



## What is emblem misuse?

Misuse of the red cross emblem includes any unauthorised appearance of a red cross on a white background, or any symbol so closely resembling the red cross emblem that it could be mistaken for one.

The most common forms of misuse occur in the medical and pharmaceutical fields and in the retail and advertising sectors, as a red cross is often used to draw attention to a product.

New Zealand Red Cross' mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity and enhancing community resilience.

### Red Cross Red Crescent Fundamental Principles

#### Humanity

Te Ngākau Atawhai

#### Impartiality

Te Tōkeketanga

#### Neutrality

Te Whakaraupapa

#### Independence

Te Tū Motuhake

#### Voluntary Service

He Ratonga Tūao

#### Unity

Te Kotahitanga

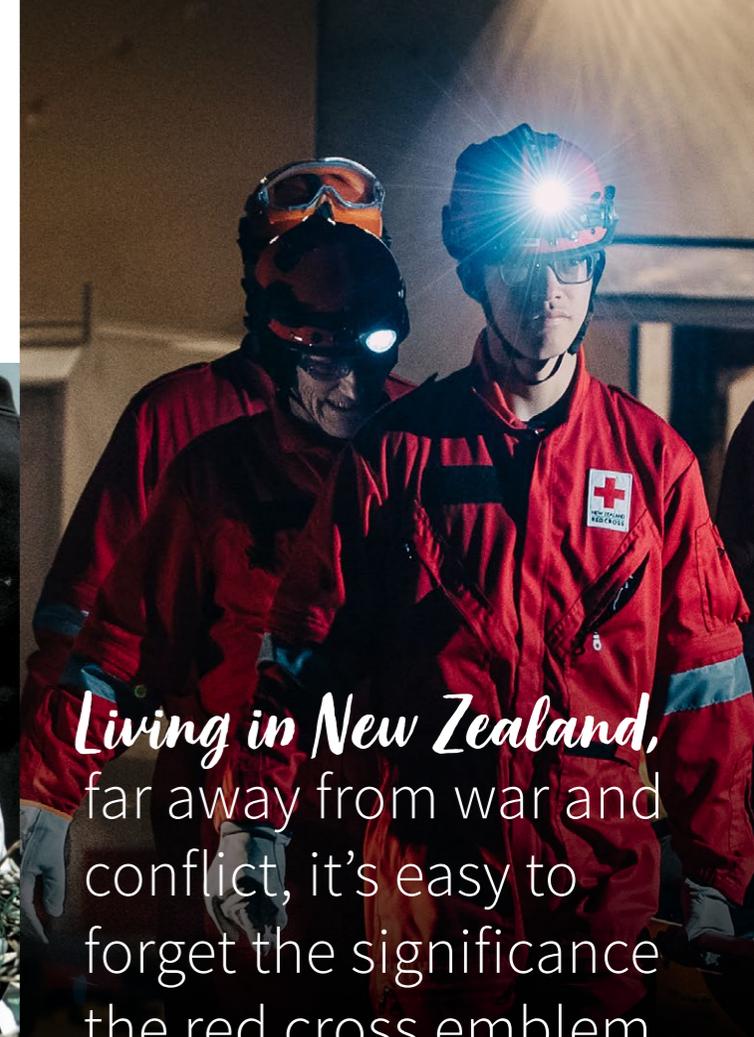
#### Universality

O te Ao



NEW ZEALAND  
RED CROSS  
RIPEKA WHERO AOTEAROA

Safeguarding the emblem's power to protect



*Living in New Zealand, far away from war and conflict, it's easy to forget the significance the red cross emblem has held since 1864.*

But in war-torn countries, a simple red cross\* can be the difference between life and death.

As one of nearly 200 Red Cross National Societies around the world, New Zealand Red Cross has an important part to play in making sure this powerful emblem retains its true meaning.

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# What is the red cross emblem?

The red cross emblem is one of the most recognised symbols in the world. If asked, many would probably say the red cross is an international sign for medical assistance or first aid. This is true – but only when used in special circumstances by approved agencies.

During armed conflict, the red cross emblem is a visible sign of protection for the wounded and sick, and those caring for them, conferred by international humanitarian law (the ‘laws of war’). In these circumstances, the emblem means “Don’t shoot” or “Don’t loot” or “Don’t harm” this person, site, warehouse, vehicle or equipment. It shows that whoever or whatever carries the emblem lawfully is providing or receiving medical assistance and is not part of the conflict, and therefore must be protected.

The emblem also shows that a person or an object is linked to the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. As such, the emblem also symbolises the independent, neutral and impartial assistance delivered by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.



In the 1870s, the red cross emblem was supplemented by a red crescent and, more recently, a red crystal. These emblems are protected by the same regulations as the red cross.

# Who can display the emblems?

The 1949 Geneva Conventions, the 1977 Additional Protocols, national laws in 200 countries and internal regulations of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement all state the red cross can only be used by permission, for humanitarian purposes.

New Zealand is no different. The organisations allowed to use the red cross emblem in New Zealand are the medical and religious services of the New Zealand Defence Force and New Zealand Red Cross.

Because the red cross is so unique and important, the use by New Zealand Red Cross is also strictly regulated, even in its humanitarian activities.

**New Zealand has two Acts of Parliament regulating the use of the red cross:**

- Under our **Geneva Conventions Act 1958**, it is a criminal offence for anyone to use the red cross emblem unless authorised by the Minister of Defence. New Zealand Red Cross received this authorisation in 1932.
- Under the **Trade Marks Act 2002**, it is an infringement of a registered trademark to use a symbol that is identical or similar to the red cross emblem.

# Why is it important to protect the emblem?

This life-saving symbol needs to be understood and trusted by all so that it can protect those suffering during armed conflict or humanitarian crises.

It is important to ensure that the emblem is used correctly so that people and communities understand its purpose, and trust what the emblem stands for. Even in countries that are not experiencing armed conflict, misuse can impair the emblem’s image and reputation globally, and may weaken its protective effect.

If an emergency strikes, including civil unrest or a natural disaster such as an earthquake or a major flood, people need to know that the staff and volunteers that display the emblem while responding to the affected communities are neutral, independent and impartial – values and principles associated with the red cross emblem – and grant them safe access.

In New Zealand, misuse of the emblem directly undermines its authorised use by New Zealand Red Cross in its day-to-day humanitarian activities, potentially causing confusion about Red Cross activities or reputation locally.

# How can you help?

**You can help ensure that the red cross emblem is not used in ways for which it was not intended.**

If you see the emblem being used by people or organisations that are not entitled to do so, please get in touch with New Zealand Red Cross. In most cases, those that misuse the emblems are simply not aware of the purpose of and laws around the emblem and how it may be used.

Alternative symbols may be appropriate to prevent confusion and misuse. For example, the medical community could use one of the many internationally recognised signs to identify ambulances, hospitals, first aid posts and pharmacies.

