk occupancies” and premises where maintaining physical distance may be difficult, and prioritised for unoccupied or sparsely occupied premises (see “General



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Approaches”). An exception is where there is a known and immediate life safety risk (e.g. a jammed fire door in an egress route of an occupied building). If such work is undertaken, protocols and procedures should be put in place so that it is conducted “safely”. See also “Virtual Inspections” and “Communication with Clients”.

Fire Product Manufacturing and Supply

Manufacturing and distribution of fire products may be undertaken. Members should follow official guidance regarding safe workplace practice, minimising personal contact, and contactless delivery.

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.

FPANZ strongly recommends the reasons for deferral of any scheduled BWoF or Evacuation Scheme work (e.g. health risk to building occupants/fire industry workers, lack of access) be agreed and fully documented between contractors and clients and advised to interested parties (e.g. TA, insurers, FENZ). This document may inform such reasoning.

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