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Media release

Chorus to focus on maintaining essential infrastructure during lockdown

Chorus has today announced that in light of the Government's increase in the COVID19 alert level to 4 on Wednesday 25 March, it will use the next 48 hours to formalise how field work will be prioritised.

Access to broadband is a lifeline utility and the Chorus network is deemed an essential service. The company owns and operates wholesale fixed line broadband infrastructure nationwide that more than 80 Retail Service Providers (RSP) use as the basis for the fixed line services they sell to customers.

"Our first priority is protecting the health and safety of the community and of those working on our behalf," said JB Rousselot, Chorus CEO. "Chorus provides strategically critical infrastructure that will be absolutely essential to New Zealand during this time, and we are very aware of the need to keep as many people as possible connected."

"Given our status as a lifeline, we will prioritise repairing faults as quickly as possible, and connecting locations where no other form of fixed line connectivity is available.

"We will continue to perform connections and upgrades in locations that already have a fixed line connection, but only if field resources are available."

"We have put a number of controls in place to identify situations where customers may be self-isolating, and any technicians who display any signs of illness are stood down and put into self-isolation immediately, along with their close contacts.

"We also have detailed health and safety requirements in place for use on occasions where faults occur at homes where individuals are ill or self-isolating.

"I would like to thank our field force for their immense commitment during a very difficult time, recognising the importance of the work they do to all New Zealanders," he said.

Broadband performing well

Chorus' broadband infrastructure continues to have the capacity available to support widespread working from home.

While daytime data consumption continues to grow rapidly, consumption is still currently lower than the usual 9pm busy hour.

Significant capacity headroom is also available above the record peak throughput ever recorded on the network. In addition, the company is continuing to work collaboratively with our RSP partners to support them to add capacity as required.

Wholesale broadband pricing

As a regulated utility, Chorus is able to apply an annual increase of the prices of its wholesale broadband products, however the company has today agreed to postpone the usual annual CPI price increase for broadband products until further notice.

Chorus will continue with its plans to reduce the price of its Gig connection from \$60 to \$56 on 1 July 2020 as originally planned, to help support improved working from home.

Further, Chorus is working through additional options to provide support for customers, retailers and service companies, to ensure as many Kiwis as possible are able to stay connected to essential infrastructure.

“We work within a complex ecosystem and the situation continues to evolve rapidly. We need to ensure our support helps those who need it most, across our entire industry.

Chorus staff now working from home

The majority of Chorus staff are now working from home., A small number of key employees continue to work from Chorus premises, which is currently necessary to ensure the ongoing integrity of essential infrastructure.

“At this stage it appears that we have managed the transition to working from home without significantly impacting our core processes, but we continue to watch this very closely.”

ENDS

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