

COVID-19: WHAT EVERY WORKPLACE SHOULD IMPLEMENT

DUTY OF EMPLOYERS

According to Section 8 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 85 of 1993, an employer must ensure that every workplace under his control is safe and without risk to the health of employees, and must take any reasonably practicable steps to reduce or mitigate any confirmed or potential hazards. This also applies to the current outbreak of COVID-19.

The Department of Employment and Labour's Code of Practice: Managing exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in the workplace, 2022, R1876 of 15 February 2022 and the Regulations for Hazardous Biological Agents, 2022 (RHBA), R1887 of 16 March 2022 specify the following minimum precautionary measures that must be implemented to protect employees.

1. CONDUCT A HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT

Determine the risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (that causes COVID-19) for each work area or work task as required by the RHBA and identify suitable control measures according to the risk rating, including the need for vaccination where applicable. Consider employees that may be more vulnerable, as well as operational requirements and any other specific circumstances.

2. COMPILE AN ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Describe the control measures that the employer has already implemented to reduce the risk of employees contracting COVID-19 whilst performing their normal work tasks. Include measures that the employer is planning to implement, such as vaccination.

3. INFORMATION AND TRAINING PROVIDED TO EMPLOYEES

Information and training must be provided by the employer regarding the RHBA and Code of Practice, and the measures implemented to adhere to it, including the health risk assessment, planned and implemented control measures, as well as updated information regarding COVID-19 and vaccination.

4. SYMPTOM REPORTING

The employer must take measures to determine the vaccination status of employees. Employers must also implement measures so that employees can inform the employer immediately if they experience any COVID-19 related symptoms, where-after the employer may require those employees to be tested for COVID-19 before entering the workplace.

5. ISOLATION OF WORKERS

Workers who are diagnosed with COVID-19, and experience symptoms, must inform their employer and must isolate for the period recommended by the National Department of Health (NDOH) (currently 7 days) or as recommended by a medical practitioner. Workers who are diagnosed but are asymptomatic, do not need to isolate, provided that they follow the NDOH recommendations. Quarantine and active contact tracing are no longer required.

6. VENTILATION

Every workplace must be kept well ventilated by natural or mechanical means, and ventilation must be improved in areas that are usually occupied but poorly ventilated, by opening doors, windows and vents, or by means of mechanical ventilation. Refer to the NDOH guidelines for ventilation to prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

7. PROVIDE SPECIFIC PPE WHERE REQUIRED

Employees must wear the required PPE applicable to their specific work tasks as identified by the risk assessment. Employers must keep up-to-date with the recommendations published in guidelines as available from the NDOH, NICD or NIOH websites regarding specialised PPE for COVID-19. This must be provided by the employer free of charge.

8. VACCINATION

Employers must notify employees that have an obligation to be vaccinated, as identified through the risk assessment, and must provide the support as specified in the Code of Practice, where applicable.

Please refer to posters, factsheets and other COVID-19 resources at <http://www.nioh.ac.za> for more information



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

Workplace Hotline: 0800 2121 75

Occupational Health Surveillance System [OHSS]

General queries for data submission: 0723215503 | 0713981169 | OHSWorkplace@nioh.ac.za

OPERATING HOURS for the OHSS hotline: Mon-Fri: 08h00 - 17h00, Weekends and public holidays: Closed

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

 NATIONAL HEALTH
LABORATORY SERVICE

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