



FREEMASONS
New Zealand

18th May 2020

Guiding Principles for the reopening of Craft Lodges during COVID-19 (Alert Level 2).

INTRODUCTION

On 11th May 2020, the Government announced that New Zealand will move to Alert Level 2 effective from 14th May 2020. **Currently, all Freemasons New Zealand Lodges are suspended until 31 May 2020**, and the commitment of the Brethren has been appreciated during these unprecedented times. It certainly has been a challenging period, and we need to ensure that that we do not lose the gains that have already been made in eliminating this virus.

The health and wellbeing of our Brethren has been a paramount consideration during this period, but with the move to Alert Level 2, and the implementation of new guidelines, the possible return to the Lodge room may be likely after further Government announcements on 25th May 2020.

The Government has currently set numbers at 10 . However, we are expecting further announcements on numbers in the coming weeks. In doing so, it is expected that the following guidelines, which are supplementary to the Governments rules, will be strictly followed.

1. GOVERNMENT CRITERIA FOR ALERT LEVEL 2 (In summary).

- a. **Play it safe:** Let us do everything that we can to stop the spread of the virus.
- b. **Stay home if you are sick:** If you are sick or feeling unwell, stay away and stay at home.
- c. **Make the space:** Keep a 2-metre separation from people you do not know, or if there is no contact tracing in place. Keep a 1-metre separation when you are in a controlled environment. (A controlled environment is when health & hygiene practices are in place as well as contact tracing measures).
- d. **Re-connect safely:** re-connect with close friends and family. Interact with people that you know.
- e. **Travel safely:** Tracking movements, washing hands.
- f. **Meet safely:** Indoor gatherings are not to exceed Government announced number of people. All gatherings must have contact tracing and hygiene measures in place.

2. RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL LODGES

- a. Each Lodge must take ownership of ensuring the implementation of these Guidelines. National Office has put together a Toolkit together with a Flowchart for reopening your Lodge to guide you through the decision-making process, together with a simple Checklist to assist you.
- b. If a Lodge does not wish to reopen (considering factors such as the age, health and demographics of the Brethren), then the Divisional Grand Master can issue a dispensation to continue the suspension until 1 September 2020 (or earlier should the Government lower the Alert Level to 1). Discuss this with the District Grand Master.
- c. Develop a COVID-19 Mitigation Plan for the Lodge and ensure that this is strictly followed. Where several Lodges meet in the same facility, the property company (or committee) may establish a Mitigation plan for the whole facility.
- d. Each plan is to be approved by the District Grand Master who will consider the appropriateness for the wellbeing of visiting Brethren.
- e. Limit the total number of Brethren to no more than the Government announced number (which may change over the next few weeks). Consider the size of each Lodge room, to decide on an appropriate number for each room, and comply with this.
- f. Prepare a hard copy contact register to record the date, time, full name, address and contact number of all attending the meeting (one is attached this package). Keep this secure and accessible for future reference if required. (*The Lodge Attendance Register is not suitable for this*)
- g. Provide hand sanitisers that are to be used by ALL Brethren before and after meetings.
- h. Toilets must be regularly cleaned, and all surfaces cleaned with disinfectant based surface wipes.

3. LODGE ROOM

- a. Ensure that the seating arrangements are in accordance with recommended social distancing.
- b. Surfaces that are regularly touched, should be cleaned with disinfectant based surface wipes, before and after each meeting. (*Deacon Wands; Poniards; Swords; Door handles; Working Tools etc*).
- c. The Tyler should ensure that the contact tracing register is completed for all meetings.
- d. Bathrooms and facilities must be cleaned on a regular basis, including surfaces that are touched (door handles etc). Ensure that there is plenty of soap and hot water. Provide paper towels rather than cotton or fabric towels. Provide hand sanitisers.

4. BRETHREN

- a. Brethren shall take personal responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. If unwell, or have an underlying health condition, do not attend any Lodge meeting.
- b. If an unwell Brother turns up – send him home!
- c. It is acceptable to wear a face mask if you prefer, but not as an exception to mitigate the above statement.
- d. Use hand sanitising before and after entering a Lodge Room. Wash your hands with hot water and soap after using the bathrooms.
- e. The wearing of white Nitrile Disposal Gloves is acceptable. Masonic gloves (cotton) are not an alternative for disposal gloves.
- f. Avoid regular handshaking. Acknowledgement can simply be the sign of Fidelity.

5. CEREMONIAL

- a. The established usage, custom and practices of Freemasonry are always to be followed.
- b. No Lodge meeting is to be video recorded or live streamed under any circumstances.
- c. Seating should be arranged or marked appropriately for social distancing.
- d. The ceremonies may be modified where tradition allows for close contact and touching. Touching of the hand is acceptable with known people, and it is recommended that hand sanitisers are used by those who need it, prior to and after touching. Discuss this with the Candidate and ensure that he is comfortable with this.
- e. Secrets may be verbally explained without physical demonstration if necessary.

6. INSTALLATIONS

The following process for the rescheduling and conducting of an Installation meeting is to be followed by Lodges affected by the lockdown. This directive is effective from 1 June 2020 and will remain in place until 31 August 2020, by which time it is expected that all affected Lodges will have either held or rescheduled their Installation meeting.

National Office has put together a Flowchart for Installations during the Covid-19 restrictions to guide you the decision-making process.

The affected Lodges are to discuss and fully involve the District Grand Master in the decision-making process and timetabling, and no Installation of Master or Investiture of Officers is to proceed without the written authority of the District Grand Master. Such approval and any dispensations granted are to be read in open Lodge and recorded in the Lodges minutes.

Note: This policy does not set a precedent and applies only to those Lodges directly affected by the Government imposed COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. All other Lodge Installations are to proceed as per the Lodge By-Laws.

- a. Election of Master: So that affected Lodges can hold their Installation ceremony as soon as possible, these Lodges may call for nominations for Master and Officers of the Lodge, and may advise brethren of the nominations received, by electronic means.

The ballot for Master, must be held in Open Lodge. If necessary, this can be at the Installation meeting of the Lodge, for which a dispensation will be granted by the Divisional Grand Master.

Nominations and notices of candidature must be advised to all brethren 7 days prior to the meeting at which the ballot is to be held.

- b. Installation of Master: Where a Master Mason is scheduled to be installed, and so that he can serve a full year as Master, it is recommended that one of the following options be adopted by the Lodge:
 - i. The Brother who is to be installed, and Officers to be invested, serve for the balance of the current year, and then for the following full masonic year.
 - ii. The current Master or a Past Master should assume the Chair for the balance of the current year.

Should the first option apply, or where a Past Master was scheduled to be installed as Master, then the following will apply:

- iii. Where the current Master and Officers are to continue for the balance of the Masonic year and therefore a second term, the Lodge may choose not to conduct an Installation ceremony. The nomination and ballot in Open Lodge is still to be followed.

- iv. If a Past Master is to be installed for the balance of the Masonic year, then where possible, the existing Officers shall continue in their present positions.
 - v. Where the succession plan was for a Past Master to be installed, then the Lodge shall conduct an Installation ceremony in accordance with the Lodge By-Laws and the Master and Officers need only serve for the balance of the Masonic year.
 - vi. Where a Warden is unable to fill that office for a full Masonic year, but as part of the Lodge succession plan is to be invested as Master the following Masonic year, then Dispensation will be granted.
 - vii. Where a Past Master is to serve only a part Masonic year, and for the record of service, the Grand Master, on the recommendation of the District Grand Master, may allow for the records to show a full year of service as Master and for the receipt of a Past Masters Certificate.
 - viii. No brother shall be disadvantaged for future preferment in anyway by the above.
- c. Dispensations: The Grand Master has delegated authority to the Divisional Grand Masters to issue such Dispensations as may be required to enable this policy to be implemented.

7. REFECTORY

- a. For the preparation of food, blue Nitrile Disposal Gloves should be worn.
- b. Stewards or those serving food should also wear gloves.
- c. Ensure the safe serving of food. Avoid a large gathering around the food servery area. Consider pre-plating and deliver to each person.
- d. Ensure that the first aid kit is well stocked, particularly with plasters and dressings for cuts.
- e. All utensils (plates, cups and cutlery) must be **hot** washed with detergent, preferably in a dishwasher, after each meeting.
- f. All surfaces should be regularly wiped with disinfectant based surface wipes.

8. GENERAL

- a. If handling cash, use disposable gloves, or consider alternative collection methods.
- b. Avoid using lifts, unless for single use (avoiding confined spaces).
- c. Lodge Open Days – Contact Tracing Register is required as well as appropriate arrangements for hygiene with hand sanitisers.
- d. If you hire out your facilities to the public, ensure that the person/organisation has a plan in place to maintain the government requirements.
- e. Remember – **Play it Safe**.

