



Worker Accommodation Standards Recognised Seasonal Employer

Accessing workers from overseas for the horticulture/viticulture sector

Information for Employers

Accommodation is an integral part of the pastoral care requirements for the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy. These minimum standards have been developed to assist employers to obtain and maintain their RSE status, and will be used to audit.

The **Health and Safety in Employment Regulations 1995**, **Health and Safety at Work Act 2015**, and [Work Safe's 'Worker Accommodation Fact Sheet' \(November 2016\)](#) include standards for accommodation and general facilities for agricultural workers. These standards have been used as a basis for these minimum standards upon which to assess the suitability of worker-accommodation at RSE application, agreement to recruit, self-audit, spot-check audits and renewal.

The RSE standards are common minimum requirements across New Zealand, and do not reflect any Territorial Authority (TA) requirements, some of which may go above and beyond the RSE standards. In addition to meeting RSE standards, all worker accommodation will need to comply with the **Residential Tenancies Act 1986** and any local Territorial Authority requirements. Because of possible time delays it is advised to make early contact with TAs to ensure that accommodations meet all territorial authority requirements including, where necessary, change of use permits and building consents, etc. Evidence of meeting local TA building code will need to be provided during accommodation audit.

If the employer doesn't own the accommodation, the employer is still responsible for ensuring the accommodation meets these minimum standards and is appropriately maintained so that workers are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from the accommodation.

Refer to the RSE Pastoral Care Standards and the RSE Employment Standards for further information on additional guidelines regarding deductions from wages for providing accommodation to workers.

Minimum Accommodation Standards

Adequate facilities and amenities should be provided for workers, following these minimum standards.

Section A

Buildings

A1. Caravans and tents aren't suitable accommodation and cannot be used.

A2. Accommodation must:

- a. be soundly built from permanent and weatherproof materials. New and altered/renovated premises should comply with the current Building Act 2004 and the NZ Building Code.
- b. be fully weatherproof, with gutters and downpipes to carry rainwater away from the building
- c. have lined and finished interior walls (timber-framed buildings)
- d. have stopped and battened joins in wall linings
- e. have paper, paint or varnish on wall surfaces
- f. have suitable thermal insulation
- g. have draught-proof floors with smooth, easily cleanable surfaces. If the floor is concrete, it should be covered with material such as sheet vinyl flooring

- h. have ventilation openings in foundation walls that are covered with mesh or screened to keep out vermin
- i. be located away from stock yards and other similar areas
- j. not have machinery and chemicals stored nearby
- k. be kept clean and hygienic, and maintained in good order and condition
- l. have adequate window coverings

A3. Neither a garage nor any other non-habitable structure should be used for accommodation. (A property owner / manager proposing to use this type of structure for accommodation must apply for a Building Consent to undertake a “Change of Use”. This consent will cover the requirements of Sections 114 and 115 of the Building Act 2004.)

Section B

Bedrooms

- B1.** Per [Work Safe’s ‘Worker Accommodation Fact Sheet’ \(November 2016\)](#), bedrooms should have the following minimum dimensions as a guide, as well as meeting any local territorial authority requirements:
- a. For one person: 6 m² of floor space, 2.4 m high in any part, 1.8 m wide in any part.
 - b. For two people: 9 m² of floor space, 2.4 m high in any part, 2.1 m wide in any part.
 - c. For more than two people: 9 m² for the first two people and 4.5 m² for every extra person – 2.4 m high in any part, 2.1 m wide in any part.
- B2.** Bedrooms should be furnished with suitable beds, mattresses and bedding.
- B3.** There should be a separate bed per person.
- B4.** When two or more persons share a bedroom they should be of the same gender (unless otherwise agreed to).
- B5.** Bedrooms should be furnished with cupboards or wardrobes for hanging up clothes and storage of personal effects.
- B6.** A secure location for valuables must be provided. If it is not provided in bedroom, a locked secure location on the property should be provided which will keep residents’ valuables secure.
- B7.** Appropriate bedding provided based on regional and seasonal conditions (e.g. Central Otago in winter).
- B8.** For bedrooms with over 6 people, refer to local territorial authority building code which may apply boarding house guidelines.
- B9.** Capacity of beds in the room should be appropriate and adequate for a comfortable long-term stay of several months for the residents (i.e. facilities that are fine for a short term traveller stay of 2-3 weeks is not always adequate for long-term 7-month stay. Use judgement on what is reasonable.)

Section C

Cooking facilities

- C1.** The cooking facilities should be big enough to prepare food in and be a sufficient capacity for the number of residents. The cooking facilities and dining room can be in the same room.
- C2.** The cooking facilities should have:
- a. at least 1.5 m clear floor space on the working side of the cooking stove and sink bench (per guidance in WorkSafe’s Worker Accommodation Fact Sheet)
 - b. suitable and adequate cooking equipment, utensils and appliances that are sufficient for the number of residents to use for cooking purposes
 - c. hot water at the sink, sufficient for the number of residents
 - d. adequate ventilation – as a guide, the window space should be at least equal to one tenth of the floor area, and at least half of the windows should open
 - e. enough cupboard space for storing non-perishable food, utensils and equipment, sufficient for the number of residents
- C3.** The cooking facilities should not be used as a bedroom.

Section D**Refrigeration**

D1. There should be adequate refrigerator and freezer space with sufficient capacity for the food storage needs of the number of residents.

Section E**Dining facilities**

E1. Dining rooms should have:

- a. sufficient room for the residents to eat their meals in reasonable comfort – as a guide, the dining room should allow at least 1.1 m² of floor space for each person
- b. tables and enough seating for all workers at one sitting – benches with backs are acceptable, but don't attach them to the floor, as this makes it harder to clean
- c. adequate and sufficient equipment, utensils and appliances for dining of all residents.

E2. The dining room should not be used as a bedroom.

Section F**Casual Recreational Open Space (e.g. lounge room)**

F1. The accommodation building should provide sufficient open space where the residents can relax, appropriate for number of residents.

Section G**Washing facilities**

G1. There should be sufficient hand basins with sufficient hot and cold water capacity given the number of residents.

G2. There should be sufficient baths or showers given the number of residents. The ratio is to be at least 1 bath or shower per 7 persons. However, the Territorial Authority requirements may differ dependent on accommodation type and set-up. It is therefore necessary to ensure that RSE employers contact their local TAs to discuss.

G3. Each shower should have an attached dressing area. Each compartment (shower and dressing area) should have a floor area of at least 1 m².

G4. If there are not separate facilities for females, the washing facility should be a fully enclosed compartment with walls from the floor to ceiling and a lockable door.

Section H**Laundry facilities**

H1. For laundering clothes, sufficient laundry facilities should be provided. This includes washing a machine and laundry tub (required by the NZ Building Code) at a minimum, and the laundry facilities have sufficient capacity given the number of residents.

H2. There should be a sufficient space available to dry clothes adequately, given the number of residents.

Section I

Sanitary conveniences

- I1.** There should be a minimum of flushing toilet provided and capable of being locked. Installed toilets should meet the standards in the Building Act 2004 and building codes.
- I2.** If there are not separate toilet facilities for females, the toilet facility should be a fully enclosed compartment with walls from the floor to ceiling and a lockable door.
- I3.** Sufficient toilet facilities need to be provided given the number of residents. One bathroom and one toilet for each 7 persons should be provided and should comply with NZ Building Code. However, the Territorial Authority requirements may be more stringent dependent on accommodation type and set-up. It is therefore necessary to ensure that RSE employers contact their local TAs to discuss.
- I4.** The occupancy of the dwelling should not exceed the capacity of the on-site wastewater system, including sewage. The capacity of the system needed for the number of residents should be checked prior to occupancy and meet building code.
- I5.** Note: It is the property owners' responsibility to ensure continued maintenance of the on-site effluent disposal system is undertaken at regular intervals to prevent any failure. Any failure will result in the property becoming insanitary and therefore will have to be vacated until such a time as the septic tank is repaired or upgraded.
- I6.** Note: The upgrading of an on-site wastewater system, including sewage, will require a Building Consent.

Section J

Water

- J1.** There should be clean, safe and wholesome drinking water that meets the current NZ Drinking Water Standards, of sufficient capacity for the number of residents.
- J2.** There should be enough hot water for showers, baths, hand-basins, washing clothes and cooking for the number of residents.
- J3.** The amount of water per person per day is required to meet NZ Building Code.

Section K

Lighting and ventilation

- K1.** All rooms should be adequately lit by natural and artificial lighting. Artificial lighting should provide a reasonable illumination (a minimum of 75 lux).
- K2.** The window areas should be at least equal to one-tenth the floor area.
- K3.** Half the windows should open. If possible, cross-ventilate rooms.
- K4.** Smoking is not permitted indoors. To maintain clean air, signage indicating that smoking is not permitted should be displayed at each entrance (signage available from Public Health Services).

Section L

Heating

- L1.** There should be heating in at least one room – electric, gas (must be flued to outside air), open fire, coal range or space heater (and fuel).

- L2.** Note: Portable gas appliances without flues can place up to 5 litres of moisture into the air for each litre of gas burned and are therefore unacceptable.
- L3.** Appropriate heating provided based on regional and seasonal conditions (e.g. Central Otago in winter).

Section M**Rubbish disposal**

- M1.** There should be bins with tight-fitting lids for storing rubbish. Rubbish shouldn't be stored near accommodation.
- M2.** Rubbish should be disposed of so it doesn't become a health hazard or create a general nuisance.
- M3.** There should be sufficient rubbish bins for the number of residents.

Section N**Fire Safety**

- N1.** Complying smoke alarms to meet NZ Building Code Standards should be installed in bedrooms and living areas
- N2.** Fire protection (e.g. extinguisher, alarms, smoke detectors, escape plan displayed) must meet local fire code and comply with all local fire safety by-laws