COVID-19 - information for landlords and tenants

24 April 2020

This page answers questions landlords and tenants may have during COVID-19.

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Updated on: 2 September 2020

For general information on COVID-19, visit the government’s central website. (https://covid19.govt.nz/)

On this page:


What are the current rules relating to rent increases and ending tenancies?

Rent increase freeze

There is a rent increase freeze in place, which means landlords cannot increase the rent of their rental property. The freeze is in effect from 26 March to 25 September 2020. Landlords can give rent increase notices now to take effect on or after 26 September, subject to the usual notice requirements. Note that from 12 August 2020, landlords cannot increase rent within 12 months of the beginning of the tenancy or the last rent increase.

Our rent increases webpage has more information about giving notices. (http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/rent-bond-and-bills/rent/increasing-rent/)

Tenancy terminations
Landlords can currently terminate tenancies in accordance with the usual termination rules. There were restrictions against tenancy terminations in place from 26 March to 25 June 2020. These restrictions are no longer in effect.

**Alert Level 2 information for landlords and tenants**

What does Alert Level 2 mean for landlords and tenants?

**Moving house**

- Tenants can move house, including between different alert level areas. Removal companies can assist with moving, with some conditions. Movers will have to comply with physical distancing rules and should keep records for contact tracing purposes.
- Tenants should bring documents to show that they are moving house, for example, their signed tenancy agreement. Find out more about the regional travel guidelines and rules on the Government’s COVID-19 website. (https://covid19.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/travel-within-new-zealand/regional-travel/)
- Friends and family can travel with a tenant who is moving, including between different alert level areas, to help the tenant with the move. If they don’t live with the tenant, they should keep records for the purposes of contact tracing. Personal hygiene and surface cleaning practices should be followed, and physical distance maintained.

**Property inspections**

- In-person inspections of rental properties can take place. During inspections, physical distance should be maintained and hygiene measures followed. Records should be kept for contact tracing purposes.

**Property maintenance**

- Maintenance can occur. During maintenance, physical distancing must be maintained and hygiene measures followed. Records should be kept for contact tracing purposes.

**Property viewings**

- Open homes are permitted with the tenant’s consent, as long as the guidance on physical distancing, personal hygiene and surface cleaning is followed. Records should be kept for contact tracing purposes, including each person’s name, phone number, and the date and time they entered the property.
- At property viewings, a QR code should be prominently displayed at or near the main entrance so people can record their visit.
- Tenants in an Alert Level 2 area cannot travel into an Alert Level 3 area to view a potential rental property.


Real Estate Authority guidance for in-person inspections where a property is for sale (also applicable to rental viewings) (https://www.rea.govt.nz/news/covid-19/).


**Alert Level 3 information for landlords and tenants**

What does Alert Level 3 mean for landlords and tenants?

**Moving house**
• Tenants can move house, including between different alert level areas.
• Removal companies can assist with moving, with some conditions. Movers will have to comply with physical distancing rules and should keep records for contact tracing purposes.
• For tenants moving between alert level areas, removal companies can assist with moving if they have received an exemption from the Ministry of Health.
• Tenants should have documents on them to show that they are moving house, for example, their signed tenancy agreement. Find out more about the regional travel guidelines and rules on the Government’s COVID-19 website. (https://covid19.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/travel-within-new-zealand/regional-travel/)
• Friends and family can travel with a tenant who is moving, including between different alert level areas, to help the tenant with the move. If they don’t live with the tenant, they should keep records for the purposes of contact tracing. Personal hygiene and surface cleaning practices should be followed, and physical distance maintained.

Property inspections

• It is recommended that routine inspections of rental properties do not take place as they normally would, and only occur in emergency situations.
• Virtual inspections are an option if the tenants agree.
• At the end of the tenancy, the landlord and tenant should not do the final property inspection together as normal. Rather, we recommend tenants take photos of the property’s condition before leaving.

Property maintenance

• It is recommended that maintenance is only carried out in emergencies. This might include plumbers, electricians and tradespeople who can work on and inside rental properties.
• Landlords should obtain tenant consent before the maintenance occurs.
• During maintenance, physical distance should be maintained and records kept for contact tracing purposes.

Property viewings

• It is recommended that open homes do not occur at Alert Level 3, but in-person viewings can happen as long as physical distancing and public health measures are followed. The Ministry of Justice has guidance for property sales and viewings. (https://www.justice.govt.nz/about/news-and-media/covid-19-news/guidance-for-property-sales-and-settlements-during-covid-19/)
• If the property being viewed is tenanted, landlords will need approval from the tenants and viewings should only occur when the tenants are not at the property.
• During in-person viewings, physical distance should be maintained and hygiene measures followed. In-person viewings should be limited to two per day per property.

Real Estate Authority guidance for in-person inspections where a property is for sale (also applicable to rental viewings). (https://www.rea.govt.nz/news/covid-19/)


I/my tenants are having trouble paying rent, what are my options?

Due to loss of employment income, some tenants may experience issues paying their rent.

Tenancy Services has developed guidance for talking to your landlord/tenant about rent payment difficulties. (http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/rent-bond-and-bills/rent/guidance-for-discussion/)
Tenants who can’t pay their rent should let their landlord know straight away. Be honest about the situation and see if you can agree on a payment plan. Landlords and tenants who reach an agreement can choose to have this formalised using the FastTrack resolution process (http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/disputes/fasttrack-resolution/), if they feel it’s necessary.

If you are likely to continue having trouble, think about other options. You can get in touch with budgeting services, Work and Income or other agencies to see what support is available.

Tenants are still liable for rent and landlords can ask tenants to pay what is due. Landlords can also seek a monetary order from the Tribunal for rent arrears, but should try to reach an agreement with their tenants before taking this step.

I am a landlord, can I still do maintenance or inspect my rental property?

At Alert Level 3

During Alert Level 3, in-person routine inspections of rental properties cannot take place unless it is an emergency situation, such as a landlord needing to confirm that emergency maintenance is required.

Maintenance can only occur in emergencies. This might include plumbers, electricians and tradespeople who can work on and inside rental properties. Landlords should obtain tenant approval before maintenance is undertaken.

At Alert Level 2

During Alert Level 2, routine inspections of rental properties can take place. Landlords and tenants should adhere to physical distancing, personal hygiene, and surface cleaning guidance. They should also keep records for contact tracing purposes.

Tenants cannot unreasonably refuse an inspection, however for those who are considered vulnerable, that could be reasonable grounds for refusal.


Maintenance can be done. This includes professional services such as plumbers, electricians and tradespeople who can work on and inside rental properties. Physical distancing and hygiene guidance must be followed when inside homes, and records should be kept for contact tracing purposes. Surface cleaning on the area that is being worked on should also be undertaken.

Information on maintenance and inspections (http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/maintenance-and-inspections/inspections/)

I’m a tenant in self-isolation, who do I need to tell?

Tenants are under no obligation to tell their landlord if they are self-isolating or sick with COVID-19. If a tradesperson is required to go to the property to do repairs while the tenant is self-isolating, we encourage tenants to first advise the landlord or tradesperson that they are self-isolating.

Tenants should also make sure any other tenants or flatmates are aware of the situation.

Follow the guidelines on the central government COVID-19 website. (https://covid19.govt.nz/how-were-uniting/self-isolation/)

I’m in a boarding house or share-house living arrangement – what does self-isolation mean for me?
Boarding house tenants and landlords need to follow the self-isolation guidelines [https://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=15517&d=j5r43IG990jI-Wk9KSAfPUbN5mSxvQP_C8ToxECFTQ&u=https%3a%2f%2fcovid19%2egovt%2enz%2fhelp-and-advice%2ffor-everyone%2fself-isolation-advice%2ff].


Boarding house landlords should consider changing the house rules to include the self-isolation guidance. Boarding house tenants must comply with the house rules and this may help reinforce the self-isolation requirement.

I'm having difficulty with my landlord/tenant, what should I do?

Landlords and tenants should talk to each other, work together and take care of each other wherever possible. Try to come to an arrangement that suits everyone.

If you can't reach an agreement you can apply for mediation through the Tenancy Tribunal [http://www.tenancy.govt.nz/disputes/mediation/prepare-for-mediation/].

Tenancy Tribunal hearings in Alert Level 3 areas are being assessed as to whether they can be undertaken via teleconference or rescheduled.

Discrimination against prospective tenants or current tenants is unlawful under tenancy law when it breaches the Human Rights Act. For example, it is unlawful to:

- not grant a tenancy to a person for any of the prohibited grounds of discrimination, for example because of their race, nationality, or disability. Disability includes physical illness, or the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing illness. This includes COVID-19.
- discriminate when deciding to continue, extend, renew, vary, or to end a tenancy. More information on discrimination.

If you are in an accommodation arrangement that is not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, and you think you have been discriminated against, you can contact the Human Rights Commission.

More information on discrimination [https://www.tenancy.govt.nz/starting-a-tenancy/tenancy-agreements/discrimination/]

If you are in an accommodation arrangement that is not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, and you think you have been discriminated against, you can contact the Human Rights Commission [https://www.hrc.co.nz/enquiries-and-complaints].