

Rent freezes and further protections for tenants

On 23 March 2020 the Government announced a temporary freeze on residential rent increases and plans to extend no-cause terminations to provide more protection for tenants.

These measures have now been applied as law through the [COVID-19 Response \(Urgent Management Measures\) Legislation Act 2020](#), and took effect on 26 March.

Key changes include:

- An immediate freeze on residential rent increases.
- From 26 March any rent increase notices issued to tenants that had not already taken effect, will be of no effect.
- Tenancies cannot be terminated, unless agreed by the parties, or in limited and specific circumstances (for specific circumstances see [COVID-19: Rent Freeze and Tenancy Terminations](#)).
- Tenants can revoke any termination notices they have already received to allow them to stay in the tenancy during the lockdown.
- Landlords will only be able to seek termination for non-payment of rent if the tenant is 60 days behind in rent (increased from 21 days). The Tenancy Tribunal will have to take into account fairness and whether reasonable efforts are being made by the tenant to pay the rent.
- Fixed-term tenancies will convert to periodic tenancies on expiry of the fixed term, unless the parties otherwise agree or the tenant gives notice.
- Tenants can still terminate their tenancy as normal.

The rent freeze will apply for an initial period of six months, and tenant protections against termination will apply for an initial period of three months. The Government will decide whether these will be extended at the end of the initial periods.

It has been clarified that a tenant is not required to inform their landlord if they test positive for COVID-19, however tenants are encouraged to inform their landlord if the landlord needs to attend the property to make urgent repairs. A tenant having symptoms, or testing positive for COVID-19, is not grounds for a landlord's termination of a tenancy.

Resources:

COVID-19: Rent increase freeze and more protection for tenants

<<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/covid-19-rent-increase-freeze-and-more-protection-tenants>>

25 March 2020

COVID-19: Rent Freeze and Tenancy Terminations <<https://www.hud.govt.nz/residential-housing/covid-19-rent-freeze-and-tenancy-terminations/>>