




A basic approach to investigate COVID19 specific incidents in the workplace

National Institute for Occupational Health a division of the NHLS

Email: info@nioh.ac.za

Website: <http://www.nhls.ac.za>; <http://www.nioh.ac.za>; <http://www.nicd.ac.za>



How will I know for sure if an employee contracted the Virus at work?

You will never know for sure, the decision will be based on probability.



Incident Investigations:

- **The mission:** Fact finding, not fault finding
- **The main purpose:** To prevent a recurrence of the same or similar event.
- **The reasons:**
 - ✓ To know and understand what happened
 - ✓ To determine cause and effect
 - ✓ Evaluate effectiveness of current controls
 - ✓ To make and implement recommendations to prevent a similar incidents.
- **Legal Requirements:** OHS Act and two Directives from DoEL on COVID19



For the purposed of reporting to The Compensation Commissioner, the following will be consider:

Exposure


- Duration of Exposure
- Method of exposure
- Source of exposure

Clinical History

- Date of contact with exposure
- Date of onset of symptoms
- Date of diagnosis

Inherent Occupational Exposure

- Some occupations' core functions bring them into close contact with confirmed COVID19 cases or high volume of people with unknown statuses.



```
graph TD; A[Positive case  
(Confirmed with a  
Lab test)] --- B[Reasonable  
evidence to consider  
the infection to be  
work acquired]; B --- C[Inherent  
Work Exposure]; B --- D[Close contact with  
colleague who tested  
positive]; C --- E[Must be a  
chronological sequence  
of events]; D --- E;
```

Positive case
(Confirmed with a
Lab test)

**Reasonable
evidence** to consider
the infection to be
work acquired

Inherent
Work Exposure

Close contact with
colleague who tested
positive

Must be a **chronological sequence** of events

Positive case
(Confirmed with a
Lab test)

Inherent
Work Exposure

Is there a chron

Methods that could be used during investigation:

- Records: Job description, time sheets
- Interview employee and witnesses.
- Workplace inspection

Questions that could be asked:

Is the Job a high risk exposure due to inherent work requirements?



Is all the workplace controls measures implemented and maintained?



Is there a safe work procedures?
(E.g. Donning and doffing of PPE)



Were the safe work procedures followed?



Was sufficient and correct PPE available and used?



Was there any specific incident during work that placed the employee at a higher risk of contracting COVID19?



Methods that could be used during investigation:

- Records: Attendance registers, daily screenings, clinical history if onsite clinic, ventilation surveys.
- Interview employee and witnesses.
- Workplace inspections

Questions that could be asked:

History of current positive case: date of onset of symptoms, date tested, date of last contact and type of interaction with known positive colleague.



History of "known positive contact": date of onset of symptoms, date of test, last at work, interaction with current positive case.



Workplace inspection: Evaluate control measures and enforcement of controls.



Reasonable
e to consider
rk acquired?

Close contact with
colleague who tested
positive

ence of events?

Is there a chronological sequence of events?

Known facts:

- One could be infectious two days before symptom onset; usually most infectious when symptoms start, and infectiousness usually lasts the first 7 days
- Incubation period 2-7 days (most common 5 days)

Keeping the above in mind, the scenario below could be a possible work exposure from a colleague who tested positive and had close contact with each other.

	Calendar days																		
	2	3	4 M	5 T	6 W	7 T	8 F	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Case 1			Close contact	Symptomatic		Tested (+)													
Case 2			Close contact					Symptomatic	Tested (+)										

Isolation (indicated by a red arrow pointing from Case 1's test date to Case 2's test date)



In conclusion:

- **Remember:** the Compensation Fund provides a “**no fault**” compensation for employees who contracted and IOD or Occupational Disease.
- **Should not done for the purpose of reporting only**
The full proses of Incident investigation should be followed with COVID19 investigations - From determining the root cause to implementing and evaluating corrective measures.
- Although COVID19 is in the public interest medical information specific to the employee should still be treated as confidential.



Final Conclusion: Regarding reporting requirements

DoEL OHS COVID19
Directive



Refer to OHS Act section 24 &
25



Report to Chief inspector
regarding Occupational
Disease



Email WCL 1 form to your
regional Inspector

DoEL Directive for workplace
acquired COVID 19



Refer to COVID Act Section 65



Compensation for
Occupational Disease



Could be done manually or
online

Thank You!

Enquiries : info@nioh.ac.za or
0800 21 21 75

COVID-19

**COVID-19 Workplace Preparedness & Prevention
HEALTHY, SAFE & SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACES**

Workplace Hotline: 0800 2121 75

www.nioh.ac.za | info@nioh.ac.za | [twitter: @nioh_sa](https://twitter.com/nioh_sa)

The NIOH website is **ZERO-RATED**

by Vodacom, MTN, Rain, MWeb, Telkom & Internet Solutions.

No data charges apply for users of these mobile network providers. All content and resources on **this website** can be browsed and downloaded for free, excluding YouTube viewing and downloading.



NATIONAL HEALTH
LABORATORY SERVICE



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service