

19 JANUARY 2021

Pre-departure testing extended to passengers to New Zealand



HON CHRIS HIPKINS

COVID-19 Response

(Hipkins, 2021a)

To further protect New Zealand from COVID-19, the Government is extending pre-departure testing to all passengers to New Zealand except from Australia, Antarctica and most Pacific Islands, COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said today.

"The change will come into force for all flights arriving in New Zealand after 11:59pm (NZT) on Monday 25 January, to minimise disruption for those passengers with imminent departures. Other countries will be considered for exclusion if their situations change.

"As we signalled last week, given the high rates of infection in many countries, most global air routes are of critical concern for the foreseeable future," Chris Hipkins said.

"New Zealand is currently in a good position with no community cases, but we continue to take action with very specific steps to further strengthen our borders in response to what we're seeing overseas.

"The expansion of Day 0/1 testing at Managed Isolation and Quarantine to all passengers to New Zealand – except for those coming from Australia, Antarctica or most Pacific Islands – is now in operation. All travellers are still required to complete 14 days mandatory isolation, including routine Day 3 and Day 12 tests.

"New Zealand already has some of the most stringent border protection measures in the world. Today's amendments further strengthen that position in line with the Government's overall elimination strategy, and more measures can be added as necessary," Chris Hipkins said.

"The primary obligation is on passengers to comply, but airlines are also expected to play a key role in checking documentation where practicable at the start of someone's journey. We recognise and appreciate the efforts of their staff.

"Customs staff will check passengers' arrival cards and inspect test documentation for all arrivals except for those who are exempt.

"Last week, I set out exemptions and provided information to assist travellers with the new requirements via covid19.govt.nz and Unite Against COVID-19 social media, and directly to airlines. They will apply to all the countries that have been added," Chris Hipkins said.

"It is critical we acknowledge that these new requirements add complexity for people wanting to get here – and ensure support is in place. We thank them for their cooperation, as it's what's helping keep New Zealand safe while cases continue to accelerate overseas.

"So far, after four days of flights arriving with travellers from the US and UK, we are seeing extremely high levels of compliance. It's great to see people doing the right thing for their fellow passengers, airline staff and the New Zealand public," Chris Hipkins said.

From 8 February, all passengers arriving in New Zealand except those from exempted countries without evidence of a negative approved test or medical certificate would incur an infringement offence fee or a fine not exceeding \$1,000.

Countries and territories not included in the expanded pre-departure requirement:

- Antarctica
- Australia
- The Cook Islands
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Fiji
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands
- Nauru
- New Caledonia
- Niue
- Palau
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Tokelau
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu
- Wallis and Futuna.