

**ANNEX 25: COVID-19 MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR WORKPLACES**

COVID-19 has affected the working population in Malaysia not only due to infections at the workplace affecting manpower, however due to the rise in cases, the nation has had to implement the Movement Control Order. Within the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) which include the Conditional and Recovery Movement Control Orders (CMCO and RMCO), some industries have been allowed to function however with the need to adhere to precautionary measures required at the workplace. It is imperative for industries to take the relevant measures to emphasize and enforce continuous compliance to the new norms to ensure sustainability of operations.

Up till the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021, there were 685 workplace COVID-19 clusters reported to the Ministry of Health (MOH) involving 54, 549 cases. The impact of outbreaks has lead to the lack of employees to carry out operations due to them being admitted or quarantined. This guideline aims to provide the necessary preventive and control measures that should be undertaken at the workplace and may be used as a basis for workplace strategies in order to ensure continuity of operations.

**Responsibility at the workplace:**

The management is responsible to ensure that all preventive measures as deemed necessary under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988(Act 342) and its regulations are adhered to. Managing COVID-19 at the workplace may be part of Occupational Health management under the purview of the Safety and Health Committee of the agency.

**This guideline consists of two sections;**

1. Prevention and control measures to be taken at the workplace
2. Actions to be taken when there is a positive case and/or close contact to a positive case at the workplace

## **1. PREVENTION AND CONTROL MEASURES TO BE TAKEN AT THE WORKPLACE**

It is important for workplaces to implement measures to prevent and manage COVID-19 at their organization. Workplaces have a responsibility towards the safety and health of their employees under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994(Act 514) as well as under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988(Act 342). Management should take the necessary steps to manage COVID-19 at the workplace by following the steps below.

### **A. BE UPDATED ON THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES RELATED TO COVID-19**

Management must constantly update themselves with regards to the latest information regarding COVID-19 and also the current prevention and management policies related to COVID-19. This is important in making decisions with regards to managing COVID-19 at the workplace. Action to be taken under the Act 342 must be implemented with urgency to avoid the spread of COVID-19 at the workplace as well as to prevent from facing liabilities associated with non-compliance to workplace SOP's.

#### **General Information regarding COVID-19**

##### **Symptoms:**

Common symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, running nose. Other symptoms include sudden new onset of loss of taste (ageusia) or smell (anosmia).

##### **Transmission:**

Droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs or sneezes can transmit the virus to other people who are in close contact (within a distance of 1 meter).

The virus can also spread after infected people sneeze, cough on, or touch surfaces, or objects such as tables, door knob and handrails. Other people may become infected by touching these contaminated surfaces or objects then touching their eyes, noses and mouths without having cleaned their hands first.

##### **Incubation Period**

Incubation period is currently estimated to range between 1-14 days

**Vulnerable Employees:**

- Older persons aged 60 and above
- Those with pre-existing medical conditions e.g. high blood pressure, heart and lung problems, diabetes or cancer

**However, anyone may get COVID-19 at any age.**

**B. TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS TO ENSURE MAXIMUM PROTECTION OF STAFF TO ENABLE CONTINUATION OF BUSINESS.**

**I. Action by Employers**

- a) Communicate regularly to employees about COVID-19;
  - i. Advise employees on preventive methods:
    - physical distancing (keep 1 metre away from others)
    - practicing personal hygiene and respiratory etiquette.  
(Refer Appendix 1)
    - practicing hand hygiene (Refer Appendix 2)
    - using a mask in areas required and where distancing cannot be maintained (Refer Appendix 3)
  - ii. Remind employees regularly about preventive methods e.g. via e mail, social media, gamification etc.
  - iii. Provide regular updates on COVID-19 to employees
  - iv. Provide appropriate health education and promotion materials regarding COVID-19 to all employees
- b) Instruct supervisors to monitor
  - i. for symptoms among employees at workplace
  - ii. employee compliance to preventive measures
- c) Encourage employees to take temperature regularly and monitor for respiratory symptoms
- d) Register premise with MySejahtera and generate and print QR code to be displayed at the premise for registration of employees and visitors upon entry (refer Annex 42).
- e) Consider obtaining travel declaration from employees on travel history.
- f) When an employee develops symptoms;

- i. if at home:
  - Wear a surgical mask and seek medical attention at the nearest health facility immediately.
  - Avoid contact with family members
  - Accompanying person should also wear a surgical mask.
- ii. if at workplace:
  - Supervisor to relieve staff member from work
  - Wear a surgical mask and seek medical attention at the nearest health facility immediately
  - Avoid contact with fellow employees
  - Any accompanying person should also wear a surgical mask
- g) Conduct mental health assessments among employees and carry out appropriate measures to reduce stress among employees.
- h) Monitor sick leave and absenteeism among employees. Keep a record of staff sick leave including reasons for leave, duration of leave and current status.

## **II. Action by Employees**

- a. Keep updated on COVID-19
- b. Scan MySejahtera QR code upon entering work premise
- c. Always maintain good personal hygiene;
  - i. Frequent hand washing with soap and water or hand sanitizer
  - ii. Practice respiratory etiquette
- d. To practice physical distancing at work, during breaks and meals
- e. Limit food handling and sharing of food in the workplace
- f. If they develop symptoms;
  - i. To alert supervisor immediately
  - ii. Wear a surgical mask
  - iii. Seek medical treatment immediately
  - iv. Avoid contact with fellow employees
- g. Employees are also advised to practice all preventive measures out of work

### III. Action at the Workplace

- a. Screening of all employees entering the workplace
  - i Temperature: those with temperature  $>37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  should be asked to seek assessment at a medical facility
  - ii Symptom screening: those with cough, sore throat or difficulty breathing should be asked to seek assessment at a medical facility
  - iii History of returning from overseas (taken when necessary)
  - iv History of close contact to a positive or suspected COVID-19 case (taken when necessary)
- b. Enforce hand sanitization at entrance for visitors
- c. Ensure regular cleaning and disinfection of the workplace including equipment and focusing on high touch areas (Refer Appendix 4)
- d. Practice a no handshaking policy
- e. Provide easy access to frequent hand washing for employees. If not possible, provide hand sanitizers for frequent hand cleaning
- f. Proper maintenance of toilet facilities with adequate supply of liquid soap and disposable towels.
- g. Provision of lidded rubbish bins with regular refuse disposal
- h. Consider alternate communication methods e.g. virtual meetings in place of face to face meetings, group chats etc.
- i. Consider deferring large meetings or events
- j. Consider having meetings outside in open air if possible
- k. In case of indoor meetings or events, ensure all precautions are taken:
  - i. Informing participants not to attend if they are unwell and to join the meeting using a virtual platform
  - ii. Ensuring all relevant information is given to the participants such as the practice of hand hygiene and the use of surgical masks for those who develop respiratory symptoms
  - iii. Providing:
    - Hand sanitizers where necessary or ensuring availability of soap and water
    - Surgical masks and tissues for those who develop respiratory symptoms
  - iv. Consider opening windows for natural lighting and better ventilation

- v. Ensuring limited participants and distancing is maintained at all times
  - vi. Monitor participants daily and provide support for isolating those with symptoms and transporting them to a health facility.
  - vii. Keep in touch with participant on their health status after seeing the doctor.
  - viii. Keep contact details of all participants and organizers in case there is a need to contact them. Records should be kept for at least one month for the date of completion of the event.
- i) When situation calls for working from home
- i. Ensure employees are well versed with handling virtual sessions
  - ii. Employees are given work targets accordingly
- j) In the setting of **public transport** e.g. taxis, ride-hail services, trains and buses, drivers should ensure the following measures;
- i. Frequent hand washing using soap and water, or hand sanitizer and practice respiratory etiquette at all times.
  - ii. Wear a mask while carrying out the duty
  - iii. Seek medical attention if symptoms develop
  - iv. Ensure passengers wear masks while in the vehicle.
  - v. Regularly disinfect the interior of the vehicle after alighting passengers or after each trip including door handles (both outside and inside).

#### IV. Travel Considerations for the workplace

- a. Before traveling:
- i. Follow the latest advisory on traveling from MKN and MOH
  - ii. Assess the benefits, risks and needs of travel
  - iii. If travelling overseas, obtain all relevant information of travel to that particular country
  - iv. Ensure high risk employees do not travel
  - v. Consider issuing employees who are about to travel with face masks and hand sanitizers if possible

- b. While traveling:
  - i. Always bring along surgical masks and hand sanitizer for use when required
  - ii. Avoid crowded places and closed contact with people especially those showing symptoms
  - iii. Avoid eating raw foods
  - iv. Seek prompt medical treatment if developing symptoms
- c. On returning back:
  - i. Observe home surveillance or quarantine procedures as per MOH directives
  - ii. Immediately seek medical attention if you have symptoms of respiratory tract infections such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing within 14 days after returning from the visit

## **2. ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN WHEN THERE ARE POSITIVE CASES AND/OR CLOSE CONTACTS TO A POSITIVE CASE AT THE WORKPLACE**

If a person is determined to be COVID-19 positive by the medical facility or screening process, the results will be informed to the relevant District Health Office (DHO/PKD). An officer from the DHO will investigate the person to determine household, family and workplace contacts. The DHO will carry out investigations at the workplace to determine the actual workplace close contacts who need home surveillance. Those identified will be issued with a Home Surveillance Order and be given a wrist band to wear for a period of 10 days after which they will be given a release order by the DHO. The DHO will also advise the workplace on the cleaning and disinfection procedures that may be followed. The organization should wait for the officer from the DHO to come to the workplace.

### **(A) Positive case among the employee/employer**

#### **I. General**

- a) If there is any positive case detected by testing, the case should be notified by a treating doctor to nearest District Health Office (DHO).

- b) DHO will carry out investigation to identify close contacts, do a risk assessment and advice on disinfection procedure at the workplace.

## II. **Actions by Management**

- a) While waiting for DHO, a positive employee should isolate him/herself at home. Employee should be isolated in a separate room, wear a face mask and avoid contact with other members of the residence. The employee should use MySejahtera to inform MOH and to carry out the daily home assessment tool.
- b) Management should try to identify the close contacts of the positive case by taking a detailed history of persons in close contact to him/ her. This is in order to assist when DHO comes to investigate.
- c) Close contacts identified by management may be put on home isolation while waiting for DHO to come. They should be isolated in a separate room, wear a face mask, maintain 1-meter physical distancing and frequently practice hand hygiene as well as maintain good personal hygiene.  
In a dormitory set up, one dormitory can be used to house close contacts if there are a large number of them. These individuals should not have any contact with any other employee in the building.  
Close contacts should use MySejahtera to inform MOH and to carry out the daily home assessment tool.
- d) The management should give full cooperation to the DHO in their investigations at the workplace. Identified close contacts would be given a home surveillance order (HSO). Symptomatic close contacts will be screened and tested.
- e) Positive cases with no or mild symptoms as well as negative cases may be given home surveillance depending on the risk assessment by DHO as well the suitability of their home for quarantine.
- f) Any employee who develops symptoms or whose symptoms become worse while on HSO, should immediately report to DHO for further action.
- g) Those who are not considered as close contacts may return to work with strict adherence to SOP.
- h) Disinfection should be carrying out as advised by DHO. However, while waiting for the DHO, management may carry out disinfection as per Annex 36; Garis Panduan Pembersihan dan Disinfeksi di Tempat Awam.



- i) The workplace only has to be closed for the duration of disinfection and subsequently the workplace may function as normal but with available employees who are not close contacts. Employers may inform the DHO to reopen the premise once the disinfection process is completed.
- j) In the event, majority of the employees are close contacts, the workplace may be closed for the duration determined by DHO in order to carry out investigation and risk assessment.
- k) The workplace will be closed for a period of 7 days if there is found to be a breach of SOP's
- l) Close contacts who have completed Home Surveillance for 10 days should get their release order from DHO before returning to work.
- m) Positive cases who have been discharged from hospital, PKRC or home isolation may return to work with strict adherence to SOP.
- n) There should be strict adherence to SOP's on transportation of suspected, probable or confirmed cases among employees.

### **III. Special Circumstances**

- a) For industries with a large number of employees who are close contacts, they may be allowed to work strictly using a bubble concept, the details of which will be determined by the relevant DHO.

This guideline may be used as a basis for managing employees during this period of time. Employers and employees are advised to keep up to date with the latest developments and advice issued by the Ministry of health.

## **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

- Good personal hygiene should be observed at all times. Regular hand hygiene by washing with soap and water or use hand sanitizer
- Maintain at least 1 meter (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

## **RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE**

- Cover mouth and nose with bend of elbow or tissue if coughing or sneezing.
- Throw tissue in the trash after using it
- Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer
- If no tissue available, use upper sleeve or elbow instead of hands while sneezing and coughing.

## **GUIDELINES FOR HAND HYGIENE**

- Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer after any contact with respiratory secretions
- Remove jewelry before any hand wash procedure
- Rinse hands under warm running water
- Lather with soap; cover all surfaces of the hands and fingers using friction.
- Rinse under warm running water
- Dry hands thoroughly with a disposable towel
- Turn off faucet without recontaminating hands
- Keep fingernails short and do not use fingernail polish or artificial nails.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used to decontaminate hands that are not visibly soiled
  - Apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer to palm of one hand and rub hands together, covering all surfaces of hands and finger, until hands are dry.

**GUIDELINES ON WEARING SURGICAL MASKS (3 PLY)**

1. If you have running nose or flu like symptoms, you are advised to stay at home. If you need to go out, make sure you wear a surgical mask.
2. Avoid crowded places. Wear a surgical mask if you cannot avoid them
3. Wash hands before wearing a surgical mask and after taking one off.
4. When wearing surgical mask, the following should be noted:
  - 4.1. The facemask should fit snugly over the face
  - 4.2. The coloured side of the mask should face outside
  - 4.3. Tie all the strings that keep the mask in place
  - 4.4. The mask should fully cover the nose, mouth as well as the chin.
  - 4.5. The metallic wire part of the mask should be fixed securely over the bridge of the nose to prevent leakage
  - 4.6. The surgical mask should not be used more than a day but if it is wet, damaged or soiled by secretions or body fluid at any time, change the mask immediately.
  - 4.7. Discard all used surgical masks into a plastic bag which should then be tied properly before disposing it into a rubbish bin.

## DISINFECTION PROCEDURES

### Surfaces

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol should be effective.
  - Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
- Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
  - 5 tablespoons (1/3<sup>rd</sup> cup) bleach per gallon of water\* or
  - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water \*\*
  - For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
  - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.

\* 1 Gallon = 3.8 Liters

\*\* 1 Quart = 0.95 Liters

Refer Annex 36 Tatacara Pembersihan Dan Disinfeksi Di Tempat Awam (Garis Panduan Pengurusan COVID-19 di Malaysia No.5/2020 ) at [www.moh.gov.my](http://www.moh.gov.my)

## REFERENCES:

1. World Health Organisation (WHO). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. Available at: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019> (Accessed 6 Mac 2020).
2. World Health Organisation (WHO). Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19. 3 Mac 2020. Available at: [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7\\_6](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6) (Accessed on 6 Mac 2020)
3. World Health Organisation (WHO). COVID-19 FAQs Available at: <https://www.epi-win.com/> (Accessed 6 Mac 2020).
4. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Water, Sanitation & Environmentally-related Hygiene. 26 July 2016. Available at: [https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing\\_sneezing.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html) (Accessed on 6 Mac 2020)
5. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations. 6 March 2020. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html> (Accessed on 11 March 2020)
6. Dalton, Craig and Corbett, Stephen and Katelaris, Anthea, Pre-Emptive Low Cost Social Distancing and Enhanced Hygiene Implemented before Local COVID-19 Transmission Could Decrease the Number and Severity of Cases. (March 5, 2020). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3549276>
7. Ministry of Health Malaysia. Guidelines on COVID-19 Management in Malaysia no. 04/2020 (5<sup>th</sup> Edition).
8. Ministry of Health Malaysia. Maklumat Terkini COVID-19. Available at <http://www.moh.gov.my/index.php/pages/view/2019-ncov-wuhan> (Accessed 6 Mac 2020)

Prepared by:

Occupational & Environmental Health Sector,  
Disease Control Division,  
Ministry of Health Malaysia  
Updated: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**Ministry of Health Malaysia**  
Updated 15 February 2021