



# BE SAFE & HEALTHY THIS WINTER

A general guide for business to be more prepared and resilient this winter.

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## INTRODUCTION

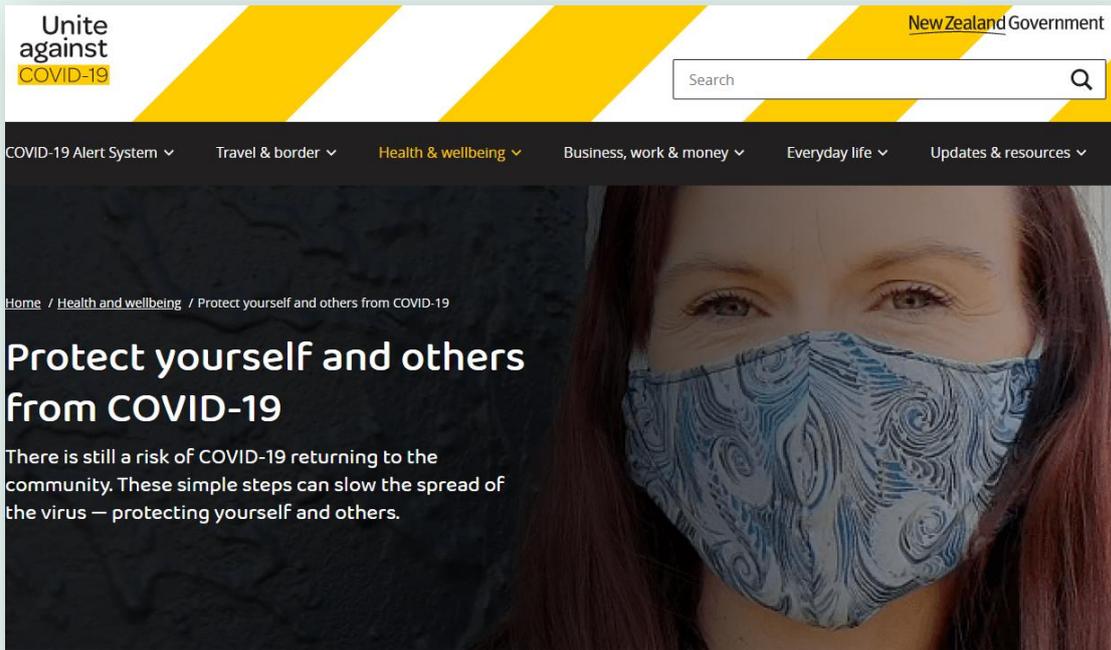
This edition of our Be Safe & Healthy This Winter Guide has been prepared to assist workers and business in preparing for winter while also living with the impacts of COVID-19. For up-to-date information please see <https://covid19.govt.nz/>

Everyday tasks are already more difficult and now we need to prepare for the winter, including possible severe weather events. By taking some simple steps we can all mitigate and reduce the impact of such events when and if they occur.

In preparation for winter, stay home if you're sick, keep track of where you've been, remember to wash your hands regularly, wear face coverings as required, follow proper sneeze/cough etiquette. It is also important to know the symptoms of COVID-19.

Our main message during the winter months is simple, - Be Prepared and Stay Safe.

Please see <https://covid19.govt.nz/> for more up to date information.




**Stay home if you're sick →**

If you're feeling unwell, isolate wherever you are and call Healthline about a free COVID-19 test. By getting a test, you're helping keep your community safe.



**Keep track of where you've been →**

Scan QR codes wherever you go, and turn on Bluetooth tracing. Using the app will help our health services reach people quickly to stop any possible spread of COVID-19.



**Wear a face covering →**

Please wear a face covering whenever you're on public transport, including flights. Keep your community safe, and cover for each other.

## Practise good hygiene



**Wash your hands →**

Washing your hands is 1 of the easiest ways to keep yourself safe. Wash often. Use soap. 20 seconds. Then dry. This kills the virus by bursting its protective bubble.



**Cough or sneeze into your elbow →**

It will keep the virus off your hands, so you won't spread it to other people and make them sick too.



**Clean surfaces →**

Regularly clean surfaces that get touched frequently.

## Maintain physical distancing

Keep a safe distance from people you do not know while out and about. This will help to minimise the spread of COVID-19 if community transmission returns.

[Maintain physical distancing](#)

## Health Preparedness

As we come into the winter months, COVID-19, influenza, and other respiratory viruses will circulate at increased levels within our communities. Influenza and other respiratory viruses have similar symptoms to COVID-19 and all spread from one person to another.

### COVID-19

- a new or worsening cough
- a fever of at least 38°C
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- sneezing and runny nose
- temporary loss of smell.

These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have COVID-19. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as colds and flu.

Shortness of breath is a sign of possible pneumonia and requires immediate medical attention.

### Time for symptoms to appear.

We do not yet know how long symptoms take to show after a person has been infected, but current World Health Organization assessments suggest that it's 2 to 10 days.

### If you have any symptoms

#### Talk to a health professional.

If you have cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms, stay home and call:

- Healthline for free on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453)
- your doctor, or
- your iwi health provider.

A health professional will advise whether you fit the criteria for testing. Call your doctor before visiting if you have any symptoms.

Let your health professional know if you have travelled internationally in the past 14 days, or if you have been in contact with a confirmed or probable case.

If you're outside New Zealand call **+64 9 358 5453** or your doctor.

For more advice, please visit the Unite Against COVID 19 website <https://covid19.govt.nz/>

### Colds

Symptoms of a cold include sore throat, sneezing, blocked or runny nose, cough and feeling unwell. While you have a cold you should drink plenty of liquids, get lots of rest at home and eat healthily. A cold usually comes on gradually and most adults will start to feel better after 3 or 4 days and be fully recovered by 7 days.

## Flu

Influenza (flu) is a virus that comes on suddenly and makes you feel unwell. Symptoms of flu include fever, muscle aches, cough and tiredness.

which develop quickly, along with feeling very unwell. Most people start to feel better after 5 to 8 days although a cough and general tiredness may last for 2 to 3 weeks.

Usually most flu cases can be treated at home by drinking plenty of liquids, getting lots of rest and eating healthily. People with flu are usually infectious a day before symptoms start and remain infectious for 5 or 6 days. If you have the flu, stay at home and try to avoid all unnecessary contact with others during this time to avoid spreading the illness to them. Discourage any visitors. You can avoid spreading the flu germs by coughing and sneezing into a tissue, binning the tissue immediately and washing your hands with soap and water afterwards. Alcohol based hand gels are also effective. If you don't have a tissue you can cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow.

Some people are at risk of complications of flu, like pneumonia, which may mean admission to hospital. People at risk include:

- Those 65 years and older
- Children, especially younger children
- Pregnant women
- Residents of nursing homes and other residential care facilities
- Those with chronic illness, like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, cancer, People with Down syndrome.

If you are in one of these risk categories, you should contact your Doctor about getting the flu vaccine. If you are in one of these at risk categories and you get flu you should contact your doctor, as you may need special anti-viral medicines. These work best if started within 48 hours of the start of flu symptoms.

It can be difficult to tell the symptoms of flu apart from the symptoms of COVID-19. If you develop these symptoms you need to self-isolate (stay at home and avoid contact with others) and contact your GP by phone. Your GP will advise you if you need to be tested for COVID-19. For more information see <https://covid19.govt.nz/>

## Flu vaccine

Influenza (flu) is a very infectious illness caused by the influenza virus that affects the lungs and the airways. It can be severe and cause complications like pneumonia and bronchitis. These can lead to serious illness and death.

Flu is more severe in people aged 65 years and over, pregnant women, and anyone with a long-term medical condition. Flu vaccination can prevent flu.

The flu vaccine is strongly recommended for:

- People aged 65 years and over
- Pregnant women
- People (adults and children) with long-term medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, liver, kidney disease, cancer, chronic lung disease including COPD, or neurological diseases
- People whose immune system is impaired due to disease or treatment including cancer patients
- Healthcare workers
- Carers and household contacts of people at medical risk of the complications of flu
- People with regular close contact with poultry, water fowl or pigs.

Ask your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist for the flu vaccine.

## **Staying healthy during COVID-19**

Taking care of our mental health and being there for others is important as we face into the winter months. The impact of COVID-19 varies across the population. We all cope in different ways and a variety of different factors can disrupt our routines. This can impede on our ability to get out and impact on our social interactions. Changes to the way we live and work during this pandemic, can be challenging for some of us, more than others. This winter, it is more important than ever before, to think ahead and plan the things you can do to assist yourself, and all the people you care about.

The <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/> website provides information on mental health supports and services that are available nationally.

## **To be Winter Ready, you need to be aware of the weather conditions in your area, so that you can PREPARE.**

Weather forecasts are available online, radio and TV. Impacts from wind/rain/snow etc., vary depending on location, recent weather conditions, the state of ground, the time of year as well as the duration of the event. The timing and location of the occurrence of extreme weather can significantly affect the impact which extreme weather may have on society, or on the economy.

## **8 Advice for vulnerable workers and their Families**

In winter it can be difficult for everyone to get about and conduct day to day activities. It is even more difficult for vulnerable people.

### **Keeping Well and Warm**

- Keep warm, eat well and avoid unnecessary travel. You should eat regular hot meals and drink plenty of fluids, this will keep you warm and will give you energy to keep active.
- Ensure you have sufficient supplies of food and of any prescription medicine you may need. Keep active indoors.
- Maintain adequate heating in your home.
- Ask your relatives and neighbours for help if you need it. Keep their phone numbers on a list beside your phone.
- If your disability is affected by a drop in temperature try and be aware of the weather forecast in order to allow you plan for pain management
- Wear the correct number of layers to try and maintain your body temperature at the required level
- Individuals with reduced mobility should take extra measures to protect their hands, feet and other areas of the body that are particularly subject to cold weather conditions.

### **Personal Safety – Staying Safe**

- In icy weather, wear well-fitted shoes with non-slip soles if you have to go out but try to limit walking outside during the cold weather
- Consider wearing a personal alarm so that family or neighbours are alerted if you fall
- If you have a fall, even a minor one, make sure you visit your doctor for a check up
- Plan for the possibility that winter weather may disrupt your homecare service
- If you use a mobility device make sure it can grip an icy surface
- If you have a ramp make sure it is well gritted in icy weather

## Working in Winter

Anyone who works outside in harsh conditions knows the chilly season takes its toll. And with temperatures outside dropping, it's time to think about protecting yourself and your workers from the elements.

The effects of the cold can range from:

- Increased risk of injury,
- Reduced work rate and quality,
- Greater potential for damage to plant and equipment.

The cold can affect the ability to concentrate on the task at hand. Working in cold temperatures can also increase irritability and frustration and may even incline people to take shortcuts just to escape the cold conditions. The increase of likelihood of workplace incidents can be related to the body's response to cold temperatures that causes a decrease in manual dexterity, fingertip sensitivity and muscle strength decrease.

People working outside jobs should try and eliminate, or at best isolate, cold hazards. However, completely eliminating hazards can become difficult; so consider the following controls when working in the cold:

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### Personal Safety – Staying Safe

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- If you have a fall, even a minor one, make sure you visit your doctor for a check-up.

WorkSafe states that if continuous work is carried out in temperatures below 0°C, heated shelters such as cabins or 'smoko' rooms should be made available. A strict timetable for breaks should be allowed to let employees warm up and change clothes if needed.

## Training

Workers and supervisors should be trained to recognise the symptoms of cold exposure such as hypothermia. Having a trained first aid person is highly recommended. Workers should be informed about PPE, safe work practices, and emergency procedures in case of injury. While working in the cold, a buddy system should be used to look out for one another.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Clothing should be worn in multiple layers: the air between the layers of clothing provides better insulation.
- The outer layer should be hi-vis, rain and wind-proof, and allow for easy opening and removal.
- Exposed areas, such as the head, hands and feet, are just as important as the body. Appropriate gloves, head coverings and footwear fit for the task and conditions should be used. Also consider alternative methods of keeping workers warm e.g., heated blowers, etc.

## Equipment

The risk of cold injury can be minimized by equipment choice and design. Plant, equipment and tools should be designed so that they can be operated without having to remove items of PPE. The more complex or fiddly the activity is, the greater the likelihood that PPE will be discarded during the process which increases the risk.

## Plan

To avoid harsh winter conditions, plan work that is appropriate to the weather.

- Check weather reports before planning your jobs so that outside tasks can be done on the best possible day.
- If you cannot be adequately protected from the effects of the cold, then work must be suspended, or work regimes modified, to remove the risk of harm.
- Following these steps will ensure that winter does not slow you down and your team remains productive and keen during the colder months.

Slip and trip accidents increase during the Autumn and Winter season for a number of reasons: there is less daylight, leaves fall onto paths and become wet and slippery and cold weather spells cause ice and snow to build up on paths. There are effective actions that you can take to reduce the risk of a slip or trip. Regardless of the size of your site, always ensure that regularly used walkways are promptly tackled.

Issues to consider during the winter months.

### **Lighting**

Is there is enough lighting around your workplace for you and your workers to be able to see and avoid hazards that might be on the ground? The easiest way to find out is to ask your staff. Another way is to shadow your employees for a couple of days, walk the main internal and external routes that they use throughout their working day. It is important to do this both inside and outside of the workplace, as the effect of light changes during the day. If you can't see hazards on the ground, you will need to improve the lighting (e.g. new lights or changing the type of bulb).

### **Wet and decaying leaves**

Fallen leaves that become wet or have started to decay can create slip risks in two ways, they hide any hazard that may be on the path or they themselves create a slip risk.

Put in place a procedure for removing leaves at regular intervals.

### **Rain water**

In dealing with rainwater:

- When fitting external paved areas ensure that the material used will be slip resistant when wet.
- Discourage people from taking shortcuts over grass or dirt which are likely to become slippery when wet. Consider converting existing shortcuts into proper paths.
- On new sites, before laying paths, think about how pedestrians are likely to move around the site. Putting the path in the right place from the start may save you money in the long term.
- Many slip accidents happen at building entrances as people entering the building walk in rainwater. Fitting canopies of a good size over building entrances and in the right position can help to prevent this.
- If a canopy is not a possibility, consider installing large, absorbent mats or even changing the entrance flooring to one which is non-slip.

### **Ice, frost and snow**

- To reduce the risk of slips on ice, frost or snow, you need to assess the risk and put in a system to manage it.
- Identify the outdoor areas used by pedestrians most likely to be affected by ice, for example: - building entrances, car parks, pedestrian walkways, shortcuts, sloped areas and areas constantly in the shade or wet.
- Monitor the temperature, as prevention is key.

- Put a procedure in place to prevent an icy surface forming and/or keep pedestrians off the slippery surface;
- Use grit or similar, on areas prone to be slippery in frosty, icy conditions;
- Divert pedestrians to less slippery walkways and barrier off existing ones.
- If warning cones are used, remember to remove them once the hazard has passed or they will eventually be ignored.

### Is Your Vehicle Winter-Ready?

You should ensure your vehicle is serviced as required by the manufacturers requirements to make sure it is ready for the conditions which will undoubtedly arrive when least expected! There are some things you can do yourself:

- Lights - Make sure all your indicators and headlamps are clean and working
- Liquids - Make sure the water reservoir is up to the maximum mark and correctly mixed with anti-freeze. You may also need to top up your coolant and screen wash
- Oil - Check your dipstick and top up the oil if necessary. Look for signs of leakages on the ground under the car
- Electrics - Check your dashboard before and after starting the engine. Listen for a weak battery and replace if necessary
- Windscreen wipers - you should inspect the condition of the windscreen wipers and clean them regularly.
- Tyres - Check your tyre treads and pressure, including the spare. The minimum legal limit is 1.5mm, but if in snow or icy conditions winter tyres are recommended for driving.

### Be Prepared – Recommended emergency equipment to have in your car:

- High Visibility Vest
- A hazard warning triangle
- A torch with batteries - check it monthly.
- De-icing equipment (Both for glass and door locks)
- First aid kit
- Appropriate clothing and footwear in case you must leave your vehicle.
- Have a charged mobile phone.

### Planning a journey in severe winter conditions

Do you really have to travel by car? You could:

- Consider delaying your trip until the weather and road conditions improve.
- Use alternative travel options where available.

### If you really have to travel by road, be prepared for severe conditions.

- Ensure your vehicle has a more than adequate supply of fuel for the journey. If possible keep your fuel tank full in winter.
- Check your emergency equipment.
- Allow extra time and drive with caution. Let someone know your route and when you expect to arrive.
- Check to see if there are any problems on your intended route before you leave.

### Driving in hazardous conditions

Remember the following serious hazards:

- Snow and ice will always be worse in mountainous areas and higher ground – try to route around such places.

- Information about road conditions, Incidents and other traffic related information is available on the NZTA Website <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/traffic-and-travel-information/>
- If you do not know your route, and are using SatNav/GPS, be sure it does not bring you over a dangerous route, such as across mountainous terrain or along narrow back-roads, which may be hazardous due to snow and ice. Look for alternative route if there is none, consider staying back in accommodation until the weather conditions clear up and it is safe to travel by road.
- Hail is probably the greatest winter hazard for the driver: even if the road is salted hail will stay on the road. Be aware of weather forecasts indicating the possibility of hail. If you do encounter hail slow down but try not to brake
- Beware of high sided vehicles in strong winds, particularly when overtaking. If you are driving a high sided vehicle try to anticipate exposed sections of roadway where winds will be stronger
- Beware of fallen trees or other debris.
- Never drive through flooded roads. They could be deeper than you think. Find an alternative route.
- Always follow local authority road signs advising of a road closure or detour.
- Leaving your vehicle is dangerous, wear a high visibility jacket and use your hazard lights to enable other traffic to avoid collision with your vehicle.

### **Winter Driving (NZTA) - <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/traffic-and-travel-information/>**

#### What should I do on the road?

- Drive slower than you normally would – it only takes a split second to lose control in wet or icy conditions.
- Avoid sudden braking or turning movements that could cause you to skid.
- Accelerate smoothly and brake gently.
- Use your highest gear when travelling uphill and your lowest downhill.
- For vehicles without anti-skid braking systems, to avoid skidding or sliding pump the brake pedal in short rapid bursts rather than pressing long and hard.
- Drive at a safe travelling distance because it takes longer to stop on slippery roads. In winter, especially in poor weather, double the two-second rule and leave a safe distance between you and the car you're following.
- When travelling in fog, rain or snow, drive with your lights dipped for increased safety.

#### **What about four wheel drive (4WD) vehicles?**

While 4WDs do have better forward traction and provide good grip, your ability to drive in adverse weather, drive to the conditions, and follow the winter driving tips above still apply to all vehicles.

#### What about ice and snow?

- Take care in shaded areas caused by high banks and tall trees where roads freeze sooner, and ice may not thaw during the day.
- Bridges may also stay slippery for longer than other road surfaces, so slow down when crossing them.
- Frost is more severe at daybreak, so be prepared for this. While it may not be frosty at 6am, it could be an hour or two later.

## **Watch out for maintenance vehicles**

There could be winter maintenance vehicles on the highway helping to keep the road open. If you come across any of these vehicles, stay a safe distance behind them and do not pass unless you're instructed to.

Our winter maintenance crews constantly update highway conditions as closures occur and conditions change. They have the most up-to-date information and experienced knowledge of their region, so please always follow their instructions and advice.

Is information available when I'm travelling?

Electronic message signs are available at roadsides across the country, providing up-to-date warnings to drivers on current conditions.

These may warn of road closures, ice, snow or other related information. The messages on these signs are changed remotely and will be blank when there are no restrictions.

Many radio broadcasts will also provide road condition bulletins, so listen to your local station for updates.

Anti-icing material spread on roads

Grit and an anti-icing agent called CMA is spread or sprayed on some roads to help travel in icy conditions. This isn't a guarantee you can drive at normal speeds so please keep your speed down.

If there is grit on the highway, drive on it where possible and not in a wheel track to maximise its effect.

Remember to drive to the conditions. The speed at which ice and snow can occur means that there will be times when grit and CMA have not yet been spread.

## **Always remember.**

- Drive to the conditions.
- Allow greater following distances on frosty and wet days.
- Be prepared for any delays – dress for the conditions, have warm blankets, bottled water and emergency rations in your vehicle.
- Obey emergency road closed signs and barriers.
- Follow the directions of any road patrol or police officer.
- Avoid towing in icy conditions.
- Road closures and restrictions are put in place for the safety of road users like you and the staff who work on them. It is against the law to drive on a closed highway. If you choose to ignore closures or restrictions, you do so at your own risk and it voids your insurance.

## **If things go wrong**

- In the event of an emergency, dial 111.
- For mechanical breakdowns, contact your breakdown service provider.
- If you want to report or check current road conditions on the state highway

- call 0800 4 HIGHWAYS (0800 44 44 49)
- check online at [www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz)(external link)
- If you do get stuck, stay with the vehicle and keep everyone warm until help arrives.
- If you are involved in a crash, tell the police even if no one is injured. This type of information helps us to make improvements to the road where necessary.

## Preparing Your Business for Severe Weather

Every business has several challenges to overcome to ensure business continuity in the event of severe weather. Preparation is key to minimising disruption during such events.

More information on Business Continuity Planning can be found on NZ Civil Defence website <https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/exercises/exercisetangaroa2016/business-continuity-management/>.

### Practical considerations on how a severe weather event can affect operations include:

#### Impact on Place of Business

- Consider how various severe weather scenarios can affect the place of work, that is, the site and buildings.
- Is the location or access to it at risk of flooding?
- Are access points liable to difficulties, for example, access roads positioned on a slope at risk of ice?
- Are water pipes insulated (including in and around vacant buildings)?
- Ensure that the business has information and contact details regarding key services including local authorities.
- Review insurance cover and contact insurance advisors in relation to any concern a business may have.

#### Impact on workers

- Consider the potential impact because of workers being unable to attend the place of work.
- Consider how alternative work practices could minimise disruption, for example, teleworking, shift-work and consider how the Human Resource Management practices in the business can cater for disruption.
- Consider what additional measures need to be taken to ensure workers can work safely, while at work
- Ensure the business has up-to-date worker contact details and a communications plan.
- Ensure that management responsibility is clearly assigned for planning and preparing; identify business critical roles and develop plans for ensuring continuity.

#### Impact on Customers

- Consider how customers may be impacted upon.
- Consider the business impact because of lower customers.
- Consider alternative means to serving customers and what strategies can be employed to minimise disruption, for example, online commerce.
- Have in place a communications plan for customers.
- Consider how customer safety can be assured within the public areas of the business.
- Assess how surrounding pavements and access points can be cleared in the event of snow and ice and prepare for suitable equipment being available.

#### Impact on Suppliers

- Consider the impact of a disruption to supplies and review stock levels.
- Liaise with key suppliers and assess their preparedness in the event of severe weather affecting their businesses.
- Consider especially time-sensitive supplies.
- Consider alternative transportation routes and logistics channels.
- Consider safety of suppliers of goods and services, which may entail access to less frequented areas of premises.

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New Zealand Transport Association (NZTA):

- <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/traffic-and-travel-information/>
- <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/driving-safely/driving-to-the-conditions/winter-driving>

SiteSafe NZ:

- <https://www.sitesafe.org.nz/guides--resources/practical-safety-advice/working-in-winter/>

National Emergency Management Agency NZ:

- <https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/exercises/exercisetangaroa2016/business-continuity-management/>

Government of Ireland, Be Winter Ready:

- <https://www.winterready.ie/en>