



COVID-19 Protection Framework – Guidelines for places of worship

Updated 4th April 2022

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Unite
against
COVID-19

The Covid-19 Protection Framework (traffic lights) outlines the settings being used in New Zealand to manage COVID-19. It has three settings Green, Orange and Red. Places of worship can operate at all framework settings.

This guidance is provided to support places of worship to operate safely.

It is correct as of 4th April 2022.

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Operating safely under the COVID-19 Protection Framework

Under the framework a **gathering** is defined as:

- a group of people who are intermingling.

Most faith-based services are treated as gatherings. For example, services at a place of worship, or a prayer group in an individual's home.

Under the framework an **event** is defined as an activity organised by a business or service:

- that takes place at a commercial or private indoor or outdoor premises or a publicly owned premises hired for that purpose
- that has controlled access of customers or clients via ticketing, fee paying on premises, registration, or other practicable means of controllable entry
- unless that activity is an outdoor community event or a gathering.

Ticketed concerts held at places of worship are an example of an event.

Face masks

Face masks must cover the nose and mouth, and need to be attached by loops around the ears or head. This means scarves, bandannas, or t-shirts should not be used.

Face masks are required at indoor gatherings and events at Red by everyone, for the entire time. However, if there is "exclusive use" of the venue attendees do not need to wear a face mask.

If the "exclusive use" exemption does not apply and masks are required at the gathering, they can be removed while eating and drinking but attendees cannot remove them to sing.

Face masks are required to be worn by workers, including volunteers, at indoor events and gatherings at Red and Orange. For indoor events workers in public facing roles, these must be medical grade masks, for example a Type IIR/Level2 masks or above. The requirement to wear face masks excludes performers and formal speakers, such as a person leading a service, provided they are 2 metres apart from the audience or other attendees.

Face mask rules do not apply to gatherings in private dwellings, for example, bible study in a private home.

For more information visit [Wear a face mask | Unite against COVID-19 \(covid19.govt.nz\)](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/face-mask)

Exclusive Use and Defined Spaces

The person responsible for a gathering or event, including those responsible for a faith-based service, needs to consider whether or not their service is held in a defined space. If it is, it will also be important to consider whether the defined space the service is held in is being exclusively used for the purpose of the service.

These are important considerations at Red to understand how face mask rules and capacity limits apply.

An indoor space is a single defined space if:

- there are walls (permanent or temporary) that divide the space from other spaces, and
- the space does not share direct airflow with other indoor spaces.

An outdoor space is a single defined space if:

- there are walls (permanent or temporary) that divide the space from other spaces, or
- there is at least 2 metres separating everyone in the gathering space from people who are outside that space and who are not attending the gathering.

If there is more than one space on the premises, people using the space (other than workers), cannot mix with other people using, entering, or leaving the premises.

Workers can move between gatherings and events held in different defined spaces.

Every venue is different, so it is up to the venue owner or activity organiser to put measures in place to stop groups of people mixing within each defined space.

To ensure groups do not mix, consider:

- separate entry and exit points
- staggering start times for events or gatherings
- separate bathrooms
- different service counters for food and drinks, and areas where people go up to pay.

Capacity limits

Capacity limits only apply to indoor events and gatherings at Red (up to 200 people based on 1 metre distancing). No capacity limits apply at Orange or Green.

Capacity limits do not include workers or volunteers (paid and unpaid), but do include all other people (adults and children) within the 'defined space'.

Capacity limits are based on 1 metre distancing. This means the maximum number of people who could occupy the space is determined by how many people could occupy the space if

each person was 1 metre apart, up to the maximum limit (200 people at Red). People do not need to stand 1 metre apart.

QR Codes and Mandatory Scanning

There is no requirement for people to scan in or for a place of worship to display a QR code poster, or have mandatory record keeping.

My Vaccine Pass

My Vaccine Pass requirements have been removed from the COVID-19 Protection framework. They are no longer a legal requirement for entry into any venue including a place of worship.

Infrastructure will be retained and updated for those who wish to continue using it as a condition of entry, including places of worship.

Vaccination Mandates for Workers

Government vaccination mandates no longer apply for workers at businesses that must use My Vaccine Passes to operate (i.e. hospitality, events, close contact businesses and gyms).

If a business or workplace isn't covered by a government vaccination mandate, an employer can determine what controls can be supported by a work health and safety risk assessment or in relation to third party access requirements. This may include requiring work be done only by vaccinated workers.

[Read more: COVID-19 controls for work health and safety reasons, including employer vaccination requirements and the latest public health advice](#)

Overview of the Settings for Places of Worship

	Red	Orange
Capacity limits	<p>Indoor gatherings and events (e.g. weddings, funerals) can have up to 200 people based on the maximum number of people who could occupy the space if each person was 1 metre apart.</p> <p>There are no outdoor capacity limits.</p>	<p>There are no indoor or outdoor capacity limits.</p>
Face masks	<p>Face masks are required to be worn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by workers, including volunteers, at indoor events and gatherings (these must be medical grade masks for events workers in public facing roles). • by attendees at indoor events • by attendees at indoor gatherings where there is not exclusive use of the defined space. <p>Face masks must cover the nose and mouth, and need to be attached by loops around the ears or head.</p> <p>Face masks are not required to be worn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at outdoor events and gatherings, • by attendees at indoor gatherings where there is exclusive use of the defined space, • at gatherings in private dwellings e.g. bible study in a private home, • by performers and formal speakers, such as a person leading a service, provided they are 2m apart from the audience or other attendees, • by children under the age of 12. 	<p>Face masks are required to be worn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by workers, including volunteers, at indoor events and gatherings (these must be medical grade masks for events workers in public facing roles). Attendees are not required to wear face masks. <p>Face masks must cover the nose and mouth, and need to be attached by loops around the ears or head.</p> <p>Face masks are not required to be worn by workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at outdoor events and gatherings, • if they are performers and formal speakers, such as a person leading a service, provided they are 2m apart from the audience or other attendees.
Food & drink	<p>At an event, attendees must be seated and separated for the service of food and drink.</p> <p>At a gathering, food and drink can be served as normal.</p>	<p>Food and drink can be served as normal.</p>

Green	<p>There are no restrictions.</p> <p>We encourage places of worship and their attendees to keep up healthy habits.</p>
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Keeping up Healthy Habits

- Face masks can help reduce the spread of COVID-19. They are particularly useful in poorly ventilated indoor areas and when you are around people you do not know.
- Stay home if you are sick and take a rapid antigen test (RAT) if you have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Encourage physical distancing and consider offering online services so people who cannot attend in person can participate.
- Clean and sanitise shared surfaces thoroughly before and after use.
- Clean and sanitise musical instruments thoroughly before and after use.
- Have plenty of places for people to wash hands with soap and water.
- Open windows to increase fresh air flow inside. If air conditioning is used, make sure the system is regularly maintained.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Keep track of where you have been.
- Stay up to date with your vaccinations.

Questions and Answers

What happens if we have a COVID-19 case that attended our service?

The place of worship should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible, including door handles, light switches, computers, horizontal surfaces including tables and counter tops, phones, EFTPOS machines, touch screens, and workplace amenities. This can be done with the same products that are usually used for cleaning and disinfecting.

For more information visit <http://www.Covid19.govt.nz>

Why do places of worship have to abide by gathering rules?

Gatherings rules are based on public health advice and have been developed to protect communities from COVID-19. They apply to all settings that involve an intermingling group of people, ranging from social, to sporting, to faith-based groups.

Can we still run services using My Vaccine Pass and what are the requirements around this?

There are no longer any Government requirements around the use of My Vaccine Pass, therefore if a place of worship chooses to use My Vaccine Pass for certain services, it will be up to them as to how they run this and any other services simultaneously.

For more information visit [Requiring My Vaccine Passes for entry — business.govt.nz](https://business.govt.nz/requirements/my-vaccine-passes-for-entry)

What should an employer do if a government vaccination mandate no longer applies to their workplace?

These employers can no longer use a government vaccine mandate as a reason for taking employment actions against unvaccinated employees.

Employers who wish to consider the role of vaccination in managing risk, should complete a work health and safety risk assessment. This should reflect updated public health information and advice from the Ministry of Health. The risk assessment will enable the employer to determine what controls are appropriate in their workplaces.

Employers may also maintain employer vaccination requirements, where they need one to ensure that their employees can access third party sites.

For more information visit [Vaccines and the workplace » Employment New Zealand](https://www.employment.govt.nz/vaccines-and-the-workplace)

What are the requirements if we are serving food and drink?

You can serve food and drink at your faith-based gathering, but people should not share drinks, cups, plates, cutlery or other items. Where face masks are required, these can be removed while eating and drinking.

If you are operating as a gathering, you can serve food and drink without any additional requirements at Green, Orange or Red. If you are operating as an event, at Red attendees must be seated and separated for the service of food and drink, and at Orange and Green you can serve food and drink without any additional requirements. Workers, including volunteers, must wear a face covering (for workers at events these must be medical grade).

Remember if your place of worship runs a café, you need to apply the hospitality rules. Detailed guidance on the rules for food and drink activities is here [COVID-19 Protection Framework — business.govt.nz](https://business.govt.nz/covid-19-protection-framework)

Who would be considered a 'worker' at a faith-based gathering?

Workers includes people who are paid, and volunteers.

Do all workers at gatherings have to wear facemasks?

At Orange and Red, workers at gatherings must wear face masks unless they are an entertainer or a person presenting to an audience (such as a person presiding over, or assisting in leading, a faith-based gathering), provided that they are 2-metres physically distanced from others.

Are gatherings in private homes covered by the face mask requirements? e.g. bible study in the home?

No, gatherings held at private homes are not covered by the new face mask requirements.

Are children required to wear face masks at gatherings?

Children under the age of 12 are not required to follow face mask rules at gatherings.

Where do medical-grade masks have to be worn?

Medical-grade masks, such as the blue medical masks are to be worn by public-facing workers at indoor events at Orange and Red.

What is considered an indoor space and outdoor space?

Indoor spaces are generally considered to be places that are completely or substantially enclosed by both of:

- a ceiling, roof, or similar overhead surface that substantially impedes the free flow of fresh, outdoor air into the space; and
- walls, sides, screens, or other similar surfaces that substantially impede the free flow of fresh, outdoor air in and out of the enclosed space.

If you are operating at a venue that requires attendees to spend time in an indoor space:

- to travel directly through to an outdoor space, purchase goods, or use bathroom facilities, then the retail rules (i.e. capacity based on 1m distancing) likely apply to those defined spaces; or
- to consume food, socialise, watch entertainment, or otherwise intermingle for any period of time longer than necessary than to undertake the activities above (i.e. travel directly through to an outdoor space, purchase goods, or use bathroom facilities), then the indoor rules should apply to those defined spaces.

There are no limits on who can be in an area if it is an emergency.

Outdoor spaces are generally considered to be places that are either:

- entirely open; or
- are only partially enclosed, in that the facility

- either:
 - does not have a ceiling, roof, or similar overhead surface that substantially impedes the free flow of fresh, outdoor air into the space; or
 - does not have walls, sides, screens, or other similar surfaces that substantially impede the free flow of fresh, outdoor air in and out of the enclosed space.

Useful Resources and Links

There are a wide range of resources to support places of worship to apply COVID-19 Protection Framework:

- **Free online posters/resources:**

Find and download resources; including logos, templates, posters, videos, social media tile. This includes a range of resource in languages other than English.

<https://covid19.brandkit.io/login>

- **Free printed posters/resources:**

Order free collateral through our online catalogue and have the resources delivered direct to you. This includes a range of resource in languages other than English.

Go to the [Bluestar Portal](#).

- **Translated information:**

Information is available in over [28 languages](#).

- **Information in alternative formats:**

Information is available in [5 alternate formats](#)

- **Information if you have COVID-19:**

<http://www.Covid19.govt.nz/isolation-and-care/if-you-have-covid-19>

- **Information for businesses on operating under the COVID-19 Protection Framework:**

[COVID-19 — business.govt.nz](https://www.business.govt.nz/covid-19)

- **Information on the use of masks and face coverings:**

[Wear a face mask | Unite against COVID-19 \(covid19.govt.nz\)](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/wear-a-face-mask)

- **Advice on vaccination in workplaces and related health and safety:**

www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/covid-19-vaccination-and-employment/#controls

- **Opting to use My Vaccine Pass:**

[Requiring My Vaccine Passes for entry — business.govt.nz](#)

- **COVID-19 cleaning frequently asked questions:**

[Ministry of Health Covid-19-general-cleaning-and-disinfection-advice](#)