WHAT TO DO WHEN AN EMPLOYEE TESTS POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) IN THE WORKPLACE?

NATIONAL HEALTH LABORATORY SERVICE

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
Division of the National Health Laboratory Service

TO BE PREPARED FOR WORKERS RETURNING TO WORK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: The employer should:

- Have a **workplace preparedness plan** and **communicate this** to all staff and contractors.

- Ensure that all **occupational health and other HR policies and SOP's are reviewed** and communicated to all including:
  - ‣ **Policies around sick leave, business travel**, and other related policies to account for COVID-19.
  - ‣ **SOP's for medical and workplace management procedures** to address COVID-19 in the workplace.

- **Identify exposure risks by completing an issue based health risk assessment (HRA)**
  - ‣ **For different categories of workers** according to job description,
  - ‣ Identify workers who may be **vulnerable and at increased risk of poor outcomes** due to chronic medical conditions and
  - ‣ **Implement appropriate control measures and accommodate where appropriate.**

- **Screen workers for symptoms** on entering the workplace and have appropriate medical surveillance is done as informed by the HRA.

- **Communicate and make available a training platform for workers** to access the latest policy and relevant information around COVID-19 and who to report to should they experience symptoms.

IF AN EMPLOYEE TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

The employee should be:

- **Isolated from the workplace** with the appropriate **sick leave.**
- **Medically treated** as appropriate.
- **Ensure notification** has been done to the Department of Health by the treating practitioner.
- Ensure **mental health support** is made available for the employee.
- **A workplace incident investigation/assessment should be done to identify:**
  - **Close contacts**- these should be quarantined and monitored for 14 days outside the workplace.
  - Determine the **movements of the positive worker** while at work so **effective decontamination** can occur in the workplace.
  - Assess if **workplace controls to prevent transmission have failed** and rectify these to prevent recurrence.
  - **Report all cases of occupationally acquired COVID-19 disease to the Department of Employment and Labour** in line with https://www.labourguide.co.za/workshop/1778-notice-on-compensation-for-occupationally-acuired-corona-virus-under-coida-amended-act/file and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.
- Have **appropriate workplace restrictions** and **return to work policies** in place for the return of employees post recovery.

EMPLOYEES WHO ARE SYMPTOMATIC SHOULD BE:

Recognize COVID-19

World Health Organization
Western Pacific Region

In mild cases: fatigue, cough, fever
In moderate cases: mild pneumonia breathing difficulties
In severe cases: severe pneumonia other organ failure possible death

TESTED → **TREATED** → **ISOLATED**

Workplace queries: info@nioh.ac.za 0800 212 175

For more information contact NICD: 080 002 9999
www.nicd.ac.za or www.nioh.ac.za

What to do if you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19?

- ‣ Alert your supervisor and occupational health clinic immediately.
- ‣ If you are experiencing symptoms, inform your health care provider about any contacts and recent travel to areas affected by COVID-19.