



# Approach on the management of a COVID-19 positive employee in the workplace

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# Outline

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- Confidentiality
- Disinfection of the Workplace
- Contact Tracing
- Symptom monitoring and return-to-work
- Reporting to relevant authorities
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- Temporary Closure
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- Guidance Note for Workplaces



# COVID-19 Management

- Prevent worker infection with SARS-CoV-2 (Coronavirus);
- Identify SARS-CoV-2 infected worker and manage (worker & workplace)
- Manage COVID-19 complications and expedite return to normality (worker & workplace)

# Employee Health Management

- A suspected COVID-19 case includes any person with an acute ( $\leq 14$  days) respiratory tract infection
  - Cough
  - Sore throat
  - Shortness of breath
  - Anosmia or dysgeusia
  - Close contact with a known positive case
- Symptomatic on screening
  - Refuse entry onto work premises
- Symptomatic at work
  - Inform relevant workplace authorities, provide surgical mask, isolate in designated area, monitor regularly
  - Facilitate travel arrangements



# Employee Health Management cont...

- Isolation area requirements
- Symptomatic patients awaiting results in public sector meeting the suspected case definition
  - Quarantine for 10 days from 1<sup>st</sup> symptom onset and at least 3 days from symptom resolution





# Respecting Confidentiality

- Confidentiality is the right to have personal identifiable medical info kept private and not released without their consent
  - Unless you agree to it
  - There are limits for COVID-19 – not absolute. It may be shared to protect public health
  - If not respected, then may not get the buy-in from employees and they may keep condition a secret
    - Legal implications however!



# Disinfection of the Workspace

- Once a COVID-19 case identified in the workplace – decontamination to be considered through a risk-based approach
  - Area that the person worked in may need to be cordoned off
  - Promote ventilation of the area
  - May not be necessary to close company operations
  - If closure is required, closure times are guided by the service provider undertaking the cleaning process

# Contact Tracing



- Notifiable Medical Condition (NICD)
- Public health importance
- Contact tracing (employees, contacts, family & community)
- According to the Directive – Workplaces are to lend administrative support to DOH conducting contact tracing
- If the workplace has capacity, it is beneficial to undertake its own internal exposure contact tracing process





health

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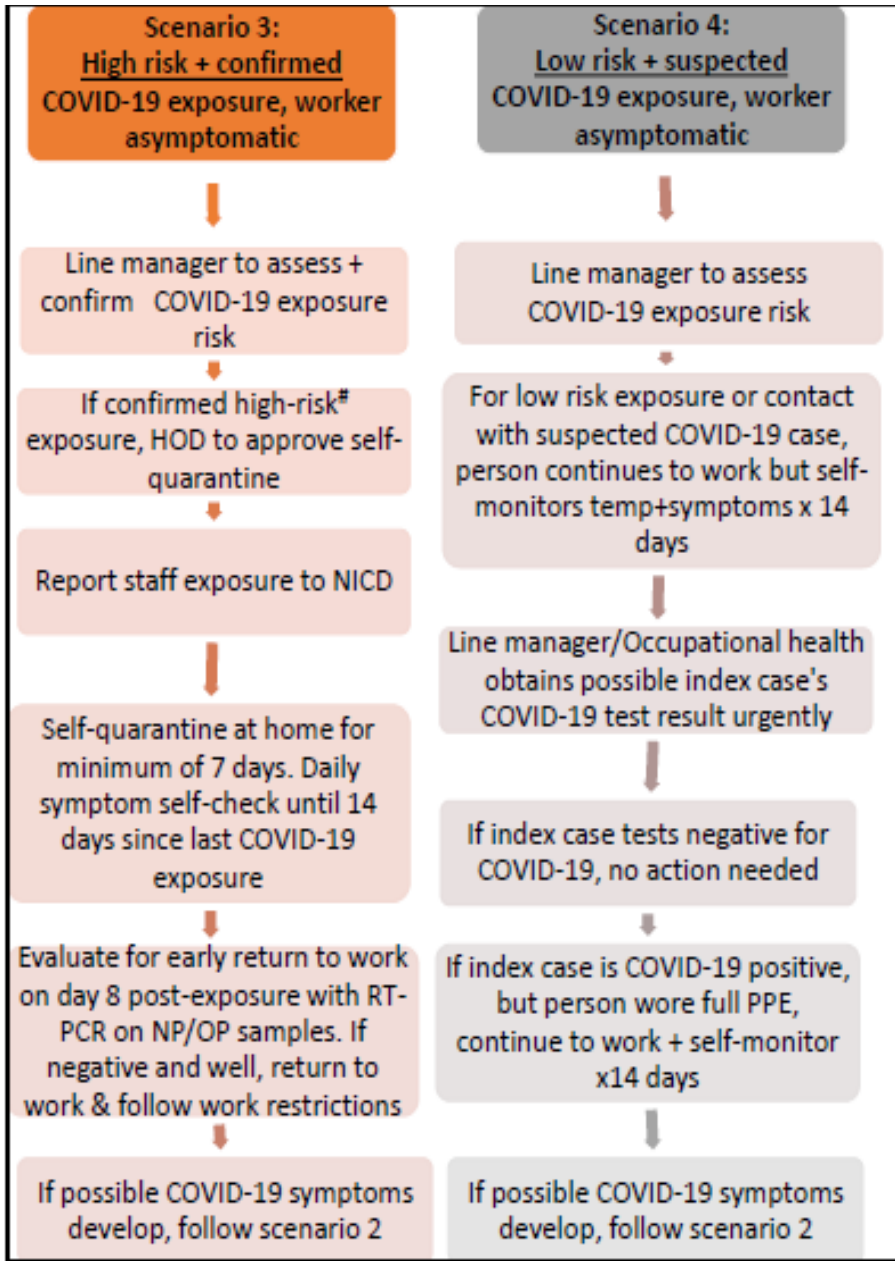
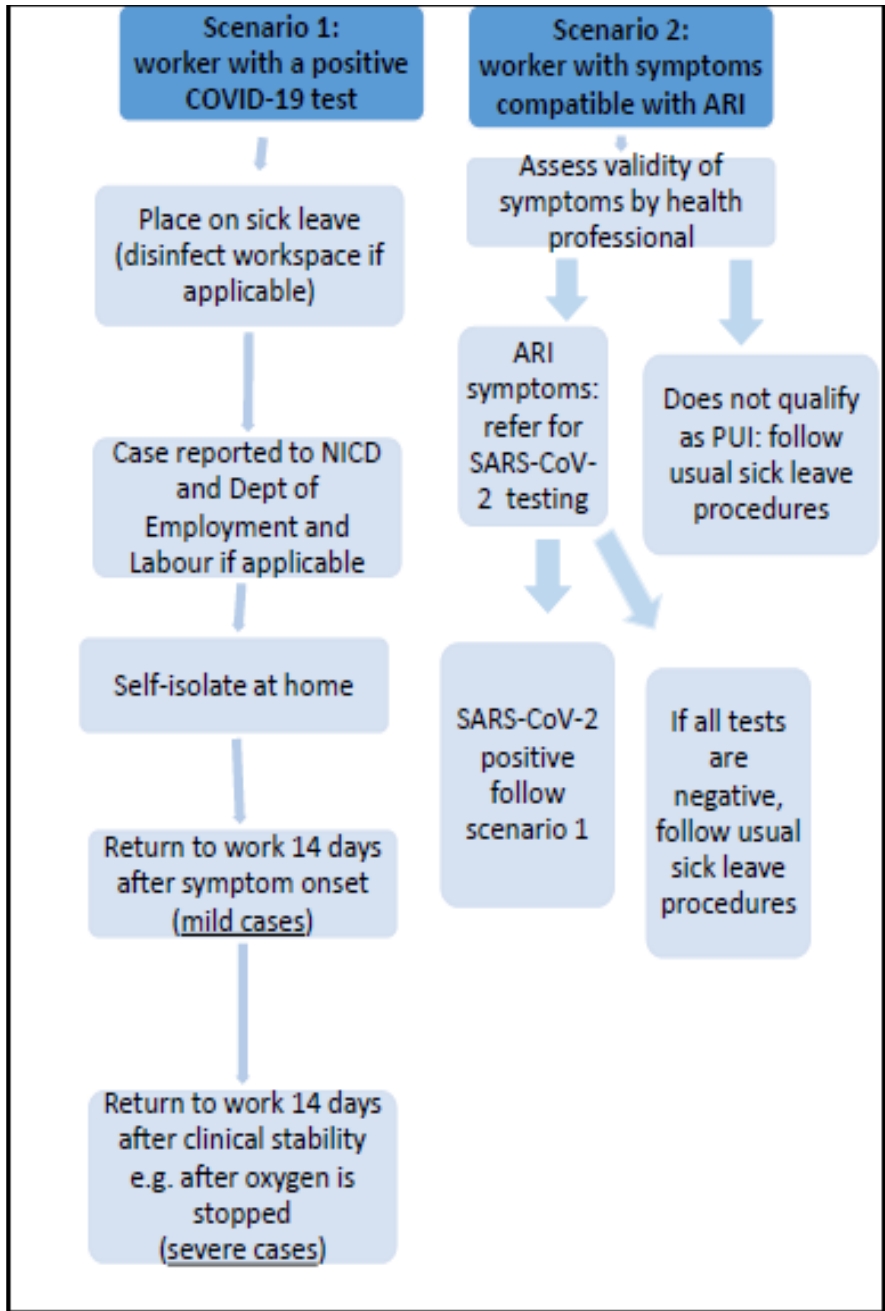
Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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

**(Document prepared by the Occupational Health and Safety Committee – Covid-19 Response)**

# Symptom Tracking for Quarantined Workers

Surname			First Name			Date of Birth	
Contact Cell number			E-mail address		Category of Essential Worker (Select from addendum 1)		
Alternative contact number					Job Title		
Next of Kin or Alternative Contact (Please provide name, relationship and contact details)							
Work address & details:							
Home address:							
Days post exposure	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Date: DD/MM							
Document morning + evening	<b>AM / PM</b>	<b>AM / PM</b>	<b>AM / PM</b>	<b>AM / PM</b>	<b>AM / PM</b>	<b>AM / PM</b>	<b>AM / PM</b>
Temperature (no meds)	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Respiratory rate	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Pulse rate	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Symptoms (Circle Y or N)	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Daily</b>
Fever/Chills	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Cough	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Sore throat	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Shortness of breath	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Body aches	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Redness of the eyes	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Loss of smell OR loss of taste	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Nausea/vomiting/diarrhoea	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Fatigue/ weakness	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
At Home or work?	H / W	H / W	H / W	H / W	H / W	H / W	H / W
Clinical and Progress Notes and Exposure History:							





# Reporting to Relevant Authorities

20.11 if a worker has been diagnosed with COVID-19, an employer must-

20.11.1 inform the Department of Health<sup>9</sup> and the Department of Employment and Labour; and

20.11.2 investigate the mode of exposure including any control failure and review its risk assessment to ensure that the necessary controls and PPE requirements are in place;

20.11.3 determine the need to temporarily close the affected work area for decontamination using an incident-based risk assessment with due regard to the Department of Health's Guidelines<sup>10</sup>; and

- Department of Health
  - medical practitioner attending to the COVID-19 employee must report the case as a notifiable medical condition
- Department of Employment and Labour and COIDA
  - only occupationally-acquired COVID-19 cases



# Reporting to Relevant Authorities cont...

- Employers are concerned over DoEL instituting forced closure of their workplace
- Only warranted under particular situations
  - Section 30 of the OHS Act – issuing of prohibition if no controls are in place
  - prohibition notice may only be issued if there is an immediate, life threatening situation.



# Risk Management

- COVID-19 Risk Assessment
- COVID-19 specific workplace policy
  - Screening, testing and monitoring of employees in the workplace
  - Crisis plan
- Business continuity
  - The purpose of business continuity is to ensure that your business is able to survive a critical incident.

# Incident Investigation

- Conducted for every COVID-19 case in workplace
  - Whether occupationally-acquired or not
- Same process that is followed for IOD
  - Nature of the exposure
  - How and when did the exposure occur?
  - Control measures in place
  - Details obtained through investigation of the incident
  - Corrective action taken
  - Ensure protection of other worker's– employer's duty to protect



# Incident Investigation

- Depending on severity of outbreak- Workplaces may enlist the assistance of the relevant inspectorate to support workplaces in using the prescribed approach in addressing any lapses in control measures and to ensure the health and safety of the workplace.
- Manage return to work of affected staff in line with NDoH & DoEL
- Follow appropriate IPC procedures if unsure (NICD Hotline 0800 029 999)
- Prevent further infection spread







# Temporary Closure of Workplace

- Initially dependent on the controls in place
  - Social distancing will affect spread and outbreak potential
  - Segregation and rotations
  - Frequency of cleaning
- Advisable for employers to temporarily close if
  - Staff capacity has been severely affected through quarantine/isolation such that operations cannot occur
  - Where decontamination of the facility is required (as guided by the service provider undertaking the task)
    - As determined by an incident-based risk assessment



# Leave & Worker's Compensation

- Quarantine leave
  - If the quarantine leave is due to a work close contact, then special leave should be provided
  - If the quarantine leave is due to an outside close contact, usually unpaid leave applies
- COVID-19 leave
  - If occupationally-acquired, special leave applies
  - If community-acquired, sick leave applies. If sick leave is exhausted and no temp incapacity leave then make application for illness benefit TERS
- Workers Compensation (COIDA)
  - If evidence that employee contracted COVID-19 in the course of employment
    - Notice on Compensation for occupationally-acquired Coronavirus



# Effective Communication

- Communicating openly and transparently throughout the process
  - Tripartite structures, H&S committees
- Provide support for workers through EAP
- Outlining your business continuity plan
- Communicate what steps were taken to disinfect the facility
- Management and labour should use the incident to work collectively and cooperatively to safeguard employees and the workplace
- Ensure good record-keeping



# Employer and Employee Rights & Responsibilities

Employers and employees have responsibilities under the OHS Act.

- The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires that employers provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards and follow OHS standards in keeping with the HBA Regs.
- Workers should participate in the development and implementation of the employer's safety and health policies and help ensure that they are appropriate and implemented.
- **"hierarchal"** way to **escalate a grievance** i.e. **employee to supervisor** to H&S rep to H&S committee to senior management to executive, and only as last resort to DoEL

Speak Up! You have a right to file a complaint with  
**Department of Employment and Labour**



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## **Guidance note for workplaces in the event of identification of a COVID-19 positive employee (V5: 14 May 2020)**

[http://www.nioh.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/guidelines\\_positive\\_worker\\_19\\_May\\_20.pdf](http://www.nioh.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/guidelines_positive_worker_19_May_20.pdf)

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- 1. Personal health procedures**
  - 2. Public health communicable disease procedures**
  - 3. Infection prevention and control procedures**
  - 4. Workplace related occupational health and safety procedures**
  - 5. Labour relations procedures**
  - 6. Incident reporting and engagement with relevant Regulator**
  - 7. Leave and worker's compensation arrangements**



# Thank You!

Enquiries : [info@nioh.ac.za](mailto:info@nioh.ac.za) or  
**0800 21 21 75**

 <b>COVID-19</b>	<p>COVID-19 Workplace Preparedness &amp; Prevention HEALTHY, SAFE &amp; SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACES <b>Workplace Hotline: 0800 2121 75</b> www.nioh.ac.za   info@nioh.ac.za   twitter: @nioh_sa</p>	 NATIONAL HEALTH LABORATORY SERVICE
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