

Essential business in the building and construction sector

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Building and construction work that meets the Government definition of an essential service is exempt from the COVID-19 Alert Level restrictions.

Find out what work is deemed essential in the building and construction sector.

For general information relating to COVID-19, please visit the New Zealand Government's [COVID-19 website \(https://covid19.govt.nz/\)](https://covid19.govt.nz/)



Essential business definition

Building and construction work can only be completed if it meets the Government definition of an essential service.

The Government defines essential business in the building and construction sector as:

- any entity involved in building and construction related to essential services and critical infrastructure, including those in the supply and support chain
- any entity involved in any work required to address immediate health or life safety risks, or to prevent serious environmental harm, and relevant essential supply chain elements
- any entity with statutory responsibilities or that is involved in building and resource consenting necessary for the above purposes.

This means your business may be essential if it provides one of the following essential services.

Essential services

Essential services in the building and construction sector include:

- Building and construction required immediately to:
 - maintain human health and safety
 - avoid significant environmental harm.
- Work required for critical infrastructure, for example electricity, gas, water and waste water (sanitation).
- Work required for [essential services \(https://covid19.govt.nz/businesses-and-employees/businesses-and-services/essential-businesses-and-services/\)](https://covid19.govt.nz/businesses-and-employees/businesses-and-services/essential-businesses-and-services/), for example food processing, food distribution, supermarkets, dairies and pharmacies.
- Regulatory service in relation to building consenting, compliance and resource consenting necessary for essential services outlined above.
- Supply of products and materials necessary for essential services outlined above.

The situation is often changing, so you may not be clear on whether your business is essential. Some businesses will be deemed essential for a short period of time while supporting other essential businesses or while carrying out an essential service.

Deciding whether a service is essential

To decide whether the service you are planning to provide, or need to have carried out is essential, you should apply the essential business definition.

The responsibility is on the person carrying out the building or construction work to ensure that the work they are completing meets the essential business definition.

If you supply products or materials, you need to take steps to ensure they are being used for an essential service or activity. For more information see:

[Retailer and supplier information \(https://www.building.govt.nz/covid-19/retailer-and-supplier-information/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/covid-19/retailer-and-supplier-information/)

Questions to ask yourself

To help you identify work that meets the essential business definition, ask yourself the following questions:

1a) Is the work required for [essential services \(https://covid19.govt.nz/businesses-and-employees/businesses-and-services/essential-businesses-and-services/\)](https://covid19.govt.nz/businesses-and-employees/businesses-and-services/essential-businesses-and-services/) or critical infrastructure, including those in the supply and support chain?

1b) Is the work required immediately to ensure health, safety and wellbeing of people, or avoid significant environmental harm?

2) Is the work you are performing the bare minimum required to meet the criteria above?

If you answered yes to both of these questions, your work may be considered essential, however it is important to assess your specific situation and satisfy yourself that the criteria in the Government definition of essential business has been met.

Non-urgent work must wait

If your work is not essential or you're unsure if it's essential, you should defer the work to when the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. New Zealand needs to restrict movement and human contact as much possible to slow the spread of the virus.

Examples of essential vs non-essential work

The table below outlines some examples of essential work and non-essential work for the building and construction sector. This list does not apply to work for essential services or critical infrastructure.

Occupation	Examples of essential work	Non-essential work
Plumbing	The repair or replacement of a failed hot water cylinder required for sanitation purposes. The unblocking and repair or replacement of sanitary waste or water supply pipes.	Replacing tap washers. Replacement of sanitary fixtures that are working.
Electrical work	The repair or replacement of electrical installations or equipment that provide heating and hot water. The repair or replacement of security alarms.	Routine servicing of non-essential equipment or infrastructure. Providing electrical connections for household dishwashers, sound systems.
Fire service technicians	Remediating a defect for a fire alarm or sprinkler in an occupied building. Responding to a request from FENZ to attend a system during an emergency call out.	Testing fire alarm systems in an unoccupied building.
Building work	Securing a structure to prevent collapse e.g. placing supports under structural beams tying beams in. Tying down a roof where there is significant risk of uplift. Repairing damage to a building that prevents the occupants from having a dry warm environment. Installing heating in an occupied building where no sufficient heating source currently exists.	Installing interior linings. Pouring a concrete slab. Roof or cladding maintenance to prevent leaks. Upgrading an existing and functioning heating system.
General	The repair of building elements that effect the security of a building such as	Painting or plastering.

repairs Occupation	broken windows, external doors, window frames. Examples of essential work	Non-essential work
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New Zealand Government

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