



**CHIEF DISTRICT COURT JUDGE  
FOR NEW ZEALAND  
TE KAIWHAKAWĀ MATUA O  
TE KŌTI-Ā-ROHE O AOTEAROA  
Judge Heemi Taumaunu**

24 April 2020

*Statement from the Chief District Court Judge*

## **The District Court under COVID-19 Alert Level 3**

All divisions of the District Court, including Family Court and Youth Court, are preparing to resume as much work as possible when New Zealand's pandemic response moves to COVID-19 Alert Level 3.

The Chief District Court Judge, Judge Heemi Taumaunu, has issued a [Protocol](#) for how the court will operate from 28 April under Alert Level 3.

During the Alert Level 4 period, the District Court has been focusing on priority proceedings such as those involving vulnerable people or those being held in custody. However, Chief Judge Taumaunu says that under Alert Level 3 the court aims to expand operations to deliver more justice services, as is feasible within workforce capacity and while observing physical distancing requirements.

As the Chief Justice announced yesterday, the District Court will be open to the public – albeit with limited capacity for anyone not required to attend to be present. The Chief District Court Judge's [Protocol](#) sets out these details.

Pandemic health and safety measures, including limits on numbers in courtrooms and court buildings, will continue to be observed. People will be asked to enter their identification details into a COVID-19 contact-tracing register when they arrive.

“From Tuesday onwards, if anyone has a scheduled date to appear in the criminal court, Family Court, Youth Court or civil court, they will need to come to court unless they are advised otherwise by the court,” Chief Judge Taumaunu said. “If anyone is unsure about when they need to appear, please ring **0800 COURTS (268 787)**.”

Impacts on court users during Alert Level 3 include:

- Public counters will remain closed.
- So far as possible, all scheduled criminal work will proceed, except Jury Trials.
- Defendants on bail or at large are required to attend court on the date their case had been adjourned to. Each defendant will be allowed one support person.

- Victims may attend personally or via AVL.
- All defendants in Police or Corrections custody will continue to appear before a Judge, usually by AVL.
- Judge Alone Trials, pre-trial conferences and call-overs are proceeding where possible. Jury Trials remain suspended till the end of July.
- The Family Court's Alert Level 4 priority work will extend to scheduled work, depending on regional capability. Matters that were adjourned without a fixed date during Alert Level 4 will be triaged for urgency.
- In Family Court lists and callovers/conferences, Judges may excuse parties from attending in person, and instead allow remote participation.
- Youth Court will continue its Alert Level 4 [process](#) for allowing a support person for young people appearing either in person or remotely. Limiting travel remains important to keep everyone safe.
- All civil cases administratively adjourned during Alert Level 4 will be reviewed.
- Accredited media will continue to have access to the court.

Chief Judge Taumaunu thanks all court users and participants for their patience during the unavoidable disruption of recent weeks. "Alert Level 3 restrictions mean the court will still be operating at a reduced capacity, but this does not diminish District Court Judges' commitment to access to justice for our communities."

. . . . . *ends*

*Media contact Marie McNicholas 027 88 22 225; [marie.mcnicholas@justice.govt.nz](mailto:marie.mcnicholas@justice.govt.nz)*