

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Updated 15 April 2020

Physical distancing in orchards or packhouses

Physical distancing is about keeping a safe distance away from others. Within the workplace it is important to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In accordance with Ministry of Health guidance and MPI advice, every workplace should strive for a minimum physical distancing of 2 metres.

Physical distancing applies to all employees at all times including:

- While completing work tasks
- During break and lunch times
- Within office facilities

Physical distance is measured head to head (not shoulder to shoulder or hand to hand)

Workers that must operate between 1 and 2 metres must implement additional risk mitigation measures i.e. PPE (masks and gloves), physical barriers.

Work stations spaced less than 1 metre apart are only acceptable if they are critical for business function and no alternative measures can be implemented, these must be separated by a physical barrier placed in between workers. The screen must be:

- fixed in place or fully-supported
- large enough that the minimum face to face distance between workers above, below or around the screen is 1 metre
- where the facility has circulating air flow or additional fans, the screen should not lead to increased air funnelling between work stations.

Where an alternative mechanism to minimise risk where workstations are spaced less than 1 metre apart, a request can be made to MPI on a case by case basis that the spacing is critical to continuing operations.

RSE workers and physical distancing

The RSE workforce live in shared accommodation. Therefore, it is not feasible to enforce physical distancing between individuals.

A group that share accommodation effectively are a “household” and the household members make up an operational work team. Physical distancing should be implemented between work teams rather than individuals in this situation. However, individuals should endeavour to maintain 2 metres only interacting between 1 and 2 metres when necessary.

If RSE workers living in shared accommodation are separated into separate smaller “household bubbles” then those smaller ‘household bubbles’ should make up separate work teams. ‘Household bubbles’ should stay 2 metres away from other ‘household bubbles’ both at home and at work.

Orchards

To maintain physical distancing in orchards

- Establish work bubbles - with either functions spread across roles to reduce staff density on site, or with all members of the bubble doing the same task.
- Maintain a register of who is in each work bubble – for contact tracking.
- Identify work bubbles – for example use colour codes as arm bands, vests or stickers.
- Maintain 2 metre distance from other individuals and work bubbles at all times.
- Working bubbles should not be combined to complete a task, they will always operate as a separate team.

Packhouses

To maintain physical distancing in packhouses

- A physical distance of 2 metres should be maintained between individuals at all times.
- Adjust shifts and roster patterns to reduce the number of workers on site at one time.
- Establish work bubbles - with either functions spread across roles to reduce staff density on site, or with all members of the bubble doing the same task.
- Maintain a register of who is in each work bubble – for contact tracking.
- Where there are permanent workstations e.g. packing line stations, consider physically marking a 2 metre exclusion zone with tape, spray paint or barriers.
- Create 'walkways' so that staff are separated when moving through and around the work area.
- Create separate entry and exit zones for shared areas to prevent unnecessary interaction.

If 2 metre physical distancing cannot be achieved

Where 2 metre physical distancing cannot be achieved, people within a work bubble may interact within 1-2m if additional measures are put in place. These could include:

- The task is undertaken by members within a work bubble from the same household bubble.
- Workers complete the task while aligned side to side and forward facing to minimise droplet spread from sneezing and coughing.
- Additional PPE is worn (e.g face mask) with correct procedures for use and disposal.
- Screens placed between workers. Screens must be able to be cleaned.
- A minimum of 1 metre separation is required at all times.

Work stations spaced less than 1 metre apart are only acceptable if they are critical for business function and no alternatives measures can be implemented, these must be separated by a physical barrier placed in between workers. Technical specifications have yet to be finalised or approved at this time. NZAPI will update this section shortly.

To maintain physical distancing during lunch and breaks

To help maintain physical distancing during lunch and breaks:

- Take breaks as a work bubble.
- Stagger different work bubbles' break times or have different locations.
- Reducing chairs in breakrooms and physically mark out 2 metres separation.
- Create separate entry and exit zones to minimise interaction in break areas or toilets.