



**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH**

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service



WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO IMPLEMENT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

**KAREN DU PREEZ
NIOH - OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE SECTION**

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Healthy, Safe, Happy & Sustainable Workplaces

**PROMOTING DECENT WORK THROUGH CUTTING EDGE RESEARCH, SPECIALISED
SERVICES, INFORMATION, TEACHING AND TRAINING**



DUTY OF EMPLOYERS

- Employers must implement preventative measures at workplaces to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for employees.
- OHS Act (as per previous presentation)
- R 639 – Consolidated COVID-19 Direction on Health and Safety in the Workplace (issued 4 June 2020) – applicable for the duration of the state of disaster
- Other sector-specific regulations and/or directives issued in terms of the regulations issued under Section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act (must include all aspects listed in Annexure B in Consolidated Health and Safety Direction)
- Refer to the Department of Health's COVID-19 online resource and news portal regularly for updated information and links to legislation (<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/guidelines-and-relief/>)



Regulations and Guidelines – Coronavirus Covid-19

Please visit <https://www.gov.za/coronavirus/guidelines> for any additional updates or guidelines

Regulations	Directions	Disaster Management Guidelines	Disaster Management Act
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Directions

- Alert level 3 railway operations directions, 30 May 2020
- Alert level 3 public transport directions, 30 May 2020
- Alert level 3 air services directions, 30 May 2020
- Re-opening of schools under Coronavirus COVID-19 lockdown, 29 May 2020
- Alert level 3 directions for religious gatherings, 28 May 2020
- Amended directions for biodiversity sector, 26 May 2020
- Amended directions on COVID-19 temporary employee / employer relief scheme, 26 May 2020
- Directions to permit travel and recommencement of studies for Final Year Medical Students registered at South African public universities during Coronavirus COVID-19 lockdown, 26 May 2020
- Amended communications and digital technologies sector directions for alert level 4, 26 May 2020
- Amended health directions, 25 May 2020
- Alert level 4 amended public transport services directions, 22 May 2020
- Transport directions on commencement of services and extension for validity period of learner's and driving licences, licence disks, professional driving permits and registration of motor vehicles, 20 May 2020
- Energy and petroleum products directions, 15 May 2020



GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

NO. R. 639

04 JUNE 2020

DIRECTION BY THE MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR IN TERMS OF REGULATION 4(10) OF THE REGULATIONS R480 OF 29 APRIL 2020 ISSUED BY THE MINISTER OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS IN TERMS OF SECTION 27 (2) OF THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ACT, 2002 (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002)

SCHEDULE

Consolidated COVID-19 Direction on Health and Safety in the Workplace

**Issued by the Minister in terms of Regulation 4(10) of the National
Disaster Regulations**

Annexure A
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH LINKS

Guidance on vulnerable employees and workplace accommodation in relation to COVID-19 (V4: 25 May 2020)

http://www.nioh.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20_2020-V4.-Guidance-on-vulnerable-employees-and-workplace-accommodation....pdf

Guidance note for workplaces in the event of identification of a COVID-19 positive employee

http://www.nioh.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/guidelines_positive_worker_19_May_20.pdf

Clinical management of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 disease Version 4 (18th May 2020)

<https://www.nicd.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Clinical-management-of-suspected-or-confirmed-COVID-19-Version-4.pdf>

Guidelines for symptom monitoring and management of essential workers for COVID-19 related infection

http://www.nioh.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/guidelines_positive_worker_19_May_20.pdf



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk Assessment as required by the OHS Act must be reviewed if / when:

- Current assessment is no longer valid;
- Control measures are no longer effective;
- Technological or scientific advances allow for more effective control methods;
- There has been a change in:
 - the work methods;
 - the type of work carried out; or
 - the type of equipment used to control the exposure;
- An incident occurs or occupational disease is diagnosed
- Additional hazards / risks were identified / introduced

Therefore any existing risk assessment must be reviewed to include COVID-19



RISK ASSESSMENT AT THE WORKPLACE (COVID-19):

- Identify work tasks or areas where transmission can occur
- Identify vulnerable workers (refer to DOH Guidance on vulnerable employees)
- Assess the risk for each task or area individually, considering the route of exposure and viral load
- Identify suitable control measures, including the need for PPE, for each task or area according to the risk rating
- Consider any additional hazards introduced in response to COVID-19, e.g. chemicals used for disinfection; prolonged use of PPE; stress, anxiety or depression; etc.
- Review the risk assessment when any changes to work processes occur, or following a confirmed case of COVID-19 at the workplace



Guidance on vulnerable employees and workplace accommodation in relation to COVID-19 (V4: 25 May 2020)

**(Document prepared by Academic Group within the Occupational Health and Safety Workstream
of the National Department of Health – Covid-19 Response)**

Please note: This is an interim guide that may be updated as the outbreak in South Africa intensifies, to guide additional workforce preserving strategies

This document aims to provide guidance to evaluate and manage vulnerable employees in the context of the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic as mentioned in the Regulations issued in terms of section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002.



PLAN FOR RE-OPENING WORKPLACES

- ▶▶ When permitted to commence with business, every employer must:
 - Conduct risk assessment
 - Develop a plan outlining protective measures in place for phased return of employees, based on the risk assessment
 - Consult with:
 - Trade union, and
 - Health and safety committee, or
 - Health and safety representative (if no committee)
 - Plan must be available for inspection by inspector, or persons listed above



PLAN FOR RE-OPENING WORKPLACES (CONTINUED)

»» What must be included in the plan:

- Date of re-opening and business hours
- List of employees permitted to return, and those working from home
- Plan and timetable for phased-in return
- Identify vulnerable employees
- How to minimise number of workers at workplace at a time
- Workplace protective measures (also refer to sectoral directions and guidance)
- Measures for daily screening of employees, clients, visitors, contractors
- Details of appointed COVID-19 compliance officer (Clause 20.6 of Direction)



ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

- ▶▶ Risk assessment (RA)
- ▶▶ >500 employees: submit record of RA and a written policy to H&S Committee, and Department of Employment and Labour within 21 days of commencement of Direction
- ▶▶ Special measures for vulnerable workers as per Guidelines
- ▶▶ Provide employees with information and training on:
 - the applicable legislation and regulations; the measures implemented to adhere to these,
 - the dangers of the virus,
 - manner of transmission & measures to prevent it (e.g. personal hygiene, distancing, masks, cough etiquette),
 - where to go for screening or testing.

Can be done through / complimented with leaflets / notices where possible
- ▶▶ Employees should take sick leave and stay at home when sick or displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19



ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES (CONTINUED)

- ▶▶ A manager must be appointed as COVID-19 compliance officer, to:
 - Oversee implementation of the plan
 - Oversee adherence to health and safety measures (> one workplace: can appoint employees to perform these function)
 - Address concerns and ensure that employees are kept informed; consult with H&S Committee
- ▶▶ Ensure compliance through monitoring and supervision
- ▶▶ Minimize number of employees at the workplace through e.g. shift regimes, rotation, remote working arrangements
- ▶▶ Minimize contact between employees, and between employees and the public
- ▶▶ What to do in case a worker is diagnosed with COVID-19



SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES

- ▶▶ Arrange the workplace to maintain at least one and a half meters between workers at all times where possible
- ▶▶ If not possible, place physical barriers between or on workstations
- ▶▶ When required, supply employees with the appropriate PPE as identified through risk assessment
- ▶▶ Ensure that measures are implemented through supervision in workplaces as well as common areas, including canteens and hygiene facilities
- ▶▶ Implement staggered break times where possible to avoid crowding in common areas, e.g. canteens



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

- ▶▶ Symptom screening
- ▶▶ Sanitizers, disinfectants and other measures
- ▶▶ Cloth masks
- ▶▶ Measures for workplaces to which public have access
- ▶▶ Ventilation
- ▶▶ Specific Personal Protective Equipment



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

▶▶ Symptom screening:

- Every employee must be screened for observable or additional symptoms associated with COVID-19 when reporting for work
- Employees must immediately inform the employer if they start experiencing symptoms while at work
- Comply with NDOH guidelines on symptom monitoring and management
- Specific requirements if a worker presents with / report symptoms
- Requirements on when to allow a worker that has been diagnosed with COVID-19 to return to work
- Requirements if a worker has been in contact at the workplace with another worker who has been diagnosed with COVID-19



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

▶▶ Sanitizers, disinfectants and other measures:

- Supply hand-sanitizer (containing at least 70% alcohol and in accordance with DOH recommendations) for use by all employees at all work areas
- Work surfaces and equipment, and common use areas must be disinfected before, regularly during, and after work
- Biometric systems must be disabled, or measures implemented for their safe use
- Ensure availability of adequate hand wash facilities with soap, clean water & **paper towels**
- Ensure that employees make use of it



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES (CONTINUED)

▶▶ Cloth masks:

- Every person must wear a cloth mask when in a public place
- Employers must provide every employee with at least two cloth masks (complying with DOH requirements) to wear at work, and when commuting to and from work
- Any other worker must be required to wear masks in the workplace
- Number and replace-ability as per sectoral guidelines, and taking into account specific conditions at work
- Workers must be informed and trained on the correct use of cloth masks, and supervised
- Where the RA indicate that specific PPE is required, workers must be provided with accredited PPE

PLEASE NOTE: The risk of COVID-19 must be addressed and managed together with risks usually present at the workplace. RPE usually required to be worn for specific tasks cannot be replaced with cloth masks



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES (CONTINUED)

» Measures for workplaces to which public have access:

- To protect workers from exposure due to interaction with the public, and to protect the public from exposure through their interaction with workers
- Employers must (where reasonably practicable):
 - ❖ Arrange workplace to ensure at least 1.5 meters between persons at all times
 - ❖ Install physical barriers at counters / provide visors or face shields to workers
 - ❖ Symptom screening for persons other than employees where appropriate
 - ❖ Display notices re. precautions required
 - ❖ Require all persons inside their premises to wear masks
 - ❖ Ensure that 1.5 meters distance is maintained with queuing inside / outside
 - ❖ Provide hand sanitizer at entrance
 - ❖ Assign employee as compliance officer to ensure compliance with these measures



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES (CONTINUED)

▶▶ Ventilation:

- Every workplace must be well ventilated by natural or mechanical means
- Local extraction ventilation (LEV) with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters where reasonably practicable, with vents not feeding back in through open windows
- Regular cleaning and maintenance of these filters
- Cleaning and replacement of filters by a competent person according to manufacturer's instructions



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES (CONTINUED)

▶▶ Specific Personal Protective Equipment:

- Employers must refer to DOH, NICD or NIOH websites regularly for updated guidelines with regards to required / recommended specialised personal protective equipment for COVID-19 for any workplaces
- This will take into account the nature of the workplace, the nature of a worker's duties, and the associated level of risk
- This may include the use of surgical masks, N95 respirators, face shields, aprons, gloves, etc.



SMALL BUSINESSES (≤ 10 EMPLOYEES)

- ▶▶ When permitted to commence with business, develop basic plan for phasing in the return of employees, considering vulnerable employees
- ▶▶ Ensure at least 1.5 meters distancing between employees, or install physical barriers
- ▶▶ Ensure that employees displaying associated symptoms are not permitted to work
- ▶▶ Contact COVID-19 hotline immediately for instructions, and direct employee to act in accordance: 0800 029 999
- ▶▶ Provide cloth masks / require use of cloth masks/covering while at work
- ▶▶ Provide hand sanitizer, soap and clean water, and disinfectants for workstations, and ensure that it is used regularly
- ▶▶ Any additional measures indicated by a RA, especially measures prescribed for workplaces the public have access to



WORKERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

W	ash hands regularly using soap and water (~20 sec) or alcohol-based hand rub (~70%)
O	bey health and safety policies and procedures
R	emember to cover nose & mouth with a flexed elbow/ tissue when coughing & sneezing
K	ey is to avoid exposure and also refrain from exposing others to potential risks
E	nsure you don, doff and dispose of personal protective equipment as prescribed
R	eport any situation likely to present a potential or serious danger to life or health
S	elf-monitor for signs of illness and self-isolate or report illness to managers, if it occurs



REFERENCES

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2. South African Government. Disaster Management Act: Consolidated Coronavirus COVID-19 Direction on Occupational Health and Safety Measures in Certain Workplaces. <https://www.gov.za/documents/disaster-management-act-direction-minister-employment-and-labour-terms-regulation-4-10>
3. Department of Health. Republic of South Africa. Guidance on vulnerable employees and workplace accommodation in relation to COVID-19 (V4: 25 May 2020) <http://www.nioh.ac.za/national-resources/>
4. Department of Health. Republic of South Africa. Cloth Face Masks. <http://www.health.gov.za/index.php/component/phocadownload/category/631>
5. World Health Organisation. Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) technical guidance: Guidance for schools, workplaces and institutions. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/guidance-for-schools-workplaces-institutions>
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Questions

info@nioh.ac.za

NIOH 24hr- hotline

0800 212 175





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WWW.NIOH.AC.ZA | TWITTER: @NIOH_SA | INFO@NIOH.NHLS.AC.ZA