



MANAGING COVID - CUSTOMS VACCINATION POLICY

Introduction

1. Our priority is that we keep our people safe and well.
2. A safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is a vital part of how Customs will protect the health and wellbeing of our people and other New Zealanders who we serve.
3. The goal of the New Zealand Government is to ensure that all those who can be vaccinated, are up to date vaccinated. The final decision on vaccination rests with the individual.

Purpose

4. The purpose of this policy is to set out Customs' approach to COVID-19 vaccination in line with Customs Health and Safety Risk Assessment.
5. This Policy supplements Customs' and individuals' obligations under COVID-19 Orders and the COVID-19 Protection Framework. This assessment is based on the assumption of highly transmissible variants, community transmission and COVID-19 now being established in the community.
6. This policy works alongside all of Customs' other infection prevention and control measures to reduce the risk of exposure of COVID-19.
7. This version of the policy was adopted in August 2022 following review and revision of the Customs Health and Safety Risk Assessment. It reflects the context in place in August 2022.

Health & Safety Risk Assessment – Transmission of COVID-19 in the Workplace

8. This policy will be reviewed if there are changes to the Health and Safety Risk Assessment that impact our controls around vaccination, and/or when additional advice/guidance is received from the Ministry of Health.
9. Customs' risk assessment is dynamic and will be revised if the situation changes, for example, the emergence of a new variant or a significant change to recommended public health management of the virus. In addition, the risk assessment could be altered if other controls become available.
10. Customs has assessed the risk and impact of a COVID-19 infection for all of our people based on a highly transmissible variant and widespread community transmission. The most recent assessment upon which has informed this version of the policy was completed in August 2022.
11. We have identified work tasks that involve contact with others, the most credible worst-case scenario associated with the risk of infection with COVID-19, and the likelihood of transmitted infection occurring and it leading to that consequence.

12. We have assessed inherent risk (before controls), residual risk with current controls (vaccination status unknown), and how having all Customs staff vaccinated would affect the risk rating.
13. Customs' health and safety risk assessment identifies different risks for different types of work within Customs. Staff who's work remains at the Border in contact with international travellers continue to face the potential risk of exposure to new variants as well as current variants. Although it is also now possible that new variants will have entered the country undetected until in the community, Customs considers it necessary to maintain the level of protection that vaccination affords for staff working at the Border at this point in time. The staff that carry out this work were previously subject to the COVID-19 (Public Health) Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021. For all other work, the risk of transmissibility is no higher in the workplace than in the community.
14. The justification for requiring vaccination in a workplace is stronger when the risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 at work is higher than it is in the community.
15. Ministry of Health advice shows that for other workers that have not been subject to the Vaccinations Order the primary risk of transmission for COVID-19 Omicron variant is now from close contact in the home environment. Given the high vaccination rates both in the community and within our workplace, and the high immunity levels now achieved by those who have recovered from Omicron, unvaccinated individuals in roles that have not been subject to the Vaccinations Order do not present a material risk to others in the workplace, as long as all other controls are adhered to.
16. The evidence continues to show that full vaccination has a strong impact on an individual's resilience against severe illness from COVID-19. In line with Te Kawa Mataaho Workforce Guidance, Customs is committed to 'educate, expect, and support' our people to be up to date vaccinated, as a personal choice.

Policy Statement

17. This policy is based on:

a. Customs' values



- b. information provided by the Ministry of Health on the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine and other approved vaccines
- c. the health, safety and wellbeing of Customs people
- d. Customs' COVID-19 Health and Safety Risk Assessment as at August 2022, and
- e. Customs' obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

Border workers

18. Although the Vaccinations Order no longer applies to Customs' Tier 1 workers, Customs requires as a matter of policy those workers in roles that were previously covered by the Vaccinations Order to remain up to date vaccinated.

Individuals that have never been covered by the Vaccinations Order

19. Customs continues to encourage and support all staff members to be up to date vaccinated.
20. For all other individuals that have never been covered by the Vaccinations Order (including employees and contractors with organisational clearances as at the date of this policy), a COVID 19 vaccination will not be necessary to be able to enter Customs sites. To avoid doubt, any individuals undertaking work that was previously subject to the Vaccinations Order (even if this is infrequent or one-off) must be up to date vaccinated.
21. Contractors without organisational clearance and visitors accessing Customs sites will not be required to verify vaccination status. Instead, on each visit, they must declare their health status (feeling well, no COVID-19 symptoms, no positive household close contacts) to the Customs manager or staff member whom they are working for or visiting and must comply with all mandatory mask wearing, hygiene and other protective practices and protocols that Customs has in place at the time of the visit. These contractors and visitors should be advised, prior to attending, by the relevant Customs manager or staff member that they should not attend a Customs site if they are feeling unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms or have positive household close contacts.
22. Outside of Customs' sites, staff members should be aware of vaccination policies of any stakeholder premises that we attend. Any staff member engaging outside of Customs sites should ensure they are aware of, and compliant with, any vaccination requirements that may be in place outside of Customs.
23. Any staff required to travel internationally on Customs business are required to be up to date vaccinated.

New staff

24. Customs requires all new staff (and new contractors with organisational clearance and a requirement to attend the workplace) to be up to date with the latest vaccine and booster shots advised by MoH as a condition of employment. The intent is to maintain Customs' high level of staff immunity.
25. This policy may be relaxed where a new employee cannot medically have their next dose because they are within 90 days of having COVID-19. Customs' clear requirement is that the new employee receives their next dose when medically able.

Implementation of this policy

26. Current staff who are unvaccinated, and who are not required to be vaccinated under this policy, will be contacted by the People and Capability team and, with the support of managers and people leaders, re-integrated into the workplace utilising our tried and proven protective practices.
27. The coming months will continue to see a range of transition points as New Zealand moves through this phase of the pandemic. The COVID-19 Protection Framework will also transition as the latest variant peaks and troughs. We need to be able to maintain the level of immunity protection we have secured to date.
28. In addition, we must also remain agile enough to respond to other variants of interest should they arise and to move through the challenges of the coming winter and onwards

29. We also wish to be responsive to the change in our overall population immunity. This means retaining the practices we know to be highly protective balanced with the requirement and desire to bring our staff back into their work environments and teams.
30. In good faith, Customs will ensure that staff have opportunities to respond to any proposed changes to their employment and their feedback will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made. If Customs is unable to find a solution, there may be a need to consider termination of employment. This, however, would be the last resort after a robust consultation process.
31. This version of the policy takes effect from 23 August 2022

Special leave

32. Special leave is available for all staff to obtain a vaccination or, in the event staff feel unwell after a vaccination, to allow time to rest and recover. Special leave is also available for staff to have a consultation with their general medical practitioner, paid for by Customs, to discuss any concerns they may have about the vaccine.

Exemptions

33. It is unlikely that exemptions will be granted on any grounds, however an exemption can be requested and each individual's situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Comptroller consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Review of Customs COVID-19 Risk Assessment and Policy

34. Customs' Risk Assessment is dynamic and, due to the current environment and the pace of change, the risk assessment will be regularly reviewed.
35. This policy will be regularly reviewed. The next review will be no later than November 2022.

Roles and Responsibilities

NZ Customs Service

36. Comply with all required public health and social measures of the COVID-19 response while continuing to provide public services for all of New Zealand.
37. Ensure compliance with all related legislative mandates.
38. Develop and maintain a COVID-19 Health and Safety Risk Assessment.
39. Continue to educate and engage with staff and their unions to support and encourage staff to be vaccinated.
40. Require visitors, contractors, and other third parties, including government agencies, to meet specified health and safety standards to enter Customs' workplaces
41. Protect the communities that Customs interacts with, while ensuring New Zealanders can access the services they need, in line with the COVID-19 Protection Framework.
42. Ensure that other health and safety controls are in place in Customs' sites

Staff

43. All staff and any other people working at a Customs' site are required to comply with this policy.
44. All staff and any other people working at a Customs' site are required to follow other health and safety measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19.

Managers and people leaders

45. Ensure their staff fully understand the requirements of this policy.
46. Acknowledge and support staff who may require more information and time to make an informed decision on getting up to date vaccination.
47. Support staff's choice of vaccination provider such as their own doctor.

People and Capability Group

48. As the policy owner, review this policy as and when required to ensure it complies with good practice and is fit for purpose. The next review will be no later than July 2022.
49. Ensure vaccine status information is collected, stored and used in accordance with Customs' obligations under the Privacy Act 2020.
50. Educate, expect and support staff to be vaccinated.
51. Ensure all new appointment documentation is amended to reflect the revised policy requirements.

Definitions

'Up to date' vaccinated

The latest worldwide data and research, particularly with regard to the Omicron variant, shows full vaccination is required to achieve the highest level of ongoing risk reduction, particularly against serious illness. Up to date vaccination means receiving all approved vaccine doses within the timeframes as recommended by the Ministry of Health. This includes 3rd (booster) doses and any subsequent recommended doses.

Customs' site:

Means any building and its immediate surrounds where the entry is controlled by Customs. This includes all Customhouses, and operational locations solely occupied by Customs (for example, Air Cargo Inspection Facility and Sea Cargo Inspection Facility). Where Customs shares a building, the Customs' site is the area of the building that Customs has exclusive rights of occupation over. Customs' site also includes any Customs' vehicles and craft.

Approved Vaccines:

For the purposes of this policy, vaccines must be from the Ministry of Health list of approved courses. This list can be found here -

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/my-covid-record-proof-vaccination-status/covid-19-overseas-vaccinations-and-certificates#approved-vaccines>.

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Owner	DCE People and Capability
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