

## COVID-19 Operational personnel medical assessment – high risk individuals

### When to use

Use this process to determine whether operational personnel with underlying health or medical conditions need to self-isolate, or whether they can remain on operational duty during the COVID-19 pandemic. These individuals are at high risk of poor outcomes if infected with COVID-19

### Introduction

The intent of this process is to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of our personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst maintaining the necessary operational capability to support our communities.

This process will help determine whether operational personnel with underlying health/medical conditions, (conditions) need to self- isolate, or whether they are able to remain on operational duty.

Some people may have an underlying condition, but may be able to continue working (e.g. where there is a history of controlled management of that condition).

To evaluate the risk of continuing to work we have developed a confidential assessment process. co-ordinated through an independent organisation, Vitality Works.

Vitality Works will assess if the person with underlying conditions is safe to continue work. This is based on a risk assessment model developed by the Ministry of Health which is then tailored to for the individual's underlying conditions and how they relate to COVID-19 risk factors.

### Important notes

This is a **confidential voluntary** process. The information collected will only be used to consider any risks related to continuing to work during the COVID pandemic.

The result will be a yes or no answer as to whether that person is able to continue operational duty

Management will not receive any medical information or details about an individual's risk assessment, apart from the yes or no answer.

### Role

People who need to read this document are:

- Managers of operational personnel. This may mean:
  - Chief Fire Officer or Controller
  - Area Manager or Assistant Area Manager
  - Principal Rural Fire Officer or Deputy PRFO.
- People who have an underlying health or medical condition and choose to have an assessment. Add high risk ops and conditions

## Underlying medical/health conditions recommended for assessment.

- Heart disease (angina, heart valve problem, heart failure, previous heart surgery, heart attack)
- Lung disease (asthma, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, recurrent pneumonia of chest infection)
- Diabetes (both type 1 and type 2)
- Cerebrovascular disease (stroke, brain bleed, TIA)
- Conditions causing reduced immunity (HIV, cancers, autoimmune disease, recent chemotherapy/radiotherapy, immune deficiency conditions)
- Individuals on immunosuppressant medications, including long-term treatment with Oral steroids / prednisolone
- Liver or kidney disease
- Cancer
- Pregnancy

More detail relating to the assessment criteria and risk relative to the role people are in is contained in the [Risk assessment framework](#)

This contains valuable information that may, or may not be currently available to your GP through the Ministry of Health. If you choose to have your situation reviewed by your GP, rather than using this process, you may choose to make that information available to your GP to assist in their assessment.

## Assessment Process outline

This process is voluntary and is designed for:

### Category A:

Any **operational personnel** who **have an underlying medical/health condition**, and who are still currently responding for operational duty.

If you fall under this category, we ask that you discuss with management, whether you should stand down during this assessment process which will take between 1 to 4 days (noting high volume might see initial delays).

Depending on the context, 'manager or management' may mean:

- Chief Fire Officer or Controller
- Area Manager or Assistant Area Manager
- Principal Rural Fire officer or Deputy PRFO

**Note:** Staff may also wish to seek guidance or support from their relevant union or association

### Category B:

Any **operational personnel** who have **already stood down** because they have previously disclosed underlying medical/health conditions

Reviewing your situation through this process, if you choose to do so, will enable you to have an assessment carried out based on the newly developed risk assessment model. This will confirm whether your condition fits in the 'safe to work' category.

This process is not necessary for people over 70 as the government has classified them as vulnerable and asked them to stay home.

This assessment process and its outcome will **only** be used in relation to assessment for ability to work safely during the COVID pandemic.

## Steps to get an assessment

1. Applicants complete the [online medical self-assessment form](#), which is sent to Vitality Works. Alternatively, applicants can submit a scanned/photo of a completed form to [karen.dickinson@vitalityworks.co.nz](mailto:karen.dickinson@vitalityworks.co.nz)
2. Vitality Works will remove all personal identifying information (e.g. name, location, station, phone number, address, etc.), assign a unique identifying number and send the form to Fire and Emergency.
3. The anonymised form, (no names or identify location information), will then be provided to the Fire and Emergency National Medical Officer (NMO). The NMO will make an assessment against the risk assessment model using the information provided by you.
4. A decision on suitability to continue will then be sent back to Vitality Works. Vitality Works will then match the unique identifying number with the individual details, and advise the applicant and their manager of the Yes / No decision.
5. Apart from the decision, no other details will be provided to either the manager or the individual. If the individual wants to seek further information about the outcome of their assessment, they can request this through Vitality Works, ([karen.dickinson@vitalityworks.co.nz](mailto:karen.dickinson@vitalityworks.co.nz)), or go directly to their own GP for further assistance and advice. If seeking a GP support:
  - a. contact your GP to make an appointment, make sure you tell them this is a medical review so they allocate enough time for this. Tell them you will supply:
    - i. a copy of your medical self-assessment, ( you can get this by contacting [karen.dickinson@vitalityworks.co.nz](mailto:karen.dickinson@vitalityworks.co.nz)
    - ii. a copy of the [Risk assessment framework](#)
  - b. once you have your GPs decision, any further discussion should be with your manager
6. In the event of a decision that a person should not be responding, the individual and their manager can then discuss next steps:
  - c. this discussion could include leave arrangements, well-being support options, or return to work following the lowering of restrictions.
  - d. You may also wish to seek guidance or support from their relevant union or association.

Depending on the context, 'manager or management' may mean:

- Chief Fire Officer or Controller
- Area Manager or Assistant Area Manager
- Principal Rural Fire officer or Deputy PRFO

### NOTES:

Applicants can **choose** to contact the Injury Management Unit, (IMU), for rehabilitation support if they wish. The Fire and Emergency IMU will not automatically be involved.

Involving the IMU, if you choose to do so, **will not** detract from the confidentiality of the information and **will not** make the information available for use for any other purpose.

### Document information

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### Record of amendments

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13 August 2020	Links updated
07 April 2020	Initial version