



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



No Runnin' the Lights!

New Zealand moved into the “[traffic lights](#)”-based COVID-19 Protection Framework on Friday December 3, marking a significant evolution from elimination to containment in the Government’s COVID-19 response.

A statement on the official COVID-19 website on November 29 noted the next phase was being launched as a “significant portion of the team of five million” had been vaccinated, with numbers continuing to rise, and rollout of booster shots having also commenced.

“We have prepared well for this moment by maintaining a cautious approach focused on protecting people and their jobs,” read the statement.

“Our next phase is focused on minimising the impact of COVID-19 and protecting people.

“We have come through the past two years of COVID in better shape than nearly anywhere in the world, with the lowest case and death rates in the OECD, a growing economy and among the highest rates of vaccination in the world.”

The statement noted the “certainty and stability” provided by the traffic lights would replace the sudden lockdowns and restrictions of the previous Alert Levels-based strategy.

“Our schools will stay open at every colour and businesses will have protection through My Vaccine Passes to keep operating.

“Other than the existing Auckland boundary, which lifts on January 17, there will be no new restrictions on travel between regions.

“Vaccinated New Zealanders using vaccine passes will be able to do many of the things that were previously treated as high risk like safely going to bars and restaurants, getting a haircut, and going to a concert or the gym. In Auckland, it means seeing friends and family indoors again.”

The three levels entail:

- Red – action is deemed necessary to protect vulnerable communities and the country’s health system from COVID-19
- Orange – there will be community transmission, presenting increasing risks to vulnerable communities and pressure on the health system
- Green – there is limited community transmission and the health system is deemed able to respond

As can be viewed on the “[traffic light map](#)”, New Zealand was split into either Red and Orange zones at the time of writing.

“Red is the highest setting in the new system, which is why Auckland has moved in at Red as the epicentre of the current outbreak, and we have taken strong account of vaccination rates and vulnerable populations in the other regions at Red,” continued the website statement.

“Red provides extra protections against COVID-19 such as requiring both vaccine passes and some capacity limits in the most-high risk settings — that is because if someone has COVID-19, the virus will find it harder to spread among fewer people who are at a distance.

“As we see what happens to cases and vaccination levels we can look to move regions down to Orange over time, where there are no gathering limits for those who are using vaccine passes.

“We are not moving any regions to Green immediately while we continue to get vaccination rates up and transition the country to the new framework.”

An update posted on December 13 advised that as from 11.59pm on Thursday December 30, the following regions would move to Orange:

- Auckland
- Taupō and Rotorua Lakes Districts
- Kawerau
- Whakatane
- Ōpōtiki Districts
- Gisborne District
- Wairoa District
- Rangitikei, Whanganui and Ruapehu Districts

Northland is to remain at Red at that time.

The traffic light map is to be updated from 11:59pm on December 30, with the next review of settings to then take place in the week of January 17, 2022.

Travel to New Zealand

New Zealand’s borders are currently closed to many travellers as a means of containing the spread of COVID-19. Most people who are not New Zealand citizens or residents must get approval from [Immigration NZ](#) before travelling to New Zealand.

Fully-vaccinated New Zealanders and “other eligible travellers” will soon be permitted to travel to New Zealand from Australia without staying in official, managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ).

The Government’s pending “three-step plan” for reopening the borders entails:

1. from 11:59pm, January 16 – opening to fully-vaccinated New Zealand citizens and residence-class visa holders and other travellers eligible under current settings from Australia (provided they have been in Australia or New Zealand for the past 14 days)
2. from 11:59pm, February 13 – opening to fully-vaccinated New Zealand citizens and residence-class visa holders and other travellers eligible under current settings, from all but very-high-risk countries
3. from April 30 onwards – opening to fully-vaccinated foreign nationals (possibly staged by visa category)

However, all travellers who do not have to enter MIQ will still require each of:

- a negative pre-departure test
- proof of being fully vaccinated
- a passenger declaration about travel history

- a day zero/one test on arrival
- a requirement to self-isolate for seven days
- a final negative test before entering the community

Public Reaction

The Government's calls on the traffic light settings as well as strategy on reopening the borders have drawn polarised reactions from the nation.

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