

23 March 2020

Information to schools

Your Compliance and Building Warrant of Fitness During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, Argest has the safety and health of our team, your school and the wider community at the forefront of our minds. We want to provide you with an update on what we're doing in light of the pandemic.

At this time, we are working hard to ensure this situation will not impact our ability to continue to deliver our Building Warrant of Fitness, Fire Alarm testing and monitoring, lift maintenance and call-outs, IQP and Sprinkler Inspections services to you. We are waiting for confirmation on whether the inspection and testing will be considered to be an essential service.

If they are deemed to be an essential service, we want to ensure that everyone is able to continue to meet the requirements of the Building Act 2004 to keep your school safe and compliant. Argest has developed a COVID-19 response plan to ensure that we can look after our team and continue to deliver our services efficiently.

Here's an overview of some of Argest's current initiatives:

- We are following Ministry of Health guidelines and directing staff to remain at home if they are feeling unwell or are required to self-isolate
- We are able to have our people to work remotely from home for BWOF management and already have this in place and tested
- We have put a COVID-19 Policy in place for our inspectors and subcontractors who have to go on to a school site
- Our COVID-19 Policy includes strict directives for our inspectors not to attend site if there is any chance they have had COVID-19 exposure or other illnesses
- We have instigated an additional step to confirm with your school that it is safe to enter and be made aware of additional protocols we need to follow in regards to your school's pandemic plan
- We have shared best practice health advice with our team and subcontractors, instigated extra hygiene precautions based on information from the Ministry of Health and informed our team of the need for social distancing practices

What we ask of you:

- Now the decision has been made to close schools you will still need to have your Specified Systems, like fire alarms and sprinklers, tested and inspected so your school is able to be compliant and have its Building Warrant of Fitness renewed. In order to do this, you will need to provide our inspectors and testers with access. This may require us working with an alternative contact person or site manager. Please advise us if this is the case. All testing and inspections will be done with under tightly managed conditions including strictly enforced
- When your school does close, we can record those closed days on your Monthly Inspections logs so that your staff do not have to complete the monthly and daily inspections as they normally do – This is the same approach as used over the summer holiday break

- If your school cannot be accessed due to the presence of COVID-19, is undergoing deep cleaning after the presence of COVID-19, or you have buildings within the school being used for self-isolation, please contact us immediately so that we can defer inspections
- If people at your school become unwell prior to an inspection, there is testing underway for potential COVID-19 cases, or there is likely to be people that are unwell at school and will be present at the planned time of an inspection or test, please advise us immediately so that we can defer inspections
- Please advise us if there are special conditions and protocols you need our inspectors to follow when at your school in relation to COVID-19 so that we can communicate that to them
- If you have any other face to face meetings booked in with us, please talk to us about changing to “Teams” video or phone conference, or email us

Argest is following a policy of doing everything it can to help keep your school, students and staff safe. While we have had to put new measures in place, we are also keen to minimise disruption and continue to deliver our services to you as normally as possible.

We would like to thank you for your co-operation and support at this time.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Rob Wilson at rwilson@argest.com or our Ministry of Education Compliance Team at TeamMOE@argest.com.

Keep safe,

Christine Scammell
Executive Director