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Released by: Nick Leggett

Update on Auckland and Northland road borders

This Advisory is update you on the dismantling of the Auckland road border tonight and the setting up of Northland road borders from midnight tonight.

I have communicated with the Transport Minister Michael Wood about the Northland road border and he is aware of our industry's concerns about freight delays at this busy time of the year. We requested greater clarity on what transport operators would face at the Northland border and the Minister directed his officials to provide us with much of the detail contained below.

Covid-19 Protection Framework changes

With the exception of Northland, which will remain in the red traffic light of the Covid-19 Protection Framework, all other areas of New Zealand that are currently coded red will move to orange at 11.59pm on Thursday, 30 December. That will make all of New Zealand, except Northland, orange.

Page 38 of the Government's [COVID-19 Protection Framework Guidance for Transport Operators](#) outlines what this means.

Auckland road border dismantled tonight

From about 9.30pm tonight, Waka Kotahi and Police will be removing checkpoints on the Auckland road borders. Road closures will be in place overnight for a short time while this work is carried out, so you will need to plan your travel around that.

Police anticipate a surge of people trying to leave Auckland tonight via road.
Waka Kotahi advises:

On the night of December 14 southbound traffic can expect closures in place from 10pm to 1am as the boundary is removed while northbound traffic can expect stop/go traffic management in place until midnight, with the boundary removed by 1am.

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With traffic patterns differing from previous years, people are instead urged to follow real time traffic updates via Waka Kotahi's [Auckland/Northland](#) and [Waikato/BOP](#) Twitter pages or its online [traffic and travel tool](#).

Southbound travellers who choose to leave very early on December 15 will be detoured at one point on their route as contractors finish off a series of overnight closures on SH1 at Ōhinewai. However, this work will be completed by 7am.

The closure is to allow 8.5km of temporary steel barriers to be removed. The temporary steel barriers were put in place to provide a safe work area, protecting construction workers from live traffic while they completed safety upgrades in the area.

More detail, including detour route information, is available [here](#).

Testing requirements

The Ministry of Transport advises:

There are no restrictions on freight movement – the same situation as now – and that freight drivers travelling out of Auckland from 15 December to 16 January must be:

- fully vaccinated; **or**
- carry evidence of having taken a Covid-19 test within seven days of their travel (but will not be required to have had the test result before they travel); **or**
- carry evidence of a negative Covid-19 test received within 72 hours before crossing the boundary.

Please note: *this is an **or**, not an and situation and your drivers need to be one of the three bullet points above, not all three.*

The intention is that where workers have been subject to regular surveillance testing (PCR or saliva tests), this will continue to be acceptable. For workers that are travelling that may not have been subject to surveillance testing, or those that prefer to shift to the alternative 72-hour model (i.e., the obligation for the general population leaving Auckland) this is also an acceptable option.

Rapid antigen testing

Rapid antigen testing is now available for businesses, the information is available here:

<https://www.business.govt.nz/news/rapid-antigen-testing-available-for-business/>

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Northland border checkpoints

Police have indicated they will be working with Iwi at two border checkpoints in Northland from 15 December.

Police advise that patience will be required as this system is set up and beds down.

We do not have the exact locations of the checkpoints but believe they will be on SH1 at Uretiti and SH12 near Maungaturoto.

Advice from Ministry of Transport

Transporting New Zealand has sought advice from the Ministry of Transport which is as follows:

The testing requirements for Northland are the same as those outlined above.

In Northland, Police will be utilising the shoulder to stop vehicles and check for compliance (sampling approach, not checking every vehicle). Police are very aware of traffic flow concerns and do not want to add to any delays. To the extent possible, this approach should reduce additional delays. However, it is important to note there will still be some impact due to the traffic management required to slow traffic so that vehicles can be pulled aside and compliance checks can be undertaken safely. There is no scope for dedicated freight lanes etc. due to the nature of the road network in these locations, as you will be aware.

Police has confirmed that they do not have an operational policy to wave all freight vehicles through. They have been very clear in all public messaging that everyone (i.e., including freight drivers), should expect and be prepared to be stopped and checked for compliance. Notwithstanding this, we anticipate Police will likely prioritise sampling more private vehicles than freight vehicles (consistent with the general approach they have adopted at the Auckland boundary to date).

In regard to the impact of the additional containers moving from Northport, we know that both Police and Waka Kotahi are aware of this, and have already been taking steps to support efficient movement of these containers. This includes avoiding adding additional road works in the area at this time, that may add to disruption and delay. We understand some containers have started to be moved over the weekend, and while we know this will not be completed before the checkpoints commence, steps are being taken where possible to support efficient movement of freight.

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The Prime Minister's words

When questioned by media yesterday about compliance checking and the situation in Northland at her post-Cabinet press conference yesterday the Prime Minister said:

"The Police, ultimately, they are the only ones who can legally operate compliance around these checks and it is totally their operational decision as to how. They have expressed a view that they will continue to manage the free flow of traffic, that will be one of the things they undertake. So, they will be determining when and how they choose to check compliance."

When asked if she could give assurance that not every car heading to Northland would be stopped by Police she said:

"That's certainly the implication from the communications I've seen from Police. Their goal is to continue to maintain the flow of traffic. So, in the way that you see them operate other compliance checks, I imagine that they'll be undertaking a similar approach where they will be compliance checking but also essentially ensuring that we don't have a large hold up of vehicles. Ultimately it is operational though."

"Checkpoints can only be legally run by the New Zealand Police."

Our advice

As we found with the Auckland road borders, some of those on the front line weren't always aware of the rules that have been conveyed to our industry by the Government, particularly around the seven-day testing regime. Please ensure your operators have all the evidence they need to comply with the rules and that they are aware they may need to exercise patience if stopped.

If there are any individual problems, we were able to sort them out with the Auckland border, so please feel free to contact Transporting New Zealand if your run into trouble, provided you have all the correct paper work and have complied with the rules as set out above.

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