
ICW INFORMATION DOCUMENT

FOR APARTMENT BUILDINGS – PLANNING FOR COVID-19

About this document

This document offers information and some ideas that may be helpful for people and Body Corporate committees in apartment buildings who are considering how to plan for the changes to MIQ.

Overview

Changes have been made to managing isolation and quarantine (MIQ) guidelines which means that there may be people associated with COVID-19 who will be completing their MIQ in their homes.

These might be people coming back from overseas, or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, or they may have been to a places of interest, or possibly even have been tested positive for COVID-19.

This means that body corporates and residents of apartment buildings - where people are sharing common areas such as lifts, corridors and entrances/exits - need to consider how best to keep everyone safe.

The Ministry of Health has provided these guidelines to assist. They are available in Word and PDF versions:

- [COVID-19. How to isolate safely in apartments and other unit title developments](#)
[A guidance document for People with COVID-19 Isolating AND Bodies Corporate](#)
[Version 2.0. 22 December 2021](#)

Extract: “It also provides guidance on the responsibilities of the Body Corporate to those isolating, and some practical and proactive steps they can take to ensure their building is safe for others living in them.”

Other information

The National Body Corporate Chairs Group (BCCG) has been working with the Ministry of Health to contribute to the above guidelines. They also have information on [their website](#) and are continuing to represent the needs of body corporate members.

Extract from the National Body Corporate Chairs Group website:

As body corporate members well know, self-isolation in an apartment is very different from self-isolation in a standalone home.

The BCCG National Executive is concerned that whilst it is possible to self-isolate in an apartment, a good many apartment buildings are simply not suitable for self-isolation. We have addressed this matter in a Discussion Paper which we have, with the support of both, the Auckland Central MP Chlöe Swarbrick and Labour list MP Helen White, represented directly to government.

Our lobby is for is an understanding at Government (MOH) level that not all apartment buildings are suitable for self-isolation and that the Public Health authorities need to consider a range of additional criteria when assessing the suitability of self-isolation at home for a person who lives in an apartment building.

The four most compelling criteria are:

1. Most apartments open on to 'common property' – most stand-alone homes do not.
2. The person self-isolating will need to be supplied with fresh food – they cannot shop for themselves, contactless deliveries by a third party will need to be arranged.
3. Special arrangements will be required for waste/rubbish removal. Bagged rubbish left outside the door must be considered contaminated, so collection and disposal must be pre-arranged.
4. Finally, and most difficult to address, many apartment buildings are airconditioned. Does each apartment have its own closed airflow system or is airflow common to other parts of the building?

Please note: Thank you to the National Body Corporate Chairs Group for providing the above information on its website. We recommend apartment body corporate committees consider becoming a [member of the Body Corporate Chairs Group](#) which will both support the Association in its work as well as provide access to further member-only information and resources.

A shared document from a large Wellington-based apartment building

The following document has kindly been shared by the body corporate committee of Chews Lane – a large apartment building located in the inner city of Wellington. They are happy for other body corporate committees and/or residents to copy it and adapt it for their own needs.

CHEWS LANE APARTMENTS GUIDELINES FOR ISOLATING/QUARANTINING AT HOME

With the forthcoming changes to MIQ and the introduction of the 'Traffic Lights' system, it is inevitable that in the coming months, some residents will be isolating at home, within Chews Lane Apartments (CLA).

They may be people returning home from overseas, close contacts, people who have visited places of interest and potentially, people who have tested positive for COVID-19.

These guidelines have largely been taken from the Ministry of Health document [COVID19 – Guidance for Isolating in Apartments](#) with (minor) applicable modification by the CLA Body Corporate Committee (the BC), so that we can all be prepared when the inevitable occurs.

Firstly some principles:

1. Right to occupy:

The BC cannot and will not attempt to prevent residents from isolating within their apartments. However, the ultimate call on this will be made by health authorities. A decision on this is likely to depend on an assessment, by the Ministry of Health, of our HVAC and access pathways. (*See Ventilation below.*)

2. Privacy:

An individual's right to privacy is of the greatest importance and the names of residents who become COVID-19 positive shall be kept confidential. We expect that only the Building Manager will be advised of affected apartments. The BC will advise residents when we have isolating or positive cases.

3. Prevention and precautions:

Ongoing infection prevention and control precautions, such as mask-wearing and maintaining separation in common areas, are essential to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19 through our apartments.

Responsibilities when Self-Isolating

Preventing transmission of COVID-19 from a case self-isolating in an apartment or multi-unit housing block setting requires a multi-faceted approach to ensure containment measures are in place so that others in the building do not develop COVID-19.

(Please note the following instructions reflect current Ministry of Health guidelines which are subject to updates [here](#))

When in self-isolation, you must:

- a. remain in your place of self-isolation for a minimum of the required period (this may be between 3 and 10 days). You will not be allowed to leave the property at any time unless in an emergency or where you are escorted by an authorised person (i.e. someone from our District Health Board).
- b. For residents returning from overseas travel, isolate alone or with other participants in your travelling party. If in a group, you must depart, return and self-isolate together.
- c. not allow any visitors to enter your apartment, aside from medical staff for testing purposes and emergency or other essential services if required (e.g. fire, ambulance, police, tradespeople for urgent repairs).
- d. provide your own food and supplies (contactless deliveries are allowed).
- e. comply with testing and monitoring requirements.

The BC does request that residents, who are self-isolating, notify the Building Manager, in confidence. Other residents will then be advised to take particular care over prevention and control precautions. Apartment numbers and floor levels will remain confidential.

Management of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 are known as 'cases' and will be directly managed by a local public health unit (who are part of our District Health Boards).

Please note if you are a case, you'll receive instructions and advice directly from a public health official which is specific to your individual situation and according to your needs.

If a confirmed COVID-19 case is identified in our building, we can expect the following steps to occur:

- a. The person will be notified that they have tested positive for COVID-19. The person will need to isolate until they are no longer infectious and are cleared to leave isolation. They may isolate in their residence if they are able to do so safely. The person may also be admitted to hospital if they are very sick, or to a dedicated facility

if it's not safe for them to isolate at their apartment.

- b. Some other residents, building managers and contractors may be considered close contacts and will also need to quarantine at home. Public Health will advise those individuals directly.
- c. COVID-19 cases or close contacts may need medical support while isolating at home. It is important emergency services can access the apartment(s) of cases and contacts 24 hours a day, with no barriers to entry. The BC and the Building Manager will help facilitate this.
- d. It is important we do not name the resident, contractor or staff member with COVID-19 or their apartment number. This is confidential information and should not be disclosed to others. In our case we would expect that only the Building Manager will need to know which apartment numbers are affected.

Deliveries for Isolation Cases

If someone in the CLA, in isolation needs to receive food, medicine or other deliveries, the following procedures should be followed:

- Goods be placed outside the unit door, and only collected by the case when the delivery person has left, and there is no one passing by.

The following guidelines are highly recommended prior to opening your front door to collect a delivery to minimise air movement from your apartment into the common area corridors:

- a. in your apartment close all windows and balcony doors. Also close all bedroom doors but open all bathroom and laundry doors.
- b. The case/isolating person will need to wear a mask when they open their door to pick up the delivery.
- c. The Building Manager will develop plans to transport deliveries to individual units from the front entrance if access is limited due to building security procedures.
- d. If a case in isolation is unable to access a delivery service, a family member or friend, the case can contact the Ministry of Social Development to access support.
- e. If the case requires medical assistance, they can call ahead to their health provider to organise for one that is carried out virtually.

Rubbish Disposal

- a. A case in self-isolation should not leave their apartments to dispose of rubbish.
- b. The BC will supply a 120L wheelie bin with liner for the occupant to use for the duration of their isolation. This can be wheeled down to the bin room on conclusion of their isolation (the Building Manager will transfer the rubbish into the bin room).
- c. All rubbish placed in the wheelie bin should be pre-bagged.

Ventilation

If you are isolating inside your apartment, ventilation is important as this will prevent the build-up of virus in the air by exchanging stale inside air for fresh outside air. At the CLA we have fresh air supply to bedrooms and extract from bathrooms/laundries. They are common systems but with no recirculation between apartments, so we would not expect any cross-contamination. Opening windows and doors to balconies can also help to refresh the air in your apartment.

Air from an apartment will usually flow out of an apartment every time the entry door is opened, so decreasing the number of times a door is opened and keeping the amount of virus in the air in common areas to a minimum, will decrease the risk of infection for anyone else living in the apartment building.

Residents who are isolating, particularly those who are COVID-19 positive, should only open their front doors once they have

- a. checked through the peep hole that the corridor is not occupied,
- b. their external doors/windows are closed
- c. and they have their mask on.

If you have a gap at the base of your front door, it would be good practice (if positive) to place a towel or a draught snake at the base of the door when closed.

Once we have isolating or positive cases within CLA, residents in all apartments should fit their masks before they leave their own apartments.

Emergencies

In the case of an emergency, normal emergency evacuation protocols should be followed, and all residents should be wearing a face mask if they need to evacuate their units.

*Written by the Chews Lane Apartments Body Corporate Committee
2 December 2021*