



15 August 2020

Mayhem at the ports bewildering

The interpretation of a Ministry of Health order ([Covid-19 Public Health Response \(COVID-19 Testing\) Order 2020](#)) is causing mayhem at ports for trucking operators, Road Transport Forum (RTF) chief executive Nick Leggett says.

“This morning (Saturday 15 August) we started hearing that ports were demanding all truck drivers who had been on the port since 21 July had to be tested for Covid-19 by 11.59pm on Monday 17 August,” Leggett says.

“This makes no sense and we questioned the Ministry of Transport at 10.13am this morning (Saturday 15 August). They admitted there was some confusion and said they would come back to us. We are still waiting.

“One trucking operator proactively sent six of his drivers for testing and they have been told they have to go into self-isolation for 14 days, or until they get their test results back. These drivers have not even been to the port and this is a small operation now without drivers.

“This panicked reaction over a weekend threatens to bring the supply chain to a halt. There are only so many truck drivers to go around and if they have to stand down for 14 days, there is going to be no one to deliver any freight to or from ports and airports.

“We cannot understand why the Government is running a line that ports and freight could be the source of Covid-19 infection. It feels like a smokescreen to hide what’s happening in managed isolation and quarantine.

“Now all of a sudden on a Saturday afternoon Ports of Auckland and Port of Tauranga are putting alerts out on social media saying truck drivers have to be tested. But there doesn’t seem to be the capacity to test them in this panicked timeframe.

“This is a complete mess. Drivers come into contact with hardly anyone at the ports. Where is this panic coming from and who is actually in charge of this mess?

“The RTF wishes to urgently clarify the contents and practical requirements of this Ministry of Health order for industry members. The requirements of the order must be clear and unambiguous. What must also be made clear is why? Why is there a sudden panic by the Government around ports and freight?”

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About Road Transport Forum New Zealand (RTF)

RTF provides unified national representation for several regional trucking associations. RTF members include Road Transport Association NZ, National Road Carriers, and NZ Trucking Association. The affiliated representation of the RTF is about 3,000 individual road transport companies which in turn, operate 16-18,000 trucks involved in road freight transport, as well as companies that provide services allied to road freight transport.

The road freight transport industry employs 32,868 people (2.0% of the workforce), has a gross annual turnover of \$6 billion, and transports 93% of the total tonnes of freight moved in New Zealand.