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Released by: Dom Kalasih

COVID-19 VACCINATION UPDATE

Purpose

The purpose of this Advisory is to clarify our position on mandatory vaccination, and provide feedback on road safety and good practice.

Clarification on Transporting New Zealand position on Covid-19 vaccination

Following my Advisory last week, [DK-27 Covid Vaccination Update](#), we have fielded questions from members regarding whether we are formally requesting Government to mandate vaccination.

We are neither recommending or promoting that Government mandate vaccination of the freight industry. Our position is based on science, facts, and includes the Director General of Health Dr Ashely Bloomfield's recently given public view: *"There is a low likelihood of transmission from someone who might be driving a truck out of Auckland and coming back, especially if they are on a regular testing regime"*.

We are concerned at the risk of procrastination and rather than rely on others to instruct our people what to do, we would like to remind you that as employers, under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA), you already have a current obligation in law to assess the risk to health and safety that Covid-19 represents in your workplace to your workers and visitors to your workplace.

We recommend you complete a risk assessment for your business. The level of risk will depend on the possibility of exposure to Covid-19 and may vary across your employees depending on their roles, and it also applies to people visiting your site. The risk controls you choose to apply, such as, but not limited to, scanning in to the workplace, physical distancing, PPE, vaccination and testing, should be underpinned and driven by the risk assessment.

We also recommend you consider undertaking a risk assessment of the impacts of vaccination and testing on your business continuity, which should include you considering how to manage:

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- a) the scenario where you have staff that choose not to be vaccinated and cannot be redeployed to an activity where the risk to their wellbeing can be managed appropriately, then the future of those workers and the impact losing workers will have on your ability to conduct your business
- b) demands from your clients in regard to information about the vaccination status of drivers, and/or requiring you drivers to be vaccinated.

In the event Government did decide to mandate driver vaccination, then we would advise members they need to comply, as we would with any other regulatory requirement.

In the meantime, we await the law changes the Government has signalled will be rolled out to allow for mandatory vaccination in some sectors, including guidance on that and on employers' ability to keep vaccination records of staff.

General safety advice

Road safety behaviours

By and large, regardless of the respective Covid-19 Alert Level, road freight operations have continued to serve customers and keep driving our economy, albeit under a myriad of new requirements. This will unavoidably increase pressure, stress, and strain on our workforce and as a consequence, there is an increased risk to the safety and wellbeing of our people and the people we interact with.

Police are observing increasingly errant behaviour among drivers in the areas of: speed, cellphone use, seatbelt wearing, and drug and alcohol use. We know that if these areas are not well managed, then there is higher risk of crashes.

Please give consideration to whether you are doing enough to manage these areas currently, or let us know what help you need.

Public feedback

While they are relatively isolated incidents, we have noticed an increase in reports from members of the public regarding truck driving behaviour, and in particular Covid-19 related issues such as non-mask wearing. Where possible we follow up specific complaints directly with operators.

We believe our sector has been unfairly vilified in some media reports ([here](#)) by identifying truck drivers and unjustifiably identifying our sector as a source of Covid-19 transmission. We

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are challenging those claims however, we would also appreciate you helping us by ensuring your people are complying with good Covid-19 work practices, and that they are aware of, and prepared for feedback from the general public.

It is important to note, as an industry our response to Covid-19 management is based in science, advice from the Director General of Health and the Ministry of Health, and appropriate risk profiling, that is, what is the level of risk and what are the appropriate steps to manage that risk. We must stick to an evidence base, rather than fall prey to commentary on social media.

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