

## What is the Safety Issue?

Moving from COVID-19 Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 2 sees a number of restrictions being eased and new Government guidance being issued. This allows a return to some aspects of 'normal' SAR operational procedures whilst some precautions remain in place.

## What is the Risk for LandSAR Members?

Members deployed whilst the COVID-19 virus is present in New Zealand are at risk of becoming infected through close contact with other people and contact with equipment or surfaces that may have residues containing the virus.

Members may also pose a risk to other people, if they are unknowingly carrying the virus themselves, at the time of deployment.



## Safety Points to Note

All Groups should update their callout procedures, during the COVID-19 pandemic, to address the following points:

- **Availability** – Members feeling unwell in any way, or having unwell people among their close contacts, should not be considered as available for deployment. Members may also be unavailable for other reasons associated with COVID-19 (e.g. returning to work after lockdown, caring for children not yet returned to school). Groups should check member availability and let local SAR Police and LandSAR know if they may have lower than normal capacity to respond
- **Mustering Areas** – gatherings of more than 10 people need to be avoided, including workplaces where SAR responders might assemble. This may mean that normal preparation or staging areas are not available – particularly Police Stations, if access is restricted.
- **Briefings and PPE** – Face to face briefings of up to 10 people at a time are now okay. Maintain two metre spacing between teams if more than 10 people need to receive the same briefing. Avoid unnecessary contact once briefings have been completed. Pre-deployment briefings and Take Five Field Safety Checks must include appropriate coverage of COVID-19 precautions. Deploy with recommended COVID-19 PPE for having contact with a patient/SAR subject. Wearing of PPE whilst only having contact with teammates is not necessary.
- **Equipment Precautions** – Team equipment needs to be issued to, and kept by, an individual member, or be thoroughly disinfected before it changes hands or is put back into a store. This especially applies to radio equipment, keyboards and any other items with hard (i.e. plastic) surfaces where there is close mouth or hand contact. Clothing should not be shared – including Group owned raincoats that have already been worn by other members in recent weeks. Sharing of huts or tents, with immediate teammates only, is now okay, if nights need to be spent in the field.
- **Operational Transport** – Teammates may share transport to and from operations and taskings. Maintain as much spacing as practical between vehicle or aircraft occupants. Wipe down hard surfaces (with disinfectant or sanitiser) in vehicles and aircraft between loads, if other teams are using the same transport.

- **Precautions in the Field** – Maintain team member spacing whilst on task and during breaks, wherever practical. Avoid touching surfaces and objects unless necessary. Use hand sanitiser after touching any surface that others may have had recent contact with.
- **Precautions in the IMT** – Keep IMTs to no more than 10 members and use larger rooms/buildings to maintain spacing between members. Do not share computers. Do not exchange paper or other objects between members. Restrict access and keep accurate records (including contact details) of anyone who comes into the ICP, for contact tracing.
- **Contact with SAR Subjects/Patients** – Designate team members for essential patient contact ahead of time and keep this to the minimum number necessary. If PPE is in short supply, these team members should be given priority. Follow specific LandSAR advice for patient contact and stretcher carries (see Operational Guidelines on LandSAR website) – particularly minimising the risk of particles from the nose and mouth of the patient.
- **Stand down/post deployment** – Stagger the return of teams to avoid congregation. Keep face to face hot debriefs to groups of no more than 10 in size. Thoroughly disinfect all SAR equipment. Treat all personal gear as being contaminated – do not take it uncleaned into home environments. Follow recommendations for sequencing when taking clothing off – clean and dry it and yourself.

Any Group that needs assistance in updating its procedures can contact their Group Support Officer for help.