

CHANGES UNDER THE NEW STANDARD FOR GENERAL TRANSITIONAL FACILITIES

The new Standard for General Transitional Facilities is now on the MAFBNZ website. As of February 2009 MAF Inspectors will audit facilities against the new standard. Your MAF Inspector will allocate you time to update your facility in line with new requirements.

How will this affect my business?

There are a number of new regulations that facilities will have to meet. Main changes are outlined below.

1. Operator training requirement

Operators of transitional facilities (TFs) must undertake approved training in biosecurity and aspects of managing a TF. The operator is the person whose name appears on the MAF facility operator approval certificate, and who is responsible for the management of the TF.

Training courses have been held since December 2007, and training is valid for four years. This is only part of the approval process. To become fully approved applicants must also complete application forms and pass a criminal convictions check.

Further information on training is available at: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/trans/req>

2. Deputy Operator requirement

Under the new standard, some facilities may need to have deputy operators. If you're the operator of more than one TF, deputy operators may be required at the facility where you don't have direct day to day management. Also, if a TF operator is going on leave for an extended period of time, a deputy may be required. This is to ensure that someone is available to deal with any potential biosecurity issues should they arise.

Deputies must also take the approved training course for operators.

If you are unsure of whether you need a deputy, contact your local MAFBNZ Inspector. Contact details can be found at: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/trans/app-group>.

3. Police checks

Any person applying to be the operator or deputy operator of a TF must undergo a criminal convictions check. The check will be for criminal as well as MAF enforcement convictions. The types of convictions that may preclude a person from being an operator are any convictions under the Biosecurity Act 1993, relating to significant fraud or serious violent crime. All information will be kept private and confidential. The check ensures that an operator is a "fit and proper person" as required under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

Persons already approved will not have to undergo this check.

4. Operating manual changes

Facilities must develop operating manuals that meet the new requirements. A part of the operating manual is to develop contingency plans with procedures for how biosecurity will be maintained in case of emergency. A template operating manual has been designed to help facilities through this process, this can be found on the MAFBNZ website.

5. Signage

Facilities will need to have signs stating that they are approved transitional facilities. These signs should be in prominent locations or points of entry. Facilities that only receive sea containers with no associated risk goods (e.g. no seeds, fresh fruit, timber, used car parts etc) may put up a temporary sign while the container is being delivered and checked by the Accredited Person. Permanent signs are not necessary in this case.

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6. Self assessments

As a part of effective management of a TF, internal checks must be carried out periodically to ensure that procedures are running smoothly. Facility operators (or another member of staff) can carry out an internal check of facility biosecurity procedures. An example checklist is available on the MAFBNZ website.

The frequency of internal checks or audits may differ depending on facility approval, but should be carried out at least annually. MAFBNZ Inspectors will check records of self assessments during their audits.

7. Facility location and management of risk

Some facilities located outside metropolitan areas may be restricted in the types of goods they can import. For example, if a facility is located in a rural area and wishes to import produce, or products potentially carrying agricultural pests the facility must have extra measures in place to deal with the increased risks.

The processes used must be included in the operating manual and approved by MAF before a facility can be approved.

8. Internet access

Facilities are encouraged to have internet access on site as this will allow for ease of communication with MAF. It will also allow facilities importing sea containers to report contaminated sea container log sheets using the online system at <http://containerchecks.maf.govt.nz/Default.aspx>.

9. Facility access

Because TF's could potentially bring in risks there must be measures in place to prevent any spreading of risk. One way to do this is to manage access to the facility, and make visitors aware that they are entering a property with a set of rules in place.

10. Equivalent systems

The new regulations have been split in two documents. There is now a short basic standard and a guidance document with a set of more detailed instructions on how to meet the standard.

Facilities can either follow the examples in the guidance document, or develop their own alternative procedures tailored to the facility that will meet the standard. If these systems are deemed 'equivalent' by MAF, then the facility may use them in stead of the examples in the guidance document. However, any systems must be approved by MAF first before they can be used, and must be recorded in the company operating manual.

11. Personal effects deliveries

Personal effects being imported in sea containers must be delivered first to a MAF approved TF. This will better manage the associated risks with this import pathway.

12. Audit escalation pathway

Compliance levels will provide recognition for facilities that are performing well in their MAF assessments. If a facility is continually compliant with no major problems, an Inspector may visit less frequently, and the facility will move to a higher level of compliance. This will also mean a drop in MAF-related costs.

However where a facility is found to have problems and doesn't pass its MAF assessment an Inspector may audit more frequently, meaning an increase in associated costs.

To view the current standard online go to: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/trans/stds>

FOR OTHER QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS CONTACT: STANDARDS@MAF.GOVT.NZ

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