

# Light Duties

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# Statement of Policy

## Purpose

This chapter provides guidance for the assignment of light duties to Police employees facing temporary limitations due to injury, illness, or disability. Use of temporary light duty can provide employees with an opportunity to remain productive while recovering and provide a work option for employees who may otherwise risk the health and safety of themselves or others by remaining on duty when unfit for their regular assignment.

## What

Light duties are temporary assignments for employees who are unable to perform their regular job functions and are tailored to accommodate an employee's illness, injury, or temporary disability. These duties accommodate the individual's medical limitations and facilitate their recovery and rehabilitation, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to the organisation while addressing health-related limitations. Light duties may involve a modified workload, adjusted responsibilities and powers, or non-traditional assignments. Light duties may include an employee's normal duties but on reduced hours.

This policy is not intended to cover minor illnesses or injuries where recovery is expected in under 10 working days.

## Why

The use of light duties provides an employee with the opportunity to continue contributing to the organisation, while limiting the responsibilities that may otherwise provide a health risk to themselves or others. Remaining engaged with the organisation will aid the employee's well-being and can benefit their rehabilitation.

## How

This policy supports the well-being, safety, and planned rehabilitation of all employees while maintaining operational efficiency. By defining clear guidelines for the scope and management of light duties, this policy strikes a balance between the responsibilities of Police and the health needs of the workforce by fostering a supportive environment that promotes recovery and facilitates a seamless return to full duties.

The underlying principle of this policy is that both Police and the employee will act in good faith in applying this policy. This means that Police will make all reasonable attempts to find suitable alternative duties for the employee and that the employee will keep all appointments and following medical advice and not participating in activities that will aggravate any injury or prolong their recovery.

## Who

This policy applies to all employees of Police appointed on a permanent or fixed term basis (including Constabulary recruits who are on a fixed term agreement). It does not apply to casual roles.

## Relevant legislation and related documents

Under section [36](#) of the [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#) (HSWA), Police has a primary duty of care to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its workers and others affected by our work. The Act's principles of ensuring the health and safety of employees includes providing suitable work or accommodations for employees suffering from illnesses or injuries. Under section [86](#) of the HSWA, Police may direct an employee to carry out alternate work until the employee can return to full duties.

Police has a duty to provide meaningful light duties during an individual's recovery from an injury. Under section [372](#) of the [Accident Compensation Act 2001](#), modifications to an Organisational Care Plan can be initiated by Police or the employee and may include a return-to-work process and document light duties assignments for an employee. It's important to note that these provisions are distinct from the compensations outlined in the Act.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with Police's [Rehabilitation policy and procedures](#) (applies to all illness or injury related absences), the [Accident compensation](#) policies and the [Accident Compensation Corporation \(ACC\)](#) agreement with Police.

For related police manual chapters and legislation see:

- [Work related injuries](#)
- [Non-work-related injuries](#)
- [Illness related absences](#)
- [Police deployability](#)
- [Trauma support policy](#)
- [Employment Relations Act 2000](#)

## Disputes / complaints

Where a dispute and/or complaint arises, which is related to return to work, rehabilitation, Police or the employee may implement the '[rehabilitation dispute/complaints resolution](#)' process.

## Return to work framework

Return to work and Injury management are a significant element of Police's [Health, Safety and Wellness System Framework](#) whose aim is to ensure that our people:

- understand the importance of being safe and well
- feel empowered, supported and recognised for making safety and wellness an intrinsic part of what they do for themselves and others
- are committed to remaining fit for work and fit for life.



The [Return-to-Work](#) team is established as one of the key Delivery of Services functions in the Framework with focus on ensuring staff recover from injury or illness. They provide advice, guidance and support regarding injury management, light duty assignments, sick leave, and rehabilitation by working with Police employees, their supervisor, Police's Third-Party Administrator (Howden Care), ACC and medical specialists.

Contact a [Return-to-Work Advisor](#) for more information.

# Light Duties policy

Temporary light duties (for clarity, in this document the terms Light Duties and Temporary Light Duties mean the same thing), when available, are for eligible Police employees who, because of injury, illness, or disability, are temporarily unable to perform their regular job functions but who are capable of performing alternative duty assignments or a modification of their normal duties (e.g. reduced hours, working from home etc). Use of temporary light duties can provide employees with an opportunity to remain productive while recovering, as well as provide a work option for employees who may otherwise risk the health and safety of themselves or others by remaining on duty when unfit for their regular job functions.

## Definitions

<b>Job functions</b>	The tasks assigned to a Police employee. <b>Note:</b> full regular job functions are assigned to employees that are fit, capable, fully operational and are a part of an employee's regular day to day tasks, where they would otherwise not be on light duties.
<b>Light duties</b>	The situation when an eligible employee is unable to perform their full regular job functions for a short period, while recovering from an injury or illness.
<b>Light duty assignments</b>	Work or tasks that are either an alternative to that of the employee's regular job functions or a modification of them, in accordance with a doctor's recommendation or physical limitations/restrictions.
<b>Medical health professional</b>	Generally, a general practitioner (GP), specialist or nurse practitioner who is able to issue a medical certificate. <b>Note:</b> This is not to be confused with a registered health professional such as a psychologist or a physiotherapist, who can help inform and diagnose the severity of an illness but will refer to a medical health professional to issue a medical certificate for any lost time.

## Medical limitations

The decision to assign an employee to light duties will be based on the certification of a medical health professional and their assessment of the employee's ability to perform their regular job functions in relation to relevant physical and mental conditions. If no suitable light duties are available, then we may need to consider that the employee remains off work.

The specific tasks assigned as part of a light duty assignment will be informed by a medical health professional's assessment which considers the employees capabilities and limitations. If the medical health professional's assessment finds that an employee should be limited to a light duty assignment, this needs to be supported by a current medical certificate that includes any restrictions or limitations.

Adjustments to the scope of light duty assignments may be made based on medical assessments and the employee's recovery progress.

## Duration and extensions

The duration of an employee's light duties will be determined by the medical health professional. The duration is determined by the severity of the injury/illness and expected recovery time. It is within the interests of the employee and organisation to find a balance between appropriate recovery time and the need for regular work duties to resume so a collaborative effort is expected to determine a reasonable period of time for a return to full duties.

Employees are required to have regular medical reviews and procure updated medical certificates to support their rehabilitation and assess their progress to adjust the duration as required. If an employee's injury or illness prevents a return to full duties, it may necessitate a re-evaluation of their work situation or medical disengagement from the role.

## Accessing Light Duty assignments

Where employees meet the criteria and circumstance threshold below, they can access support and available light duty assignments by applying via the process here.

## Eligible employees

Employees are eligible for light duty assignments if they experience a temporary injury or illness that impedes their ability to perform their regular job functions. Eligibility is determined by a medical health professional's assessment of the employee's condition, supported by a current medical certificate.

## Eligible circumstances

Light duty assignments may be requested when an eligible employee:

- **has an injury or illness** - a physical or mental condition that hinders an employee's ability to perform their regular job functions, leading to the need for modified or reduced tasks within their regular job or alternative duties to accommodate their recovery or health limitations. This includes both work and non-work-related illnesses and injuries.
- **has a debilitating condition** - Light duty work is sometimes used for employees who have other conditions that render them temporarily unable to perform their normal duties. For example, employees who have developed symptoms of severe stress and need a reduced workload while receiving counselling may be placed on light duties.
- **is pregnant** - pregnant employees are eligible to request light duty assignments at any point during their pregnancy (<https://tenone.police.govt.nz/media/2896>) and, where light duty assignments are available, the organisation will seek to accommodate them. If no light duty assignments are available to the pregnant employee, they may be required to start their agreed maternity leave at an earlier date. See the [Parental Leave](#) policy for further details.
- **responds to a critical incident** - after a [critical incident](#) light/alternative duties may be assigned to an employee who has had a stressful or traumatic response. For more information see the [Trauma support policy](#) for further details and liaise with a District Wellness Advisor.



## Working from home

Employees on light duty assignment may be able to temporarily work from home when a formal agreement with their manager/supervisor and their Return-to-Work Advisor is reached. Working from home may be full-time, follow an ongoing and regular schedule, or be part time-time and flexible depending on the needs of the employee and Police. This is to support a conducive environment for recovery for the affected employee.

Remote work expectations (tasks, hours etc.) are determined in line with a medical health professional's assessment of the employees' condition (via a current medical certificate) and agreed upon between the employee and their manager/supervisor. Regular communication will be maintained to support collaboration and monitor the employee's rehabilitation needs.

Compliance with police policies, confidentiality, and data security are essential during remote work. Any adjustments to the arrangement will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

See [home workers - health and safety guidelines](#) for further information and guidance.

## Unable to accommodate light duties

In instances where, despite every effort being made, Police cannot accommodate light duties, alternative solutions, including leave options or modified work arrangements may be explored to support the employee during this period. If no suitable alternative arrangements can be identified, and accommodating light duties is not feasible, Police will engage in open communication with the employee. This may involve discussing available leave options, rehabilitation programs, or any other support services that can aid the employee's recovery while recognising the limitations of the current role. The wellbeing of the employee remains the priority, and efforts will be made to explore avenues that align with both organisation needs and the individual's health circumstances.

## Work and non-work-related injuries

In both work and non-work-related scenarios, the principle of no-fault compensation under ACC (via Howden Care) aims to support employees in their recovery, emphasising rehabilitation and minimising financial burden. Light duties may be part of this rehabilitation process, tailored to the nature of the injury and its impact on an employee's ability to perform their regular job functions.

### Work related injuries

These occur while an individual is performing a task associated with their employment and is defined in the [Accident Compensation Act 2001](#) (s21B, s24, s26, s28, s29 and s30).

### Non-work-related injuries

These occur outside the scope of employment during personal activities and is defined in the [Accident Compensation Act 2001](#) (s25, 26, 32 and 35).

See [work related injuries](#) and / or [non-work-related injuries](#) for further information and guidance.

## Head injuries

Head injuries can result from any blow to the head, the head hitting the ground or an object, being hit by an object, a fall or a vehicle incident. This may result in concussion, a blood clot or a bleed to the brain.

Any employee with a head injury (as diagnosed by a medical specialist) must be removed from duty immediately and:

- have the situation communicated to their supervisor, and
- be assessed by a medical specialist and follow their guidance, and
- consult with their supervisor and [Return-to-Work Advisor](#), and
- provide medical clearance prior to returning to full duties.

See [head injury](#) under [incidents and recovery](#) and [preventative health](#) for further information and guidance.

## Court appearance while on light duties

Constabulary employees may be required to appear in court for ongoing cases or legal proceedings. While on light duties an officer may only appear in court, with the approval and consent of their manager/supervisor. When this occurs, the officer must advise the court, via the Prosecutor or Crown Solicitor, that they are on light duties and must work with their manager/supervisor and their Return-to-Work Advisor to manage the individual's situation.

Officers may be exempt from wearing their uniform when medical conditions may significantly impact their ability to wear the standard uniform. In these cases, the officer must discuss this with their manager/supervisor and are expected to wear professional attire that reflects the dignity of the court setting.

Consideration must be given to the TENR risk assessment when making the decision to deploy an officer on light duties. See [Police deployability](#) for further information and guidance.

**Note:** Police officers on light duty assignments who have approval to appear at court, must only wear their uniform during the court proceedings. It must be removed or covered when travelling to and from the Court. If a police officer is seen in uniform, they may be expected by the public to perform the full range of police duties or respond to emerging incidents, functions that the officer may be unable to perform to their full capability while on light duties. Preventing further harm to the officer is paramount.

## Return to full duties

While an employee is on light duties, an Organisational Care Plan will be developed in collaboration between the employee, their Return-to-Work Advisor and manager/supervisor. Unless agreed to, an Organisational Care Plan is not required while an employee is off-work fully unfit. This plan will consider their health status and any ongoing support needs. An employee must have medical clearance from their health professional to return to their full regular job functions. Regular communication and check-ins must be maintained to address concerns and monitor progress. Adjustments to the plan will be considered as needed, to facilitate a successful and sustainable transition.

See [Light duties process and procedures](#) for further information and guidance.

While an employee is fully unfit, an Organisational Care Plan will be drafted between the Return-to-Work Advisor and the manager/supervisor on behalf of the employee. The Plan will indicate who's responsible for checking in with the staff member to ensure regular contact and engagement is being made with the injured/ill employee. Checking in may be in the form of a text message, phone call or in some circumstances a visit. The manager/supervisor will be expected to provide information on what is an appropriate level of contact, how often and the method undertaken. The manager/supervisor will be expected to inform the Return-to-Work Advisor of any changes that occur and will update the Plan accordingly.

## Restrictions

There is a public expectation that a constable in uniform is able to perform the full range of Police duties. As a constabulary employee in uniform may be seen by the public and may not be able to perform to their full capacity, certain restrictions need to be placed on constabulary employees on light duties. This is also necessary to maintain their well-being and maintain public safety. Additionally, use of some equipment may pose a safety risk to themselves or others.

## Uniform

Police officers on light duties should not wear uniform, as there is a possibility that the officer on light duties, may be expected to perform the full range of police duties, functions that the officer may be unable to perform to their full capacity.

Unless there is a plain clothes allowance for an employee's regular role, they are unable to claim the plain clothes allowance while performing light duties.

Plain clothes allowance is set out in the CEA and is intended for specific operational roles. Light duties plain clothes is not an ongoing requirement of their role and is for the health, safety and wellbeing of the employee on light duties.

If uniform must be worn for Court appearances, then the uniform is to be removed or covered, it must not be worn outside of the building.

## Police vehicles

Police officers on light duties should not drive marked police vehicles, as there is the possibility that the officer on light duties may be expected to respond to an incident, engage in urgent duty driving, be flagged down, or be expected by the public to perform the full range of police duties, which they may be unable to perform to their full capability. Employees may be able to use an unmarked car if available. Where no unmarked car is available, the employee's manager/supervisor should be advised.

## Weapons carriage

Police officers on light duties are restricted from carrying service weapons (TASER, firearm etc.).

## Undertaking operational work

During the period of light duties, police officers are not to undertake operational police work. This restriction aims to prevent additional strain on the employee's health while allowing for a focused recovery. As well as, mitigating potential risks associated with health limitations, ensuring that individuals assigned to specific tasks are physically and mentally capable. By doing this we enhance our ability to respond effectively, safeguard the public and maintain the highest standards of service, ensuring we align with our commitment to deliver a safe and reliable policing service.

## Leaving the station

During the period of light duties, police officers are restricted from undertaking operational police work both inside restricted areas of the police station e.g. Custody suites, and outside of the station and should not be seen to leave the station in any operational capacity. This restriction aims to prevent additional strain on the employee's health while allowing for a focused recovery.

This extends to any reintegration programme designed to support the employee back to full regular duties.

## Training

Employee training while on light duties must be considered based on the employees' current condition and whether the training would directly contradict the medical health professional's advice. The decision to allow the employee to participate in scheduled training (other than PCT, PITT, AOS and STG training - see below) is up to the discretion of the employee's supervisor and based on the employee's most recent medical certificate. Where appropriate this decision should be made with advice from the employee's Return-to-Work Advisor.

## PCT and Frontline Safety Training

Where a police officers scheduled PCT or FST training overlaps with a light duty assignment and a medical health professional has not cleared them to partake, these will be deferred for the employee to complete once they have returned to their full regular job functions. In some instances, a medical health professional will provide clearance to partake in training including PCT but will review full clearance once all training has taken place. Where this occurs, the employee will ensure the Return-to-Work Advisor and Physical Education Officer are fully informed why full clearance is being withheld.

## Participating in organised Specialist Group training days

Where police officers scheduled specialist training, such as AOS, STG or SAR, overlaps with light duty assignment and a medical professional has not cleared them to partake, the police officer is not permitted to participate in the training activities. The police officer may attend in an observational capacity **only**, if agreed with their Supervisor and Return-to-Work Advisor. It is imperative that the officer be cleared to return to full regular duties if they are to fully partake in any operational training.

The police officer may participate in medically approved light duty activities at the training location provided they are not in conflict with medical certification restrictions.

## Medications

Employees on light duties are not required to disclose any medications they are taking, however staff must be aware of the [Drug and Alcohol](#) policy and what medications are tested for, should they be involved in a critical incident or part of a work group that is tested regularly. If employees have any concerns regarding the medication they are taking in relation to the [Drug and Alcohol Policy](#), they should speak with their doctor.

## Personal Leave

Employees on light duties and receiving ACC compensation must confirm any annual leave absences with their Return-to-Work Advisor. The Return-to-Work Advisor will discuss the leave with the employees Howden Care case worker to ensure any leave does not prolong the employee's recovery or interrupt with medical treatments. This could ultimately extend the light duties assignment and delay the employee from returning to their full job functions.

**Note:** Applying for personal leave follows the same process as when on full regular duties and must be approved by the employee's manager. Employees who are fully unfit and are on Weekly Compensation are entitled to take leave and are expected to submit Annual Leave requests for any planned holidays. Employees should check with their relevant Case Manager and Return to Work Advisor to ensure there is no planned rehabilitation activities scheduled during the proposed leave.

## Pay

An employee's employment agreement, including their remuneration, is not affected by light duties. Where an employee works less than their contracted hours their remuneration will be pro-rated to reflect the hours worked, this also extends to allowances generally payable to the employee that cannot be performed while on light duties. Howden Care manages compensation on behalf of ACC for police employees and will support employees (alongside their Return-to-Work Advisor) to access up to approximately 80% compensation (**Note:** calculated from the average pay received over the past 4 and 52 weeks including all taxable allowances). The remaining approximate 20% can be covered by an employee's available leave balances, utilising their sick leave balance in the first instance.

## Applying for roles/EOI's/transfers

Employees on light duties are allowed to apply for and accept internal roles and EOI's as they would if they were on full regular duties, provided the receiving manager agrees and the new position aligns with their current health restrictions. Transfers while on light duties to another district are allowed and must be approved by both District Commanders and the employee's Return-to-Work Advisor.

It is important to note that the receiving manager is aware of the employee's rehabilitation and the delays that can occur when reengaging with new medical specialists, additional assessments and the associated increased time and fiscal cost that a change in service providers or medical wait lists can have.

It is also important to note, where an employee has been off work fully unfit and has travelled outside of their rostered District to convalesce, they must return to their substantive district to undertake their light

duties.

Employees who wish to undertake light duties assignments in an alternative district can only do so with approval by both District Commanders and the employee's Return to Work Advisor.

## **District Commanders overriding Light Duties**

Compliance with the light duties is mandatory, and any deviation must be approved by the District Commander/Director following a thorough assessment of the employee's fitness for operational duties.

# Light duties process and procedures

This section outlines the necessary steps to be taken to commence light duties by the eligible employee, as well as the necessary steps from their regular supervisor/s, managers, and their Return-to-Work Advisor.

Step	Action
1	<p><b>The eligible employee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must report the injury/illness/disability to their supervisor as soon as reasonably possible and include all relevant information.</li> </ul> <p>Relevant documentation can include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Medical certificates issued by a medical health professional (GP, Surgeon, Specialist etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Medical certificates must be provided for <b>ALL</b> ACC related absences to access the ACC Scheme (via Howden Care).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An Organisational Care Plan between the employee and their direct supervisor/manager is to be developed. This is to be coordinated with the Return-to-Work Advisor.</li> <li>- Any other relevant evidence which supports the request for light duties</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> when employees are seeking medical treatment, they are encouraged to utilise the light duties return to work pack to best set them up for performing light duties</p>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must log any work-related incidents into MyPolice</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upon confirming the Care Plan, Police will identify available light duties opportunities they deem to be suitable to replace the employee's regular duties. Suitable temporary alternative duties must be work that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- safe for the employee to do and which will not aggravate their medical or physical condition</li> <li>- meaningful</li> <li>- agreed upon by the medical health professional to be work that is suitable.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must keep timesheet/records of hours while on light duties.</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must adhere to any of the restrictions laid out in this policy including restrictions to uniform, vehicles, weapons, and constabulary powers, including the use of tactical options.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Light duties may or may not be within your workgroup and you may be required to work within a different workgroup. Light duties may follow a different shift pattern to your regular shift pattern depending on the nature of your injury and any restrictions that may be necessary. Shift changes will be discussed and will only occur to meet the needs of the employee, therefore the Short Notice Shift Change allowance does not apply.</p>



Step	Action
	<p><b>The Supervisor/Manager</b></p> <p>Supervisors and managers are responsible for initiating and managing employees who are on light duties and supporting their rehabilitation to the best of their abilities.</p> <p>When an employee has been placed/has requested to be placed on light duties, supervisors and managers:</p>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must engage with the Return-To-Work Advisor to outline the employee's goals to recovery while on light duties. These must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear goals and timeframes</li> <li>- Regular review dates</li> <li>- Signatures by all relevant parties, including the employee</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must maintain weekly monitoring to track how the employee is managing their duties and to identify any barriers in returning to work.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> This is an audit requirement and failure to do so may impact NZ Police's Accredited Employer programme.</p>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must ensure, if it is a workplace incident, the incident has been recorded in MyPolice.</li> </ul>

	<b>Return-to-Work Advisors</b>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide support to supervisors and managers regarding the management of employees placed on light duties</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop an Organisational Care Plan to provide support, document any medical certificate restrictions and advice to employees who are needing to be placed on light duties including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sick leave</li> <li>- Rehabilitation</li> <li>- Return to Work</li> <li>- ACC and communication with the ACC Third Party Administrator Howden Care</li> <li>- Health Insurance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Employee wellness and support

Police are committed to providing proactive and effective rehabilitation for all employees who are injured or become ill during or outside of work. There are several services available to employees both during their time on light duties and during their transition back to regular duties.

## Return-to-Work Advisors

The Return-to-Work team ensures staff recovering from injury or illness are actively supported to once again be fit for work and fit for life. They provide advice, guidance and support regarding injury management, sick leave, rehabilitation, return to work, ACC and health insurance.

## Wellness Services

[Wellness Services](#) are a team of registered health professionals who work within Police to build emotional resilience in all staff. They provide confidential advice, guidance, and support to help you manage the challenges and demands of your role.

## Safer People

[Safer people](#) actively supports the wellness and safety of our people to ensure they remain fit for work and for life.

# Privacy

All information provided by staff, including medical, is kept and handled in line with the [Privacy Act 2020](#) and is confidential and kept separate from other personnel files. New Zealand Police are also bound by the conditions as set out in the [Health Information Privacy Code 2020](#).

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