

Most quarries to close over lockdown

Eamon Rood - Tue, 24 Mar 2020

The majority of quarries around the country are expected to close during the four-week national lockdown to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus, but there will be some exceptions.

Aggregate and Quarry Association CEO Wayne Scott, who is also CEO of the extractives health and safety council MinEx, says most of the major companies which dominate production are telling him they plan to shut down operations today or tomorrow.



“While some production is able to be carried out under the Essential Services List to support such things as critical infrastructure and farming, most big operators are saying that shutting down is the best option for them at this time.”

Scott says some quarries with maintenance and operations contracts with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency may choose to continue operations.

“NZTA is saying these activities are essential services and it will continue with cyclic maintenance and emergency works. This includes summer renewals and reseal programmes underway which need to be completed.

“NZTA is also advising that in accordance with government guidance, capital works are not seen as an essential service and must be stood down for four weeks.”

Health and safety top priority

Scott says putting the health of staff first during the Covid-19 pandemic was the first priority and this was best achieved by self-isolation.

“While a lot of staff spend much of their time in machinery cabs, they still engage with others at times like lunch breaks and maintaining social distance and sanitised environments takes a lot of effort to meet government requirements and be effective.”

He says he is advising companies that if current stocks are low, it may be advisable to do some production before any shutdown.

“If we have a major climatic event or similar, quarries need to provide rock or aggregate to protect riverbanks or repair roads; there should be stocks available to meet such critical infrastructure need if it arises.”

Scott says quarries going into shutdown should be in touch with their local councils to provide contact points, should any urgent requirements emerge over the next four weeks.

“We will obviously be listening to our members in the interim and reviewing matters as the end of the designated self-isolation period approaches to see what, if any, change is necessary.”