Wellington City Council COVID19 Volunteer Protocol for Alert Level Two

Introduction

This protocol is for environmental volunteers working on Wellington City Council (WCC) land, operating under the NZ COVID-19 Alert System.

We want you and your group to complete your volunteer work while protecting yourselves and others from transmission of Covid-19.

Prior to any volunteer work on WCC land these protocols must be read, understood and followed by all volunteers. All groups operate differently and should identify their own risks and mitigation measures, adhering to WCC requirements and New Zealand Government restrictions.

Our focus is a safe restart. This is not a return to volunteering as usual. There will be restrictions operating.

The Government is using four levels to define the status of the pandemic and how all of NZ will respond (Appendix 1). The levels are categorised as follows:

- Level 1: Prepare - The disease is contained in New Zealand
- Level 2: Reduce - The disease is contained, but risk of community transmission remains
- Level 3: Restrict - High risk that the disease is not contained
- Level 4: Eliminate - Likely that disease is not contained

Volunteer work on WCC land is defined as non-essential at Level 4 and non-operational at Level 3. Volunteering can recommence in a modified way under Level 2.

WCC requires all groups to have in place a COVID-19 Safety Plan (CSP) based on Government advice for operating (volunteering) at Level 2. You will need to show how you will keep a minimum physical distance of 1 metre at all times as well as safety and hygiene provisions for minimising the possibility of spread of COVID-19 between volunteer workers. This is in addition to any normal health and safety processes that you have in place. WCC has created an online form which will enable you to complete this plan digitally. WCC may be able to provide any additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as disposable gloves, hand sanitiser, and disinfectant wipes needed.

This protocol uses the Ministry of Health and Ministry for Primary Industries guidelines, which describe general safety measures to control the spread of COVID-19 at Alert Level 2:

- Stay at home if sick
- Regularly disinfect surfaces
- Cough/sneeze into elbow
- Wash and dry hands regularly
- Don't touch your face
- Maintain physical distancing of at least 1m

At Alert Level 2 Wellington City Council is requiring groups to:

- Establish and maintain a register of people volunteering on WCC land to enable contact tracing
  - This means all volunteers and visitors at each work site to be checked-in on a register.
  - A designated volunteer needs to maintain a register of volunteer activity, this is to minimise risk of transmission from sharing pen and paper - this could also be a list on your phone. A photo of each group might help.
- Limit volunteer groups working at each site at the same, we recommend no more than 10 people at a time at one site.
- People undertaking activities must be regular members of the group – no large public events/invitations to new members
- Identify and check in with people at high risk of severe illness (older people and those with existing medical conditions) who we encourage to stay at home where possible. If they choose to volunteer, they must take additional precautions. Criteria here for high risk people.
- Each volunteer needs to use appropriate gear and follow good hygiene practices. This could include but not limited to hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, clothing, footwear and gloves, as appropriate to the circumstances. Follow safe practices when using gloves on site:
  - Any time you are completing a task use appropriate safety gloves.
  - If you are cleaning any surfaces use disposable gloves for this and throw them in the bin when you finish cleaning.
  - Avoid touching your face while wearing gloves.
  - Remove your gloves and then wash your hands.
  - Practice good hand hygiene and good cough and sneeze etiquette while wearing gloves
- Unfortunately, there is no *shared* food or drink to be consumed onsite. Strictly BYO drinks and food to work site
- Implement an appropriate cleaning and disinfecting programme of surfaces, clothing and equipment used to do your volunteer work
  - Clean all equipment before and after volunteer work sessions
  - No sharing equipment between volunteers during the work session
  - Limit equipment to essential items to reduce cleaning and chance of spread

At Alert Level 2 WCC recommends volunteers implement the following measures where possible:

- Establish some clothing and footwear that you will dedicate for your volunteer work.
- Identify an area outside your house that your clothing can remain in when not being washed.
- Wash your hands thoroughly immediately after returning home. You may even want to take a shower.
- Only take the equipment you need to undertake your volunteer work
- If you use a vehicle to get to the site, wipe down the commonly touched areas of the vehicle before and after each day. This includes but is not limited to the gear stick, steering wheel, hand brake, indicators, and door handles.
- Catch up with group coordinator after each volunteering session to share lessons/insights.

Additional WCC Requirements for different volunteer activities:

1. **Planting, releasing, weeding, gardening**
   a. WCC Rangers are unable to provide additional equipment including tools, machinery, and mulch at Alert Level 2.
   b. Native plants cannot be collected from Berhampore Nursery. Pre-ordered native plants will be delivered contactless to an agreed location. Berhampore Nursery will be operating but is closed to visitors at Alert Level L2.

2. **Pest control and monitoring**
   a. Line checks need to be limited to a minimum number of people operating per trap line.
   b. Notify designated group contact before/after as required when normally working alone (this includes providing them with the following detail: Name, Contact number, Where you will be operating, Date of operation, and names of anyone else joining you).
   c. WCC may be able to supply bait / lure via courier - this will take up to two weeks. If ordering please provide a list for anticipated needs for month or two.
   d. Please use your own tools and do not share with others.
   e. This means each trap/bait station is only accessed by one person.
   f. Check in with designated group contact before/after as required when normally working alone.
   g. Use your current supply of bait/lure consumables conservatively. WCC may be able to supply bait / lure via courier - this will take up to two weeks. If ordering, please provide a list for anticipated needs for month or two.
   h. Chew cards and tracking tunnels are to be put out and brought in by same person (or people in same personal bubble).
   i. Bird counts should not be done in places where people congregate.

3. **Track building and maintenance**
   a. Sheds and storage bins need to be cleaned thoroughly before and after use.
   b. Please note that WCC Rangers are unable to provide additional equipment including tools, machinery and mulch at Alert Level 2.

4. **Community garden and nursery sites or any shared space/facility**
   a. Shared toilets and kitchen facilities are not to be used.
   b. A roster should be in place for site maintenance by minimum number of volunteers.
   c. All shared surfaces to be wiped with soapy water or disinfection spray before and after use, including but not limited to: door handles, locks, hoses, and taps. (See Construction industry guidelines for more detail.)

Protocol framework

This protocol has been developed using the following framework:

1. Start-up pre-planning (i.e. planning, rostering, identifying high risk volunteers)
2. Site start-up activities (i.e. checking-in, hand-washing facilities, assigning bubbles, work distancing, site maps)
3. Activities during work session (i.e. approach for deliveries, separation plans /work bubbles, bathroom management, break management, limited access points)
4. Activities after work session (i.e. checking-out, hand washing, transport protocols, home arrival hygiene)
5. What happens in an emergency (i.e. emergency plans still work in line with hygiene and physical distancing, (e.g. assembly points); COVID-19 safety plan)
6. What to do if there is a suspected or confirmed Covid 19 case (isolate, inform, transport, clean, identify, clean, review)

Restarting of volunteer work on WCC land

In addition to public health considerations, a successful restart of volunteer work on WCC land will require collaboration, coordination and detailed planning with all those involved.

This lockdown situation is unprecedented. Volunteer groups should adjust their work schedule and expectations prior to start-up. Coordinators cannot reasonably expect people to complete the planned work in less time or with fewer people and this will particularly impact seasonal work such as planting.

When people return to volunteer work, there will be a whole range of pressures which may be unseen and unknown (work scheduling, financial, emotional, relationship, physical pressures). It will not be business as usual for some time.

This is also the longest break from volunteer work that many people have had. We will have to be aware of mindset, physical condition and general health, along with pre-existing health conditions and circumstances within people's existing 'bubble'.

The challenges of working differently at this time means everyone needs to keep communications open and honest so that together we can ensure we can operate safely. We need to be mindful of the consequences on the rest of the community of an outbreak.

Operational start-up considerations

When re-starting volunteering on WCC land you need to go through the following:

1. Start-up pre-planning

- Complete a Covid19 H&S plan which is reviewed and authorised by your WCC Ranger before any work starts onsite. You should also discuss your plan with any overlapping groups.
- Liaise with all key stakeholders
- Talk with your people and identify any 'high risk' volunteers. Talk with high risk volunteers about alternative ways they can support the group if they choose to stay at home
- Identify and acquire any PPE and equipment required for start-up

- Determine methods for volunteer transport to and from work sites that maintain physical distance
- Assign a person responsible for managing register of participants to enable Contact Tracing
- Determine communication methods prior to starting work and when on site. If volunteers are working out of range, you need to establish protocols for this.
- Site assessment including considering the ability to maintain physical distancing, identification of hazards and beware of public access points
- Ensure the essential capabilities (eg physical and mental fitness) are still present for undertaking work safely
- Assign a person to manage stock of essential PPE including acquisition and distribution, so it remains readily available as needed
- Consider make-up of workforce by role / skills / tasks and implement 'working bubbles' based on people who are volunteering together, and may travel together, to:
    - Minimise the risk of community spread between groups of people
    - Reduce risk to functionality / continuity by losing all people with same skill set who have fallen sick or been in close contact with an infected person.

2. Site start-up activities

- Equipment clean completed
- Check the person responsible for maintaining participant register for contact tracing has initiated the register and has a list of volunteers
- Site is re-checked for hazards and any high touch surfaces disinfected/cleaned
- Complete any site remedial work before work starts (rubbish and other hazard removal)
- Check that cell phone communication is effective with every volunteer

3. Activities during work session

- Methodical, pre-planned approach with sufficient time allowed
- PPE must be used where appropriate and volunteers be instructed on its safe use and disposal.
- Mental and physical pre-start exercise for all volunteers to participate in before work
- Pre-start-up meeting (detailed and engaging volunteers in work plan for session)
- Physical distancing to be maintained during conversations
- Coordinators to have a high-level regular review of implementation of safety plan
    - Ensure the measures needed to control the spread of COVID-19 are effectively implemented
    - Regular coordination of work to avoid physical interactions and ensure good communication
    - Ensure Protocols for communication are being used when volunteering.

4. Activities after work session

- All volunteers to checking-out when leaving work site with person maintaining register
- Wash all tools and equipment
- Wash hands
- Ensure people have appropriate transport home

- Remind volunteers of home arrival hygiene

5. Plan for emergencies

- If there is an immediate risk to human life this takes precedence over Covid 19 control measures Emergency plans still need to work in line with hygiene and physical distancing
- Appoint a key responsible person (and back-up) onsite to notify emergency services
- Ensure someone onsite has completed basic First Aid training

6. What to do if there is a suspected or confirmed Covid 19 case

1. Isolate - Isolate the person from others and provide a disposable surgical mask, if available, for the person to wear.

2. Inform - Call Healthline (0800 611 116). Follow advice of health officials. Also inform WCC.

3. Transport - Ensure the person has transport to their home or to a medical facility.

4. Clean - Clean the area where the person was working and all places they have been. This may mean evacuating those areas. Use PPE when cleaning

5. Identify - Identify who at the workplace had close contact with the infected person in the 24 hours before that infected person started showing symptoms. Send those people home to isolate. Allow volunteers to raise concerns.

6. Clean - Clean the area where the close contact people were working and all common areas they have been. This may mean evacuating those areas. Use PPE when cleaning.

7. Review - Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether work may need to change. Keep volunteers up to date on what is happening.