



AREC SPECIAL BULLETIN

8 March 2022

AREC Critical Worker Response Phase-3 Omicron outbreak

Requirement

As a SAR emergency response agency, AREC is expected to have members available to support a Search or Civil Emergency response.

Two things have now happened:

- AREC, LandSAR, Police and the other SAR partners are now exempt from the requirements of the Covid-19 response order when attending a SAROP or SAREX or regular training. This means that whilst involved in those activities we can legally breach the various physical distancing, isolation and other requirements – see section 104 of [the full response order](#). However that doesn't mean we need to throw common-sense out the window.
- We are now governed by the [Covid-19 Phase 3 response rules](#). Basic infection prevention and isolation rules still apply – if you are symptomatic you should get tested then isolate and not attend any SAR other activities for the isolation period (10 days). Also the rules around Close Contacts isolating has changed. You are now only deemed to be a Close Contact if you have a family member with active Covid-19. This will start to affect more and more of our members as the virus moves through the community.

Our problem is the potential loss of capability to respond

The increase in infections will mean that the ability of AREC to respond to a SAR callout or other emergency response may be compromised. This is where we need to prioritise what we do. Our response should be in this order:

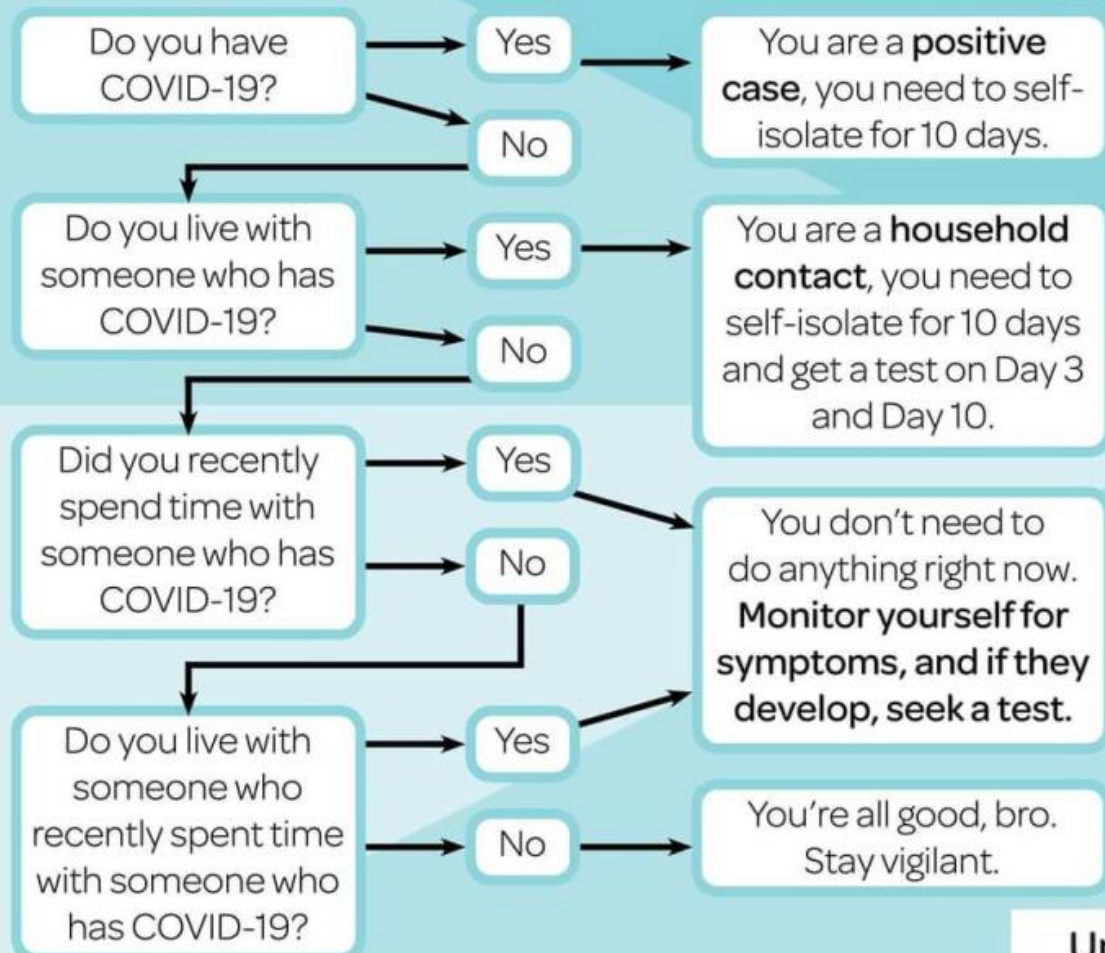
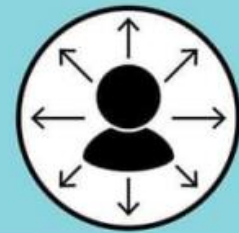
- Primary response – to be from triple vaccinated, asymptomatic members with no family members positive or awaiting test results who are able and willing to respond.
- Secondary response – contact neighbouring groups if time allows to see if they can provide a Primary response as above.
- Tertiary response – an asymptomatic close contact that has received a valid negative Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) immediately prior to responding, may respond as a Critical Worker. Such a responder should take a new RAT test immediately prior to every shift and whilst not on shift remain in self isolation until their self-isolation period ends. Prior to deploying a Close Contact member, the District Manager should be advised, preferably via email, with an explanation as to why this tertiary response option has to be exercised.

Rules for asymptomatic household close contacts – called Critical Worker Requirements

These are clearly outlined on the [MOH website](#). This means RAT tests can now be ordered on-line but only for Critical Workers. The collection points for the test kits can be found here: <https://healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19/?covidTesting=rats> and on that page you can find the link to order the tests.

AREC has been registered as a Critical Services Employer and can now issue letters of approval to members to collect test kits. You need to follow this flow chart to see if you qualify for a RAT test:

What type of contact are you?



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Unite
against
COVID-19

Once you qualify you need to do the following:

- Email HSW@arec.nz with a brief explanation as to why you must be available to attend a SAR callout plus: a scan or screen shot of your Vaccination Passport, plus a declaration that you are a Household Close Contact (someone in your household is Covid-19 positive – RAT or PCR test positive), plus a declaration that at the time of the email you are asymptomatic.
- If you qualify the HSW Advisor will email you back a letter of Authorisation to collect some tests or will advise why you do not qualify.
- You then go to <https://healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19/?covidTesting=rats> select your preferred collection point, locate the link on that page to the ordering link, then order the tests online.
- You will receive a confirmation email/txt with an order number that you need to take to the collection point to authorise the pickup. Note once you arrive you will need:
 - **The email/letter from AREC** as outlined above.
 - **A copy of the txt with the order number** on your mobile phone.
 - **Personal ID** to prove who you are (for example, a driver's licence). This allows them to register your collection of the tests against your name.

Note the RAT tests are issued for self-administration and recording of results. Once a test has been administered the member must enter the test result (Positive or Negative) onto their personal Health Record at the MoH website here: <https://identity.health.nz/>.

There is a video on how to do the data entry here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGifSro0rf4>.

Summary of rules for deploying:

- **No symptomatic AREC member should ever deploy, even if they have a negative RAT test as the RAT test is not 100% accurate.**
- **Only asymptomatic members with boosters should deploy.**
- **Members that have Covid-19 positive close family members must only deploy as a last resort and then only if they meet the Critical Worker Close Contact Exemption Scheme requirements.**
- **As most Groups are likely to not have a full response capability at the peak of the outbreak they should coordinate with their District Manager and the Groups around them to develop a mutual support contingency plan as their primary option.**

In order to qualify for the **Critical Worker Close Contact Exemption, Scheme** the worker (AREC member about to deploy) must be:

- Deemed critical to the delivery of the SAR service as determined by AREC.
- Asymptomatic,
- Vaccinated, and
- If a close contact have received a negative RAT test immediately prior to deployment and have uploaded the result to [My Covid Record](#).

Likelihood of requiring RAT testing

In some of the larger AREC teams there may be sufficient members who are not household close contacts able to respond anyway. The smaller teams with one or two members only will have to be ready to do their bit if they cannot call in support from surrounding AREC Teams.

To ensure enthusiasm to respond doesn't get in the way of sound thinking, the decision to deploy a close-contact member must be advised to the District Manager to ensure all other options have been explored.

Hopefully most members will be able to avoid infection, have low acuity cases, or be asymptomatic due to having received the vaccinations and booster shot.

So, look after yourselves, your family and friends.

Any questions contact HSW@arec.nz

Dave Wilkins ZL1MR
HSW Advisor

Don Robertson ZL2TYR
Chief Executive Officer