

PROACTIVE INFORMATION	
COVID-19: Update	
Deadline: NA	Date of Response: 3 April 2020

Purpose

- 1 This paper provides an overview of the technology being used by Police to check compliance with the self-isolation requirements for people who have recently arrived in New Zealand.

New Zealand's greatest risk of COVID-19 spread is from travellers entering the country

- 2 Limiting and managing the movement of people into and around New Zealand is critical to containing the spread of COVID-19 under Alert Level 4.
- 3 There are three management options for people returning from overseas (quarantine, managed self-isolation and self-isolation within the home).
- 4 When these three options were developed, there was an expectation that Police would conduct a compliance check on all of the people in self-isolation in their home within 72 hours of their arrival back in New Zealand.
- 5 The number of people who have returned to New Zealand since the tiered system was put in place has been higher than expected, and there are now approximately 4000 people in self-isolation in their home. This has resulted in significant pressure on Police resources to complete compliance checks. Delays in transmitting information (names, addresses etc.) from ports of entry to frontline police staff have also created challenges in meeting the 72 hour target.

Police has developed an online system to assist with checking that people are complying with the self-isolation requirements

- 6 To help meet the demand, an existing search and rescue tool (which has been available to Police for several years) has been repurposed to assist with checking the location of a person. The system went live on the evening of 31 March 2020.

How does the technology work?

- 7 When a person arrives into New Zealand from overseas they are screened at the border. As part of this process they are required to provide a mobile phone number to the screening officer.
- 8 Incoming passengers are advised that in addition to welfare calls from Ministry of Health officials, they will receive a text, phone call or visit from Police to check

compliance with the Level 4 Alert requirements and adherence to the their self-isolation plan.

- 9 Mobile phone numbers of incoming passengers are provided to Police and Immigration staff operating in an All of Government team.
- 10 Police staff sign into a website with a unique user name and password. They create a new record of the contact including the person's name, phone number and address. The system then sends a message to the person which says
*"NZPolice COVID19 self-isolation check under S.70(1)(f) Health Act 1956.
Select the link to confirm geolocation: [internet address link]"*
- 11 The system is able to provide the Police staff member undertaking the check with a confirmation that the message has been received.
- 12 The person receiving the message is required to click on the internet address link at the end of the text message. This brings up a screen on their phone which will ask them to agree to their location details being shared.
- 13 If the recipient clicks "accept", the location details including latitude, longitude, closest address and accuracy data (to within metres) are provided back to the system.
- 14 The accuracy of the system requires the person to have a smart phone, a functioning battery and the ability to connect to GPS. It will never be 100% effective.
- 15 Police staff can then confirm that the address provided in the person's self-isolation plan at the point of arrival matches the location of the mobile device. An ongoing record is created which tracks the location of the mobile device every time it connects with the mobile network until the contact is closed. Police are closing contacts within the system as soon as the person's location has been confirmed to match the address given in their self-isolation plan. If for any reason a contact is not actively closed, it will automatically close after 30 hours of going live.
- 16 If the person does not accept (i.e. by clicking "no" or "block") or does not respond to the message, the record stays in the system but does not include any location data.
- 17 In addition, many people are using the reply function on their phone and a number are providing a photograph of themselves in their home or isolation location (though photographs are not requested).

Where is the information stored? Is it secure?

- 18 The All of Government team is using a separate website and standalone server to undertake this function, not the New Zealand Police website. None of the information transmitted enters into the Police system. All of the information recorded in the system can be deleted at the end of the persons 14 day self-isolation period or at any other time as necessary. Police is currently

considering and seeking legal advice on what to do with this data in the longer term. The data will be cached and made not accessible via the internet.

- 19 Each staff member undertaking compliance checks logs into the system using a unique identifier (username and password). Each contact initiated by the staff member is recorded along with the response from the recipient. Full records of all log-ins into the system and all contacts created are kept so that contacts can be linked back to the Police or Immigration user if necessary.
- 20 There has been online chatter about the security of the system and the potential to hack into the system. Work is ongoing to ensure the system is secure and security systems are being further strengthened.

How is the system working?

- 21 As at 2pm on 2 April 2020, Police have contacted 5984 individuals via e-text. 48.4% of people who have been sent messages have agreed to share their location and this number is increasing. 5.9% of recipients have declined to share their location data. The priority focus of contacts is with the more recent returners for which a goal of contact within 72 hours was set. The system does however allow for follow up of previous returners (if appropriate information is available).
- 22 The overall feedback from those contacted via e-text is positive and people have texted back thanking Police for keeping them and their wider communities safe and well. There have been approximately 1300 photographs received from people who have responded to the message.
- 23 In the first 30 hours of its operation, the use of this system has avoided the need for approximately 2500 visits, which is a significant reduction in demand on Police resources.
- 24 Some recipients are naturally suspicious of scams and are not responding or are checking the legitimacy through other sources such as ringing 105 or through MBIE CERT notifications. This was expected given the speed with which the system was established and the limited wider public communication. A notice about checking by text is posted on the front page of the Police website and new arrivals from 31 March have been advised in person. Recent media coverage will also improve public awareness.

Next Steps

- 25 In order to provide greater assurance that the text message is from NZ Police, an update to the system is in progress to amend the web address which people are required to click on to include the "police.govt.nz" URL. The new link should help to reassure people that they are not providing access to their location data to a third party.
- 26 Participation in the use of geo-location will remain voluntary and consent based. People who do not respond to the message or who do not agree to the use of

geo-location will continue to be telephoned or visited in person by Police. Random compliance checks will also continue to occur.

27 A briefing on the system will also be provided to the Privacy Commissioner.

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