



COVID-19

Checklist of actions

Be clear on Health and Safety responsibilities

As employers there is a duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees at work in the business. Employees also have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety so that their own actions or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons. Coronavirus (COVID-19) has to be considered in light of these obligations.

Keep up to date with information

There is a considerable amount of information available (and it is evolving quickly). It is important to keep up to date with developments using websites you trust. Excellent sites in NZ include Worksafe and the Ministry of Health. Outside of NZ the World Health Organisation provides regular updates.

Deal with early risks

- Remind employees about requirements around personal hygiene
- Track individual travel both personal and work related to identify risk. Be clear about what will happen regarding isolation if someone knowingly goes to a high-risk area
- Advise employees if they are unwell not to come to work

It pays to have standard documentation, such as travel forms and policies. These policies need to be regularly updated and communicated. Contact us if you need assistance with this.

Review employment agreements

It is important to remind yourself what provisions you have in your employment agreements around sick leave and business continuity. This will help identify what options you have and assist your planning. You may need advice to clarify the implications of the wording of these policies.

Now, for tomorrow

Leave

Identify annual and sick leave balances for all employees, so you know immediately what situations might apply to individuals if they become sick or have to be isolated.

Isolation

Determine your approach to isolation issues. These could include:

- Allowing the person to work from home – this is the ideal situation as work continues and you do not need to consider leave arrangements
- Giving the person sick leave if they are sick or they are required to look after a dependent who is sick (if they have sick leave available)
- If sick leave is exhausted, allowing the person to take annual leave if they request this (you cannot require them to do this)

Work through various scenarios around how you would manage leave.

There are a range of legal opinions on whether you should pay or not pay employees who are either forced into self-isolation or choose to self-isolate. If you consider not paying employees who are in isolation you should seek legal advice.

Plan your communications

It is important to communicate regularly to employees while making it clear that as circumstances change this may affect how you respond. Communications should be timely and easy to understand. It is important to consult and keep employees informed.

Business Continuity

1. Discuss with third party providers what steps they have in place if the virus escalates

As part of your business continuity planning identify areas of your business which would be impacted by a supplier or other third party not being able to provide services/ supplies over a two-week period. Clarify what processes/plans they have in place to ensure your business is unaffected or the impact is reduced.

2. Remote working

Identify early the ability for employees to work remotely. Who can, what requirements are needed, and what gaps exist. You could assess your on-line systems by having all key employees test your applications on working devices from home.

3. Employee Contact Details

Ensure you have up-to-date contact details for all employees so you can communicate with them outside of work. This might be necessary to organise return to work and monitoring the health status of employees.

Advice

At this stage it is recommended employers treat issues related to the COVID-19 on a case by case basis. This gives employers flexibility to adjust their responses as we become clearer on the implications of the spread of the virus.

DISCLAIMER: The information given in this checklist is provided as a guideline and has not been prepared with regards to the specific needs of the individual business. No liability is assumed by Baker Tilly Staples Rodway for any losses suffered by any person relying directly or indirectly upon the content of this checklist. It is recommended that you consult your advisor before acting on this information.

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