



association of
consulting and
engineering



POSITION STATEMENT ON COVID-19 VACCINATION

The arrival of the COVID-19 Delta variant means Aotearoa faces new risks that have a significant impact on the continuity of engineering and professional services.

Our work is critical to Aotearoa. We need our businesses to be well prepared and able to avoid disruptions due to COVID-19 so that we are in a strong position to deliver our country's ambitious work programmes across the construction, residential, education, health, transport and other sectors.

We also have a responsibility to provide a safe working environment. Our people work collaboratively, and go to many places as part of their daily work, not just the office – they visit schools and hospitals, clients' offices, consent agencies, other consultants and partners, contractors, public and hospitality venues and more. Every location our people work is different and changing and must be treated that way.

We're calling for engineering and professional services providers to regularly assess COVID-19 risks and respond accordingly, for the safety of our people, clients and communities. This will also support business continuity.

Our position is that vaccination is a necessary part of our defence against COVID-19. The uptake and use of vaccinations should be central to engineering and professional services' COVID-19 response planning.

Clear direction and the use of vaccinations are our greatest opportunities to manage risk, and along with other public health measures we will use vaccines to keep our people safe.

We must proactively protect our people, clients, and communities, and ensure we can keep delivering for Aotearoa. The very nature of our work requires we provide safe spaces for open, engaging, collaborative teamwork. Proactive risk assessment and adaptive response means there will be times when access to offices or sites will necessarily be restricted to vaccinated workers only, to avoid potential harm to those in the workplace, our clients, and communities. We know some people do not wish to be vaccinated or are uncertain about vaccinations, and we acknowledge that some people cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. We respect individual rights.

How Aotearoa responds to COVID-19 will continue to evolve. As providers of engineering and professional services, we are committed to enabling a safe network of people and places across Aotearoa.

We are in this together and we will get through this together.



Helen Davidson
Chief Executive
ACE New Zealand



Richard Templer
Chief Executive
Engineering New Zealand



Craig Lewis
Chair
CEAS

GUIDANCE FOR ENGINEERING AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES COVID-19 RISK MANAGEMENT AND VACCINATIONS

This guidance is for employers managing COVID-19 risks and based on the premise that COVID-19 will continue to present in Aotearoa.

We acknowledge the situation is dynamic. Organisations must be responsive and agile and prioritise their people's wellbeing.

The following principles and guidance are based on what we currently know. We will review this guidance as the situation evolves.

PRINCIPLES

- 1. Vaccination is a necessary part of our defence against COVID-19. The uptake and use of vaccinations should be central to engineering and professional services' COVID-19 response planning.** There is a significant body of evidence on the safety and efficacy of vaccination to control the virus and reduce life-threatening illness.
- 2. COVID-19 risks must be actively managed.** The spread of COVID-19 throughout New Zealand presents significant health and safety risks. Risks must be actively managed to protect health and ensure the safety of the workforce.

APPROACH

Risk management and business continuity planning are critical to managing emerging COVID-19 risks. To manage COVID-19 risks to both the health and safety of your people, as well as business continuity:

1. Prioritise your people's wellbeing and engagement. Employers have a duty to manage employees in good faith, and this duty includes engaging with employees.
2. Make sure you are familiar with, and comply with, public health advice and orders. You may also need to consider the COVID-19 requirements of your clients and locations where your people work.
3. Conduct a risk analysis of how COVID-19 will affect your business. This should be undertaken in partnership with your employees. Consider their views on the roles that should be undertaken by vaccinated employees only, vaccination policies, and any processes you as an employer might follow.
4. Develop a policy around management of COVID-19 and engage with your staff on this.

5. Prioritise the uptake of vaccines, supporting your people to take time off work to get vaccinated. You may wish to require new employees and contractors on your sites to be vaccinated as a condition of their employment agreement, provided you have done a risk analysis and have a clear policy.
6. Obtain information on your people's vaccination status. While you can ask your people for their vaccination status for health and safety planning purposes, you can't require they provide this information. If you're going to ask your people about their vaccination status, then tell them it is a voluntary question and let them know that if they don't respond then for health and safety purposes it is assumed they are not vaccinated. Let them know what you will do with the information collected, and how it might determine your ability to deploy them in higher risk settings. Keep this information confidential and do not use it for any other purpose without consent.
7. Manage risk posed to staff, clients and visitors to sites, including clear organisational directives on situations where access to offices or sites should be limited to vaccinated people. The Government will lead the way on frameworks to consider risk. In some places risk may be minimal (locations where there is no sustained and intensive community transmission), while in other places risks may be high (multiple cases of unlinked community transition).
8. Reinforce wider public health measures to help keep people safe, including staying home if you are sick, keeping track of where you have been, using face coverings, maintaining good hand hygiene, and observing physical distancing with others.
9. Engage early and often with clients and stakeholders to manage risks within projects.