

COVID-19 – Kua rāhui te motu

2 April 2020

Tangihanga – a need to adapt our practises during this extraordinary time. Bereaved families and whānau from all cultures and backgrounds will find this time challenging. This makes it even more important that we show each other kindness and caring, manaakitanga and aroha.

Tangihanga

Already, iwi and hapū have been adapting tikanga and kawa to keep our people safe. This has also extended to tangihanga.

There are now strict rules put in place during Alert Level 4 for when loved ones have passed away. These rules apply to everyone; every culture, every religion.

We support the advice and guidelines shared by Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā (The National Māori Pandemic Group) on tikanga, hui and tangihanga for Alert Level 4 - this means **no formal tangihanga until further notice**. For Māori, this means:

- No public funeral services whatsoever,
- No tangihanga at our marae, funeral homes, churches and other venues,
- No private whānau tangihanga at home.

Why?

Because COVID-19 is now in the community, public gatherings put all our whānau members at risk, especially our kaumātua. Therefore, we must protect people's health and ensure our health system can look after New Zealanders who become sick.

What are your options?

- Burial of tūpāpaku (deceased whānau member) at the urupā (graveyard) in a timely manner.
- Storage (refrigeration or longer-term embalment) for burial once we recover – where these options are available.
- Cremation and a delayed process for the burial of ashes once we recover. This approach will reduce contact spread of COVID-19 to our kaumātua and our at-risk whānau members. It is the best way to keep our communities safe.

We are regularly updating our advice and guidelines to be accurate, relevant to whānau, and responsive to the changes in our situation.

We will be issuing further guidelines for whānau on what to do during Alert Levels 3, 2 and 1 over the coming weeks. It's important to remember that once we come out of Alert Level 4, COVID-19 is still a real threat and we will need to remain vigilant.

Alert Level 4 – kua rāhui te motu: Official guidelines for tangihanga

What to do when someone dies

Appoint a whānau member to potentially liaise with funeral directors, health providers and/or police.

- Māori communities, iwi, hapū and whānau are being encouraged to establish local 'kaiwhakarite' or people who can assist whānau during this time as well. **You may wish to contact your 'kaiwhakarite' to seek advice.** Get in touch with your iwi and hapū organisations, marae, local social services provider or local Civil Defence Emergency Management Centre to see if a 'kaiwhakarite' has already been established.

Contact the deceased's health provider (general practitioner, hauora, public health organisation).

- **If your loved one has died from a known health issue**, this will be critical information for the funeral director – your loved one's health provider will liaise directly with the funeral director (once appointed) to pass on the necessary information.
- **If your loved one has died from COVID-19**, it will be critical for the health provider to support you with information on what to do next – there are strict guidelines that must be followed in these instances. There is also information available on covid19.govt.nz to help you in these situations.
- **If your loved one has died from an unknown cause**, a post-mortem may need to be undertaken. Your health provider will assist you in the first instance and the police may also need to be contacted to facilitate this process. They will liaise directly with your appointed whānau member.

Get in touch with a local funeral director

A registered funeral director must be engaged to carry out the functions of burial or cremation and transporting a deceased person in New Zealand.

- Funeral directors will organise arrangements for burial, storage or cremation – as set out above. If you are unsure about funeral directors, work with your local Police Iwi Liaison Officer, 'kaiwhakarite', tribal authority, health provider and/or local Civil Defence Emergency Management Centre to identify someone suitable. Once you have secured the services of a funeral director, **be prepared:**
 - You will need to provide the funeral director with the names of the people within your isolation bubble as a matter of urgency.
 - If the funeral director encounters high levels of anxiety, distress or confrontational behaviour due to the restrictions we are all under, they will contact the local police for assistance.

- **They may wear personal protective equipment whilst they uplift your loved one. This could** include masks, gloves, protective clothing, etc. This may be daunting for whānau, especially young ones.
- The funeral director will only allow **one appointed whānau member to facilitate arrangements**, including paperwork – this may need to be done remotely or at least using strict social distancing measures.
- Where your loved one has died from a **non COVID-19** cause, **up to two whānau members may be allowed to dress the tūpāpaku**, however this must be carried out in the presence of an embalmer/funeral director who will give direction to anyone present on the correct requirements. Activities such as kissing, washing or touching the body must not occur before, during or after the dressing and viewing.
- **Only whānau who have been in the same isolation bubble as the tūpāpaku (i.e. whānau pani/kirimate) will be allowed to go to the funeral home** for viewing, karakia, poroporoaki or mihi.
- Other whānau, friends or others (in separate isolation bubbles) will not be allowed to go to the funeral home either with the whānau-pani/kirimate or separately for viewing, karakia, poroporoaki or mihi.
- All funeral directors are being encouraged to **carry out burials and cremations in a timely manner**.
- Again, **only whānau who have been in the same isolation bubble as the deceased will be allowed to go to the cemetery** alongside the tūpāpaku and funeral director.
- **Importantly, the above option only applies within the region** the tūpāpaku has passed away in. Tūpāpaku are not to be transported inter-regionally.
- **This does not preclude whānau from electing to have their loved one placed in storage (refrigerated)** if this facility is available locally, until we are past the current Alert Level 4 – National Emergency. You can discuss this option with the funeral director if you wish.

Other important information

Covid-19 - Tūpāpaku are potentially contagious

This applies when loved ones have died from Covid-19 and relates to the time period immediately after.

- Where possible, try to minimise contact with the deceased loved one to prevent COVID-19 spread.
- It will be very hard, but in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19 we cannot allow any others to come into contact with the deceased or those who are in isolation with them.

If your loved one passes away in hospital

- You may be able to view them at a safe distance before and after their death, but only if the hospital is still allowing access to their buildings. Remote viewing may be available via technology.
- You will not be permitted to touch, wash and/or dress your loved one's body at the hospital.
- The hospital will transfer your loved one to its mortuary, and then into your funeral director's care.
- You will need to provide the funeral director with the names of the people within your isolation bubble as a matter of urgency prior to going to the funeral home.
- Only whānau who lived at the same residence or have been in the same isolation bubble as the tūpāpaku will be allowed to go to the funeral home for viewing, karakia, poroporoakī or mihi.
- Funeral directors may have restrictions in place depending on their own health and safety policies and protocols. They will let you know what these are.

If your loved one passes away at home

- Whānau touching, washing and/or dressing of your loved one's body poses a significant health risk and is strongly advised against.
- The funeral director will transfer your loved one to their facilities.

If your loved one passes away overseas

- Cremation will almost certainly have to occur, as repatriation is likely to be impossible. Your loved one's ashes may be repatriated at a later date when border controls return to normal.

Travel for tangihanga

- Only whānau who have been in the same isolation bubble as the tūpāpaku will be allowed to go to the funeral home.
- As above, only whānau who have been in the same isolation bubble as the tūpāpaku will be allowed to go to the cemetery alongside the tūpāpaku and funeral director.
- Strict travel restrictions are still in place. Whānau who are travelling must do so using their own vehicles, or by using authorised essential transport services.
- As soon as the burial is complete, or as soon as whānau have received their loved one's ashes, they must return home directly without taking detours.

Protecting everyone in your isolation bubble

- Anyone who is unwell, even mildly so, must remain home.
- People at higher risk must also stay home. This includes kaumātua, pregnant women, whānau who are immune-compromised, have cancer or pre-existing conditions like cardiovascular disease, respiratory issues, kidney problems, diabetes, or high blood pressure.

Cremation

- Although you may not be used to cremation it may have to be an option you consider, especially if you are wanting to return your loved one to their whānau urupā once we recover.
- Be prepared that you may have to wait until Covid-19 restrictions have reduced in order for your loved one's ashes to be returned.

Role of marae

- All marae are closed during Alert Level 4.
- Marae can assist whānau via email, text, and phone contact to ensure they have access to cultural and technology support if needed.

Burial at urupā

- Whānau who live in the same region as their whānau urupā may opt to have their loved one buried there.
- Whānau will need to make the urupā arrangements themselves. Marae can assist with making these arrangements.

Role of funeral directors

- All funeral directors have agreed to follow a strict set of guidelines and will abide by these.
- Funeral directors will liaise with local councils to ensure that all local authority rules are followed – where local authorities have closed their public cemeteries they have been asked to give consideration to allow the whānau pani/kirimate to attend the graveside.
- Funeral directors may have other restrictions in place depending on their own health and safety policies and protocols. They will let you know what these are.

Honouring your loved one

- You may briefly conduct karakia, poroporoakī, and mihi at the funeral home, cemetery and/or urupā. If you do not have the capacity to do this yourself, the funeral director may be able to assist or you may be able to utilise technology.
- You may choose to livestream your time at the funeral home, cemetery and/or urupā to include whānau and friends who were not in the same isolation bubble as the tūpāpaku.
- Once we recover from this pandemic, your whānau may want to come together to honour your loved one. If your whānau member was cremated, you may want to bury their ashes at a whānau urupā. If they were buried immediately, you may choose to hold a service at the burial grounds. These are only some of the ways you may choose to remember your lost loved one.

Getting support

- We encourage whānau to utilise the services of their Police Iwi Liaison Officers, their local 'kaiwhakarite' and their deceased loved one's health providers.
- Grieving is never easy. If you feel you are not coping, it is important to talk with a health professional. For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can call or text 1737 – free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – to talk with a trained counsellor.

Māori Funeral Homes in Aotearoa

The following is a list of Māori funeral homes. This is not an exhaustive list nor does it represent all Māori within this sector. For further funeral home options, you can go to <https://www.fdanz.org.nz>

Auckland Mortuary Services Limited	nzmortuaryservices@gmail.com	0274 525 133
Haven Falls Funeral Services	office@havenfalls.co.nz	Northland: 0800 428 364 Auckland: 0800 428 363 Wellington: 0800 428 365
Mountain View Funeral Services Rotorua	info@mvfs.co.nz	07 350 1461
Ngā Hau e Whā Tangihanga Auckland	info@tangihanga.co.nz	09 527 1866
Ormsby Family Funerals Otorohanga	funerals@ormsby.net.nz	0800 737953
Sincere Funeral Services Hamilton	admin@sincere.co.nz	07 8471465
Simplicity Bereavement Services Hamilton	info@simplicityhamilton.co.nz	07 8476851
Simplicity Bereavement Services Hawkes Bay	simplicityhb@xtra.co.nz	06 8783391
South Auckland Funeral Services	info@safs.co.nz	09 2769000
Tipene Funerals Services Auckland	info@tipenefunerals.co.nz	0800 266662
Tranquility Funeral Services Hāwera	tranquil.fs@xtra.co.nz	
Whānau Funeral Services Cambridge	whanaufunerals@gmail.com	0800 942386
White Haven Funerals Rotorua	whitehaven@whfm.co.nz	07 347979