



Exceptions to border closure for 'other essential workers'

The New Zealand border is currently closed to almost all travellers to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

From 18 June 2020, the criteria changes for 'other essential workers' who may meet exceptions to the border closure.

The threshold for entry for Other Essential Workers remains very high, aimed at high value workers on projects of national or regional significance, and businesses should ensure no alternative options are available before applying.

Criteria from 18 June 2020 for 'other essential workers' who may meet exceptions to the border closure:

- For a short-term role (less than six months):
 - The worker must have unique experience and technical or specialist skills that are not obtainable in New Zealand, or
 - The work must be significant in terms of a major infrastructure project, or event of national or regional importance, or government approved programme, or in support of a government-to-government agreement, or have significant benefit to the national or regional economy, AND
 - The role must be time critical (eg if the person does not come to New Zealand, the project, work or event will cease or be severely compromised, or significant costs will be incurred),

- For a longer-term role (more than six months), the worker must:
 - meet one of the short-term criteria AND
 - earn twice the median salary (as an indicator of high skills), or
 - have a role that is essential for the completion or continuation of science programmes under a government funded or partially government-funded contract, including research and development exchanges and partnerships.
 - have a role that is essential for the delivery or execution of a government approved event, or programme that is of major significance to New Zealand.

An application to be determined as an 'essential worker' may also request approval for the worker's partner and dependent children. Anyone approved under the 'essential worker category must secure a place in managed isolation or quarantine for 14 days, and the costs of that managed isolation or quarantine are to be met by the employer or sponsoring agency, or the individual.

Visa requirements still apply.



Businesses need to be taking active steps to employ and upskill New Zealand workers for all types of roles wherever possible.

The Government is working on establishing a joined up approach to labour market planning which will see our workforce, education and immigration systems working together to better meet differing and changing skills needs across the country.

More information about border restrictions is available [on the INZ website](#).

Other essential worker request process

Requests for approval as an 'other essential worker' are considered on a case-by-case basis and will only be granted in very specific and limited circumstances. Holding an Essential Skills work visa is not sufficient to qualify as an 'other essential worker'.

Requests for approval as an 'other essential worker' must be submitted by employers or immigration professionals on behalf of the workers they are seeking exceptions for. Requests from individual workers will not be considered.

To make a request, employers should initially contact the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment at employerborderexceptions@mbie.govt.nz.

Workers whose employers receive approval for an exception for an 'other essential worker' will be contacted by Immigration New Zealand and invited to apply for a visa or variation of visa conditions to allow them to travel to New Zealand.

Approval for an exception does not guarantee that visas will be granted to the workers. Applicants must submit an application and must demonstrate they meet all criteria to be granted the relevant visa or variation of conditions.

Information employers should provide

The detail that employers will be expected to provide when making a request include:

- the name of the business and a summary of the work it undertakes, including which industry/sector it is a part of;
- a description of the role the worker would be undertaking;
- an explanation of why the role is essential to the business;
- comment on why the work cannot be done by a worker already in New Zealand;
- comment on why the work is time-critical, e.g. there is insufficient time to train a New Zealander to do the work;



- a description of why the work is of strategic economic importance to New Zealand;
- comment on how the business is currently managing without the worker and what will happen if the role is not filled, including discussing alternatives such as working remotely as an interim measure;
- how long the worker is required to be in New Zealand and what plans are in place for the worker to leave New Zealand when the work is completed; and
- whether partners or dependent children wish to travel to New Zealand with the worker and why (partners and dependent children will be approved by Ministers on a case-by-case basis).