



**NEW ZEALAND  
IMMIGRATION**



# Get ready pack – Information for RSE workers



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
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[immigration.govt.nz](https://immigration.govt.nz)



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IMMIGRATION**

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# Welcome!

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## **Welcome to RSE New Zealand. Congratulations on being chosen to become an RSE worker!**

RSE stands for Recognised Seasonal Employer. A Recognised Seasonal Employer is an employer that has been given approval by Immigration New Zealand to recruit seasonal workers from overseas.

New Zealand's horticulture (fruit and vegetables) and viticulture (wine) industries need extra workers during certain times of the year to help with planting, growing and harvesting.

The information in this pack will help you to make the most of your time working in New Zealand. Please make sure you take this with you when you leave for New Zealand and keep it while you are there.

You should also attend a pre-departure orientation presentation before you leave your home country. This presentation will explain more about what working and living in New Zealand will be like. You will also have a chance to ask questions and get answers about anything that isn't clear to you.

On arrival in New Zealand, your employer and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment will have more information on hand to help you settle into New Zealand and your new work.

It's a great opportunity and it's up to you to make the most of it. We wish you well!

**The New Zealand RSE Team**

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# Induction

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Before you travel to New Zealand, you should attend a pre-departure training session with your local government officials. This will help you understand more about life in New Zealand. Your travel arrangements will also be confirmed then. On arrival in New Zealand, you will also attend an induction with your employer. The two inductions will provide you with useful information, such as:

- › Your transport arrangements in New Zealand;
- › The weather and the type of clothing you'll need;
- › What you should eat to keep yourself healthy and fit;
- › How to budget — this is about how best to use your pay and manage your costs while in New Zealand;
- › The tax you will pay on the money you earn while in New Zealand;
- › What happens if you have an accident at work and are unable to continue working;
- › What happens if you get sick;
- › Contraception, safe sex and sexually-transmitted infections; and
- › What you can do when you aren't at work and how to enjoy your stay in New Zealand.



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# Money

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You need to ensure you have sufficient money when you arrive in New Zealand to cover your expenses until your first pay.

## Your pay

Your money will go into a New Zealand bank account. Your employer will help you set this up after you arrive. You will receive a payslip each week, telling you how much you were paid and what your deductions were.

Please ask your employer if you have a question about the information on your payslip.

As a seasonal worker, you will be paid in one of the following ways:

### 1 Hourly rate

If your contract says you are being paid an hourly rate, this means you will be paid a set amount for every hour you work.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** If you work 30 hours and your hourly rate is \$NZ15.00, you will be paid NZ\$450.00 BEFORE tax and deductions. Tax and deductions reduce your pay.

**You cannot be paid less than the minimum wage.**

### 2 Piece rate

A piece rate means you will be paid a certain amount each time you complete a particular task. For example in the apple industry, you can be paid a set price for every bin you fill with apples. This means the faster you work checking the quality of the apples, the more you will be paid.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** if you are paid NZ\$30.00 for every bin of apples you fill, and you fill 15 bins by the end of the week, you will be paid \$NZ450.00 before tax and deductions.

If you are paid at a piece rate, you still cannot be paid less than the minimum hourly wage for the number of hours worked that week. However, as this option is generally made available to experienced workers, you will usually make more than the minimum wage.

It is important to ask if the rate being paid includes the holiday pay or if that is paid above the rate. (Holiday pay is explained below.)

### 3 Sliding rates

Sliding rates are usually a part of piece or contract rates. This is when you get paid a set amount of money (a value rate) for each unit of work completed. This can be paid as per bin, per basket, per tree, per bay, or per kilogram. It depends on what the task is and on which unit it is paid under. The idea of a sliding rate is that usually the amount you are paid for each task (the unit rate) is not fixed and can change depending on the circumstances.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** if you are doing apple harvesting and are being paid by the number of bins you fill, then the price per bin may depend on factors such as how big the crop is, how old the trees are, the variety of apples you are picking, the time of harvest, whether the crop is organic or in-organic and whether it is for the export or local New Zealand market or being used in the production of apple juice. This means that you may be paid NZ\$15.00 per bin for a bin of apples picked for juice and let's say NZ\$45.00 per bin for export quality organic apples.

The employer must detail in your employment agreement that the rate per bin is from NZ\$15.00 (lowest possible dollar value) to NZ\$45.00 (highest dollar value) per bin and explain why there is the price variance. The employer can always pay above the top rates but can't pay below the minimum.





If you are paid on sliding rates, you still also cannot be paid less than the minimum hourly wage. However, as this option is generally made available to experienced workers, you will usually make more than the minimum wage.

It is important to ask if the rate being paid includes holiday pay or if that is paid above the rate. (Holiday pay is explained below.)

#### **4 Combination rates**

In some cases you might change rates. This can happen when the kind of work you are doing changes. For example, sometimes when you are new to a job you can start on an hourly rate, then change to a piece rate as you get more experience and can work faster.

You might be paid differently from other workers if you are doing different work or being paid a different way.

## ■ **Holiday Pay**

You are entitled to annual holiday pay at a set rate. For example, if the holiday pay rate is eight per cent and if you earn \$500 a week, you will have an additional \$40.00 a week set aside as holiday pay. You will have to pay tax on your holiday pay. Some employers include holiday pay in your weekly pay and others will pay it to you at the end of your employment. If your holiday pay is paid weekly, then tax is taken off automatically as part of the wages, but if your holiday pay is paid at the end of your employment the tax will be taken off then.

**If you have any issues with your payslip, or think something is wrong, contact your group leader or employer.**

## **Deductions from your pay**

The amount you earn will not be the final amount you get paid because you will have deductions taken directly out of your pay.

### ■ **Tax**

Tax or Pay as You Earn (PAYE) is a compulsory deduction – you have to pay this. Tax is money from your pay that goes to the New Zealand Government to pay for essential services such as public roads and safety. Everyone who works in New Zealand is taxed. RSE workers have a special tax code (NSW). You will see this on your payslip.

As you are on the lowest tax rate, you usually do not need to fill in an end of year tax refund form as you will normally not be entitled to any refund. In fact if you earn too much money you may end up owing the Government more tax if you submit the form. Talk to your employer if you have any questions.

### ■ **Voluntary deductions**

You can make voluntary deduction from your pay, with your written approval. These deductions usually cover things like transport costs to and from work, and accommodation. Allowing your employer to deduct the cost of these from your pay can make it easier for you to manage your money.



Your employer must explain to you what you will be paid for, what is in your payslip, any deductions they are going to make, and get your approval for these. You can stop the deductions at any time.

If you do this, you will still need to pay for anything you owe and pay for any continuing services in cash or through your bank account.

For your protection, all deductions must be shown to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment labour inspectors, who will check that they are lawful and correct.

### ■ **Travel cost deductions**

Your employer and you share equally the costs of your airfare from your home country to New Zealand (if you are from Kiribati or Tuvalu, this is half the return airfare from Fiji). If your employer has paid the entire fare, you need to pay back your half. This is where your employer may deduct that amount from your pay. You may have to pay your travel costs in New Zealand as well. This can include things like air fares, bus and train fares.

### ■ **Accommodation deductions**

Your employer has to provide safe and suitable accommodation for you at a fair New Zealand price. The accommodation needs to have been checked by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. You can either agree to your employer deducting money for accommodation from your pay, or you can pay it directly.

### ■ **Power and other living costs**

You should expect to pay for power and other living costs that are a part of your accommodation. You may also be required to pay some transport costs such as the cost of travel to and from your work. You can get these deducted from your pay or you can pay them directly. Some employers include power in the price of your accommodation. Ask your employer what is included and what must be paid for separately.

After deductions, you will have an amount left in your bank account. What you do with this is important!

## Things to remember

**PAY AND DEDUCTIONS:** Your rate per hour might sound like a lot but there are deductions, and if you are not careful with the rest of your money, you may not go back home with as much money as you expected to.

**EXPERIENCE:** First time workers in New Zealand may not earn as much as return workers who have become good at their job and learnt how to use their money wisely.

## Savings and remittances

### ■ Savings

To save as much as you can while you are working in New Zealand, you need to be strong. There are many things to tempt you to spend money on!

Your employer can help you to save by automatically putting some of your pay in a separate bank account and leaving you enough money to spend every week on living expenses. You must give your written approval for this. Talk to your employer if you would like to take up this option.

### ■ Remittances (sending money home)

For a fee, you can send money home. The bank that holds your account will be able to help. But you can use other banks or businesses to send money. Different banks and businesses charge different amounts. The charges are different, depending on the amount of money you send, the country it is sent to and how quickly the money is transferred. Your employer will be able to explain these details and help you make the best choice.

It is more expensive if you send money home frequently, because there is a cost attached to each transaction. You can talk to your employer about the best way to send money home, or visit the website [www.sendmoneypacific.org](http://www.sendmoneypacific.org). To do this, you'll need to use a computer or smartphone to access the internet. Ask your employer how or where you can access the internet.

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# Relationships

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## ■ What you do for your employer

You will be expected to do all the jobs you agree to in the employment agreement you signed with your employer, and to do them in the way your employer expects you to. This will include:

- › Coming to work on time;
- › Looking after the place you are living in; and
- › Behaving responsibly at all times, both at and after work.

You are expected to work when needed; this may include working on your Sabbath or other holiday. Your hours of work will be set out in your employment agreement.

You may also find that outside work can depend on the weather and you may find that there may be days when there is no work available.

Team work is important, so talk to your team leader or employer about what is required. It is a good idea to watch and listen in the first few weeks so you get an idea of what's expected of you. You can expect to take a few weeks to settle in.

## ■ After work

What you do after work will play a big part in making your stay in New Zealand enjoyable. Talk to your employer about activities you can do when you are not working. There will be local church and sports groups you can join, as well as other community activities you will be able to join in. There may be opportunities to meet with RSE workers from other countries, and local New Zealanders.

You also need to obey New Zealand's laws. If you break the law, the New Zealand Police may get involved, and you may lose your job. If you are dismissed from your employment, you will not be able to remain in New Zealand and will have to return home.



## ■ What your employer does for you

Apart from paying you for your work, your employer must take care of several things for you. This includes:

- › Finding you suitable accommodation;
- › Paying you at least the New Zealand minimum wage per hour;
- › Providing you with a certain number of hours to work; and
- › Providing you with transport to and from your worksite .

Your employer also needs to provide you with pastoral care. Pastoral care is about looking after your well-being while you are in New Zealand. Employers are required to help you find services and community groups that help you with health issues, shopping, sport and attending church.

All RSE employers have to be approved by the New Zealand Government to make sure they are suitable employers and can provide the necessary work and good working conditions. Your employer has to meet all the living and safety requirements set up to protect RSE workers.

**Employers want you to go to them if you have a problem  
Don't be shy to approach them!**

## ■ Solving problems at work

If you have a problem or there is something you don't understand or feel is dangerous or unfair, the first thing you should do is ask your team leader or employer about it. You can do this yourself or ask your group leader to do it for you. This is often the best way to sort things out, clear up any misunderstandings and settle any problems.

If you are not happy with the employer's response, you should contact the Labour Inspectorate. Labour inspectors are government officers who are there to ensure employers meet certain conditions for hiring you.

You can also contact a union. Unions are there to represent the rights of workers in New Zealand. They are likely to have a local representative or member who can help.

If a problem comes up, you should tell someone as soon as you can. You can contact:

- Your group leader or employer;
- Your government representative;
- The Labour Inspectorate; or
- Your union, if you are a member.

Other organisations that you can contact for help include:

- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Community groups
- Free Law service
- Settlement Support Service

A list of contact numbers is provided at the end of this information booklet. Your employer will also be able to provide a local list of contacts.

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# Employment

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## ■ Employment agreement

You will have received a written employment agreement as part of your offer of work. Your employer or their agent will have explained the agreement to you.

Every employee in New Zealand must have a written employment agreement. This is an important document that explains what you must do for your employer and what the employer must do for you.

Your agreement will set out certain conditions that are the law in New Zealand. These include annual leave provisions, holiday pay, working on public holidays and sick leave.

You should not sign the employment agreement unless you understand everything in it and are happy with its terms and conditions. If there is anything you don't understand or are unsure about, ask the government official, employer or their agent to explain.

## ■ Work-related injuries

If you have an accident, you can apply through your doctor for financial assistance from the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). You will have paid an ACC levy as part of your tax. ACC is run by the New Zealand Government and provides insurance for some personal injuries. Depending on how your injury happened, the ACC can help pay for medical treatment after an accident.

It is very important to let your employer know as soon as you injure yourself otherwise ACC may refuse to cover any expenses.

This includes medicine, special surgery or treatment for accidents or injuries, but not general medical conditions like the flu. Those costs will usually be covered by your medical insurance.

## ■ Non-work-related illnesses

Medical insurance is compulsory for all RSE workers. This is to cover any illness-related health costs that you may have while in New Zealand. ACC does not cover illness.

Your employer will arrange medical insurance as part of the visa process. The cost of this will be deducted from your pay, once you start working. You will have to pay for your medical insurance even if you don't claim anything.

Medical insurance can cover expenses such as visits to the doctor; the cost of the medicine the doctor gives you (prescriptions), emergency dental treatment, and hospital costs including surgery. If you have a serious illness or disability and you need to return home because of your illness, medical insurance may cover these costs as well. If you are already being treated for an illness or are found to have developed an illness before arriving in New Zealand, medical insurance may not cover the cost of treatment. These illnesses are known as pre-existing conditions or an on-going illness. You will need to discuss these with your employer or your recruitment agent when they arrange your medical insurance.

Your employer will provide you with information on your medical insurance coverage. Make sure you read the information or ask your employer to explain what the insurance covers and what you are allowed to claim for.

## ■ Your visa

You will enter New Zealand on a limited visa that allows you to work under the RSE scheme. Your visa will also list the conditions of working in New Zealand, including who your employer is and what region of New Zealand you will work in). While in New Zealand you cannot apply for any other type of immigration visa. If you choose to leave your employer, you will not be allowed to stay in New Zealand.

You must return home at the completion of your work. If you do not comply with the conditions of your visa, and stay on in New Zealand, you may be unable to return in the future.



If you comply with the conditions of your visa and are offered further employment by an RSE employer, you may be able to return to New Zealand in following seasons. Since your visa expires when you leave New Zealand, if you return to work for another season, you will need to apply for a new visa.

### ■ Joint Approval to Recruit (ATR)

A joint Approval to Recruit (ATR) allows employers to have access to workers at peak work periods by sharing workers with another employer. A joint ATR will enable you to work for two or more employers and you will be able to stay longer in New Zealand to earn more money. Both the employers responsible for you will organise your employment agreements including travel and accommodation arrangements. Don't forget to sign both employment agreements.



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# Living Conditions

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## ■ Weather

Prepare yourself for weather that is very different from your country. New Zealand weather is a lot colder. You may need to work outside in some very cold temperatures. The coldest months are June, July, August and September, during the New Zealand winter.

You'll need to have appropriate shoes and clothing to help you stay warm and dry while you are at work. Your employer will provide you with blankets and warm covers for your bed. Your employer will also give you advice on what and where to buy extra clothing and blankets if you need them. You will be provided with heaters to warm your accommodation. Your employer can tell you how to use these. Having warm showers before and after work will also help to warm you up and keep you healthy.

## ■ Accommodation

You can check with your employer or RSE agent or representative what accommodation will be provided, and what is provided with the accommodation. Employers understand that you cannot bring large items with you, so bedding is supplied and should be used. But there may be some things you can bring from home to make yourself more comfortable.

Cooking facilities, washing machines and hot showers are available for your use. Learning how to use them properly will save you time and effort.

It's your responsibility to look after your accommodation by keeping it clean and tidy. If you cause any damage, you may have to pay for it, and this can be expensive.

## ■ Eating

You need to pay for your own food. New Zealand supermarkets and shops sell a good range of food.

It is important to eat regularly. Three good meals a day should give you the strength and energy needed to work. You may need to eat more than you normally would at home, as the work you are doing will probably require a lot of energy. Try not to eat lightly or miss lunch, and drink plenty of water.

If you do not eat well or drink enough water, you will be less productive and will earn less money. Also if you do not take care of yourself, you could become sick and unable to work and have to return home. Remember, you will not get paid if you don't work.

Eating arrangements will have been made by your employer. Different workplaces have different ways of organising food for workers. If you are concerned about your eating arrangements, please talk to your employer.



## ■ Staying healthy

The weather and working environment in New Zealand can be hard on your health. Keeping warm, washing regularly and wearing clean clothes daily will help.

You also need to make sure you have enough sleep and are fit for work in the morning.

It is especially important to wash off dirt regularly as this dirt can infect any cuts on your body. Using antibacterial soap is the best way to avoid skin infections such as boils. Ask your employer if you would like help to buy these.

There is also another type of health that is important – your well-being. You may miss your families and your home more than you realise. Keeping in contact with them and sending money home is a way to keep in touch. Your employer can help you find the cheapest ways to contact your family, and how to use email and phone cards.

Stay strong and remember that time will pass quickly. Focus on what you have come to do and keep working hard.

If you feel unhappy and worried, talk to your group leader, employer, or your government representative or liaison officer, as they are there to help you with problems like these.

## ■ Sexual health

You should be aware that sexually-transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, are present in New Zealand. To protect your health, it is recommended that you do not engage in unsafe sex and always use a condom. Family planning sessions are available from a local doctor.

If you do engage in a sexual relationship, make sure yourself and the other person both fully aware of the situation and agree to the close contact.

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# Important information

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## ■ Disciplinary Procedures

These can be the result of either a workplace dispute or criminal offending. An employment-related matter is to do with work, and criminal offending is when you break the New Zealand law.

## ■ Termination of employment

If you are dismissed from your employment, you can't stay in New Zealand. If you get into trouble with New Zealand law, your employment may come to an end, and you may have to leave New Zealand.

## ■ Deportation

If you commit a crime or you fail to comply with the conditions of your visa (such as abandoning your employment or overstaying your visa), you may be required to leave New Zealand or deported. In these circumstances, Immigration New Zealand will send you a deportation liability notice and/or a deportation order.

If you are served with a deportation order, you will be required to leave New Zealand immediately. If you do not leave immediately, Immigration New Zealand may detain and deport you. If you are deported, you will be banned from returning to New Zealand for five years. This may affect your chances to apply under the RSE scheme in the future. You will also have to pay back any costs associated with your deportation. Being deported from New Zealand can also stop you visiting or working in other countries.

**Please be aware you must leave New Zealand before your visa expires or you will risk being deported.**

## ■ Drugs and alcohol

The legal age for drinking alcohol in New Zealand is 18 years. Some towns have rules which stop you drinking alcohol in public areas such as parks, gardens and public car parks. Smoking in public areas is not permitted. This includes shopping malls, pubs, bars and restaurants, and plane, buses and trains. Drugs and alcohol are not permitted in most workplaces. If you have any questions about this, please talk to your employer.

You should never be in possession of illegal drugs, substances or associated items. If you are found in the possession of illegal drugs or substances, you will be dealt with by your employer's disciplinary procedures. This may lead to you being dismissed from your job without any warning.

## ■ Driving in New Zealand

You are not allowed to drive in New Zealand without a licence. If you hold a licence and can drive in New Zealand, always remember to drive on the left hand side of the road. On most of New Zealand's main roads the speed limit is 100 km/h unless a sign says a lower speed applies. In towns, the speed limit is usually 50 km/h unless a sign says otherwise.

You should not drive your employer's vehicles unless you have their permission.



## ■ What to do in case of an emergency

Knowing what to do in case of an emergency is important. Your employer should have a plan to deal with various types of emergencies. An emergency could be an injury incident, a severe illness, a fire, earthquake, flood or storm, a fight or other serious incident. Ask your employer during your induction for information about what to do in an emergency.

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# Going Home

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You will be leaving New Zealand at the completion of your work with your RSE employer. If you have bought goods to take home with you on the plane, remember that if you take more than your airline's weight allowance, you will have to pay for the extra weight.

Try to plan to send your items home early. Talk to your employer about freight deals that will help you send goods home at a reasonable cost. The amount you save in freight charges will be more money in your pocket.

Remember to keep your New Zealand IRD tax number and your New Zealand bank account number. You will need these if you return to New Zealand under RSE in the future. If you want to keep your New Zealand bank account open, you will need to leave enough money in it to cover any bank fees. You should also keep any warm clothing you bought during your time in New Zealand.

To get the most out of your RSE experience, you might want to talk to your government representative about financial literacy or other training opportunities.



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# Before you leave – your checklist for the plane

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You will be given important documents that are needed for you to enter and work in New Zealand. You must keep these important documents and bring them with you.

## Checklist

- Passport with New Zealand Visa
- Plane tickets
- Employment agreement
- Medical insurance documents
- Drivers licence (if you have one)
- Money for the time before you are paid
- List of contact numbers for home
- New Zealand IRD tax number (if you have one)
- New Zealand bank account number and ATM card (if you have one)

**Please ensure that your name and date of birth on your plane tickets and medical insurance documents are spelt the same as your name in your passport.** If they aren't the same then contact your recruitment agent or employer immediately

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# Contact numbers

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## **Labour Inspectorate**

0800 20 90 20

## **RSE Unit at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (Immigration New Zealand)**

0508 55 88 55

## **Healthline**

0800 611 116

## **Settlement Support New Zealand**

0800 776 948

## **Citizens Advice Bureau**

0800 367 222

## **New Zealand Council of Trade Unions**

0800 698 646

## **Emergencies: Police, Fire, Ambulance**

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