

Your obligations as a national security clearance holder



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Introduction

Congratulations on being granted a New Zealand national security clearance.

Holding a clearance gives you access to highly classified information. This information could harm New Zealand's national security if it fell into the wrong hands.

You have been granted access to highly classified information based on a positive point-in-time assessment of your integrity — that is, your honesty, trustworthiness and loyalty. This assessment has been made following rigorous security vetting undertaken by the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service.

As a clearance holder you must continue to demonstrate a high level of integrity by meeting the ongoing obligations set out in this document. This helps ensure that you remain suitable to hold your clearance. It also assists your agency to manage the risk of you being targeted by people who want unauthorised access to highly classified information.

It is important that you understand your obligations as a clearance holder and that you meet them. Not doing so can lead to your clearance being reviewed or cancelled and could potentially give rise to employment and legal consequences.

Your agency's security team will support you to meet your obligations as a clearance holder. Contact them with any questions.

Clearance levels

There are four national security clearance levels:

- CONFIDENTIAL
- SECRET
- TOP SECRET
- TOP SECRET SPECIAL

Your clearance level is determined by the classification of the information, assets, and work location you need to do your job. Your clearance level is not based on your rank, seniority, or status.

Some people who hold high-level clearances are also briefed to have access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI). People who are briefed into SCI are subject to expectations beyond those set out in this document. Your agency's security team can provide more information.

Clearance level	CONFIDENTIAL	SECRET	TOP SECRET	TOP SECRET SPECIAL
National Security Classification access level			TOP SECRET	TOP SECRET
		SECRET	SECRET	SECRET
	CONFIDENTIAL	CONFIDENTIAL	CONFIDENTIAL	CONFIDENTIAL

Your obligations as a clearance holder

1. Comply with any conditions of your clearance

The agency that sponsors your clearance may have imposed specific conditions (e.g. passing drug tests) as part of a security risk management plan. You must comply with any such conditions.

2. Keep classified information safe

You must protect classified information in the manner set out in the Protective Security Requirements (PSR). This includes respecting the 'need-to-know' principle. If a person asks you for access to classified information but doesn't need it to do their job, you must refuse — even if they hold the necessary clearance, and even if they are in a position of authority.

Your agency's security team will provide you with training and support on protecting classified information.

3. Maintain a high standard of behaviour

You must maintain the high standard of behaviour that the public would expect from a person in a position of trust on national security matters.

This includes obeying the law and acting with a high level of honesty and integrity at all times.

4. Avoid broadcasting the fact you hold a clearance, especially on social media

If you broadcast the fact that you hold a clearance, you increase the risk of being targeted by foreign intelligence agencies and other people who want access to New Zealand's highly classified information. Sharing your work and personal information widely could give them an opportunity to find you and to reach out.

You must meet your organisation's expectations around social media use, which will include compliance with rules set out in the PSR. You must also keep the number of people that know you hold a clearance to a minimum. If someone doesn't need to know, then don't tell them. Security clearances are a privilege, not a marketing tool.

5. Participate in an annual security appraisal

Your agency is required to conduct an annual security appraisal for all clearance holders — including you.

You must take part in this appraisal, which aims to ensure you remain suitable to hold your clearance. You must give full and honest answers to all questions.

6. Meet your ongoing reporting obligations

You must tell your agency's security team as soon as possible about:

- [security breaches and incidents](#)
- [significant changes in your personal circumstances](#)
- [suspicious, ongoing, unusual, or persistent \(SOUP\) contacts](#)
- [security concerns about people you work with.](#)

SECURITY BREACHES AND INCIDENTS

You must report all security breaches or incidents that you are involved in, either deliberately or accidentally, or that you are otherwise aware of. A security breach is an accidental or unintentional action which contradicts internal protective security procedures that can be categorised as a security breach or security violation i.e. SCIF electronic device breach, information distribution breach).

CHANGES IN PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Your clearance was granted based on an assessment of your integrity when you went through security vetting.

Like everyone else your personal circumstances will change over time. Most changes in personal circumstances don't affect your suitability to hold a clearance, or can be managed, and will not result in you losing your clearance.

But some changes in personal circumstances can affect your suitability to hold a clearance. People who want unauthorised access to New Zealand's highly classified information can take advantage of changes in your personal circumstances to put pressure on you — e.g. through blackmail.

You must report any change in your personal circumstances that might bear on your suitability to continue to hold your clearance. This includes the following changes. If you are in any doubt, talk to your agency's security team.

Close personal relationships

You must report all changes in your close personal relationships — that is, relationships that involve sexual, emotional, and/or financial intimacy.

Examples of changes that must be reported include beginning or ending a relationship, a change in the status of an existing relationship (for instance, getting married or entering a civil union), and the birth or adoption of children.

Close relatives moving to (or between) foreign countries

If one of your close relatives moves to a foreign country, or between foreign countries, you must report it. 'Close relatives' include anyone in your immediate family and any relatives or whānau you have regular contact with.

Citizenship and residency status

You must report all changes in your citizenship and residency status, as well as any plans to move overseas.

Acquiring citizenship or residency of some countries can impact on your suitability to hold a clearance. Talk to your agency's security team in advance.

Significant changes in health or major medical events

You must report any significant changes in your health or any major medical events. Changes in health or major medical events can place additional stress and pressure on you, your financial situation and your close personal relationships.

Financial circumstances

You must report significant changes in your financial circumstances — both good and bad.

This includes:

- any new income stream (for example, rent)
- inheriting or winning a significant amount of money
- increasing your debt (for example, by taking out a mortgage or personal loan)
- creating or ending a financial commitment, either personal or business
- being unable to meet your financial responsibilities (for example, being unable to pay bills or meet your mortgage)
- being referred to a debt collection agency, having an application made to declare you bankrupt, declaring bankruptcy, being declared bankrupt, or entering a No Asset Procedure.

There are additional travel-related requirements for people who hold SCI briefings. Your agency's security team can provide more information.

Overseas travel (in accordance with your agency's policies)

You must report in advance any overseas business or personal travel that your agency requires you to report.

Your agency will support you to manage risks associated with overseas travel. Your organisation may ask you to report some or all instances of planned overseas travel, and may restrict the countries you can visit, the airlines you can use, and the activities you can take part in.

Non-routine interactions with courts and enforcement agencies

You must report any non-routine interactions with the courts, New Zealand Police, other New Zealand enforcement agencies (such as Customs, IRD, and Immigration), or their overseas equivalents.

Non-routine interactions include:

- being prosecuted, arrested, cautioned, warned, interviewed, or spoken to as a witness, victim or suspect
- receiving a speeding ticket
- interacting with a court or tribunal in a civil matter as either plaintiff or defendant.

You don't need to report routine interactions such as passing a random breath-test or crossing a border without incident.

Involvement with criminal activity

You must report any involvement you have with criminal activity, even if it is accidental or inadvertent.

Involvement with people or groups that may pose security risks

If you become involved with any people or groups (including societies or organisations) that could pose security risks, you must report your involvement. Involvement could be either in-person or virtual.

Examples of groups that might pose security risks are:

- extreme ideological groups or organisations
- special-interest or issue-motivated groups — especially ones that have an interest in projects that you or your organisation are working on
- commercial or non-commercial organisations that could benefit from access to official or classified information.

Involvement with a disciplinary process

If you are involved in an employment investigation or disciplinary process with your employer, you must report it to your agency's security team.

Any other changes in personal circumstances that your organisation has asked you to report

Your organisation may ask you to report other specific changes in your personal circumstances. They will tell you about any extra reporting rules when you are employed or granted a clearance.

SUSPICIOUS, ONGOING, UNUSUAL OR PERSISTENT (SOUP) CONTACTS

Holding a clearance makes you a potential target for people who want unauthorised access to New Zealand's highly classified information. This includes people who are employed by foreign intelligence agencies, or who are working on their behalf either wittingly or unwittingly.

You must report any contact, with any person, of any nationality, that seems to you to be suspicious, ongoing, unusual or persistent (SOUP). This includes contacts in which:

- you are asked for official information that the person asking is not cleared to see and/or does not have a need to know
- you are asked for information about the people you work with
- you are encouraged to establish ongoing contact about official matters outside official channels
- you are encouraged to participate in dodgy or illegal activity
- you are offered hospitality or gifts, including offers of travel or training, and encouraged not to tell others
- you are flattered or otherwise paid a high degree of attention or sexual interest
- you perceive an unusual degree of interest in your work or your personal life
- you perceive a pattern or a degree of persistence that doesn't feel right.

Approaches from foreign intelligence agencies happen in real life — not just in the movies.

Trust your intuition.

Report any contact that doesn't feel right to you.

Be especially wary of contact that involves:

- foreign officials or nationals within New Zealand
- foreign officials or nationals outside New Zealand, including trade or business representatives
- any person, from any country, who is seeking access to official information for which they do not have a 'need to know'.

SECURITY CONCERNS ABOUT PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH

You must report any concerns you have about other clearance holders that you work with. Reporting these concerns helps your agency to manage risk, and to put in place ways to support that person and maintain the organisation's security culture. Concerns do not have to be major, something that feels minor to you may be a piece of a larger picture.

7. Meet your lifelong obligation of discretion

You have a lifelong obligation to be discrete about your work and to protect the classified information that you worked with. This obligation endures even if you no longer hold a clearance.

Your agency's security team will remind you of your lifelong obligation of discretion when you leave and will make sure you know who to contact with any questions.

WHEN YOUR CLEARANCE EXPIRES

Your clearance has been granted for a defined period of time. Most clearances expire after five years.

If you still need your clearance at the end of that period, then your organisation will arrange for you to undergo security vetting again. Your agency can review your clearance at any time if doubts arise about your suitability to continue to hold it, and this includes requesting that you go through the vetting process again.

WHEN YOU CHANGE ROLE OR GOVERNMENT AGENCY

If you move to a new role, your agency's security team will assess whether you still need your clearance. They might decide to cancel it or to grant you a clearance at a lower level. If you need a higher level of clearance, they will arrange for you to go through the vetting process appropriate to that level.

If you move to a role requiring a security clearance in another government agency, that agency will usually take over sponsorship of your existing clearance. The two agencies' security teams will arrange this.

If you have questions

Contact your agency's security team with any questions about your obligations as a clearance holder.

More information on the Protective Security Requirements and on national security clearances is available at protectivesecurity.govt.nz.