# MAKING YOUR WORKPLACE COVID-19 SAFE FOR YOU & YOUR CUSTOMERS

## Introduction:

The 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is driving a "new normal" that requires stringent non-medical interventions to stop the spread of this infectious virus. This demands a new way of operating that we all need to explore together. As such, The Fijian Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOHMS) has prepared this guideline with the expectation that stakeholders in various workplaces can refine these guidelines into documents that are appropriate and relevant to specific work settings. As an employer, you have a duty of care to your employees, customers and the community in putting into effect safe COVID-19 working practices.

## Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19

In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease in Hubei Province, China, to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO stated there is a high risk of COVID-19 spreading to other countries around the world. Today,  over 212 countries, areas and territories have reported confirmed cases of COVID-19, with a total of more than 2 million cases worldwide.

## How COVID-19 spreads

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales, they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects, such as desks, tables or telephones. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects, and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If they are standing within two meters of a person with COVID-19, they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by the person who is already infected. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to the flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require specialized hospital care. The risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 appear to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and those with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

This document provides guidance to help you assess whether your workplace is prepared for COVID-19. Use these simple and low cost measures to prepare for COVID-19 in your business:

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- Identify simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within your workplace.

- Identify ways to mitigate COVID-19 risk when organizing meetings & events.

- Establish guidelines for yourself and your employees on safe work-related travel.

- Train your workforce in COVID-19 safe working practices.

- Put measures in place to ensure your workplace will be safe for both your employees and customers should COVID-19 arrive in your community.

Use this template to generate a COVID-19 safe working place for your staff and your customers

**Date:**

**Company Name:**

**Type of Business:**

1. **Understanding the risk of COVID-19 to your business**
   - How many people do you currently employ?
   - Are they all based at location or at multiple locations?

2. **Understanding your risk to COVID-19 exposure and transmission**
   - Do your employees serve and engage with customers face to face or by being in close proximity to them?
   - If yes, how many customers do you or your employees see in a day?
   - Have you conducted health awareness & education programs with respect to COVID-19 for your staff and/or employees?
   - If yes, how was this conducted?

3. **Helping your staff who may get sick:**
   - What are some of the ways in which your staff and you can maintain safe physical distancing while at work?
   - Do you have an established protocol at your workplace for employees who feel unwell at work? If yes, what is it?
   - Is hand sanitizer readily available around your workplace?

- Are soap, running water and hand towels available at your workplace for staff to practice hand hygiene?
- If any of your staff are quarantined, have you made any provisions for them to be able to work from home (if feasible for your business)?

### 4. Helping your customers:

- How are you ensuring that your customers practice safe physical distancing at your workplace?
- Is hand sanitizer readily available at your workplace for customers to use?

### 5. COVID-19 measures you can put in place

- Train your staff in safe physical distancing practices, hand hygiene practices and respiratory hygiene practices that you can use at your workplace. This remains the most important measure to prevent transmission of the covid-19 virus.
- Ensure masks are available for any person who is coughing or sneezing, and display appropriate signage to support this measure.
- Nominate an officer who is empowered to ensure business-wide compliance with safe COVID-19 working practices.
- Display COVID-19 posters at places easily accessible to customers and employees and make available COVID-19 pamphlets (available from the Fijian Ministry of Health and Medical Services) within your workplace.
- Ensure hand sanitizer dispensers are readily available for your staff to use.
- Ensure that bathroom facilities have soap, running water and hand towels.
- Ensure hand sanitizer dispensers are readily available for your customers to use.
- Ensure there are simple and effective ways for your customers to observe social distancing.  This includes having 2-meter distance markers for separating queuing customers.
- Discourage handshaking. Encourage the use of other non-contact methods of greeting.
- Review the possibility of implementing work-from-home practices where appropriate, especially on behalf of workers over 50 who have significant medical illness.
- Identify workers who may be at increased risk of infection or complications from COVID-19 and consider adjusting their work responsibilities or locations to minimize exposure.

- Ensure the routine cleaning AND disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. Making disinfection wipes widely available is encouraged. However, this must not replace social distancing practices, hand hygiene practices and respiratory hygiene practices.

- Review and implement measures that will prevent sick persons from entering your workplace.

- Consider ways of improving the building ventilation system**.** This should include ways to increase ventilation rates and increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the building.

- Taking care when attending meetings and gatherings:
  - Carefully consider whether travel is necessary.
  - Consider using videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
  - Consider canceling, adjusting, or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person.
  - When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces.

- Workplace plans for those engaged in the public transport (land, sea and air) sector should facilitate safe physical distancing, hand washing on entry and exit, use of face masks and disinfection procedures.

References

WHO guidance on workplace readiness for preventing COVID-19 spread in the workplace
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf

CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html