



17 March 2020.

Ref. Nr. 18/4/3/3.

**Attention:**

**Owners / Persons in Charge of Workplaces**

Dear Sir / Madam

**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 the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spreading to other countries around the world.

WHO and public health authorities around the world are taking action to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. However, long term success cannot be taken for granted. ***All sections of our society – including businesses and employers – must play a role if we are to stop the spread of this disease.***

The Occupational Health and safety Act 85 of 1993 places an express obligation on the employer to maintain a working environment that is safe and healthy.

On the issue of a healthy working environment, the employer must ensure that the workplace is free from any risk to the health of its employees as far as it is reasonably practicable. Within the context of COVID-19, there is a clear obligation on the employer to manage the risk of contamination in the workplace.

**The Section Municipal Health Services would like to bring the following to your attention:**

**1. 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 could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

If they are standing within 1 or 2 meters of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu.

Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 50. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

## **2. Simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace**

The low-cost measures below will help prevent the spread of infections in your workplace, such as colds, flu and stomach bugs, and protect your customers, contractors and employees.

**Employers should start doing these things now, even if COVID-19 has not arrived in the communities where they operate.** They can already reduce working days lost due to illness and stop or slow the spread of COVID-19 if it arrives at one of your workplaces.

### **a) Make sure your workplaces are clean and hygienic**

- Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly.
- Why? Because contamination on surfaces touched by employees and customers is one of the main ways that COVID-19 spreads

### **b) Promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors and customers**

- Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace.
- Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled.
- Display posters promoting hand-washing – ask your local public health authority for these or look on [www.WHO.int](http://www.WHO.int).
- Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefings at meetings and information on the intranet to promote hand-washing.
- Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water.
- Why? Because washing kills the virus on your hands and prevents the spread of COVID-19.

**c) Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace.**

- Display posters promoting respiratory hygiene. Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefing at meetings and information on the intranet etc.
  - Ensure that face masks and / or paper tissues are available at your workplaces, for those who develop a runny nose or cough at work, along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of them.
  - Why? Because good respiratory hygiene prevents the spread of COVID-19
- d) Advise employees and contractors to consult national travel advice before going on business trips.
- e) Brief your employees, contractors and customers that if COVID-19 starts spreading in your community anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more) needs to stay at home. They should also stay home (or work from home) if they have had to take simple

**3. Other important information:**

**3.1 Masks**

Many people are wearing masks in photos we see of COVID-19 overseas. However, the message in RSA with regards to masks is that masks are not recommended for the general population. Masks irritate our face and, in some instances, result in people touching their face more often.

Masks have to be removed to eat and drink and care must be taken not to touch the dirty side of a mask. The mask must not be put on back to front in error or else the germs it caught are inhaled.

There are times when masks (surgical/medical/construction masks) are recommended:

- when an individual takes ill at work e.g. coughing or sneezing - to keep their germs to themselves;
- when an ill person goes out to see the dr;
- when medical staff are examining sick patients;
- when providing home care to the sick;
- if a person with COVID-19 is in self-isolation at home.
- If a mask is needed and unavailable, a scarf can be used or a homemade mask can be used.

N95 masks and eye protection are recommended for medical staff taking a swab test for COVID-19.

N95 masks with eye protection, a gown and gloves are recommended and when treating a person with COVID-19 in isolation in hospital.

### **3.2 The Face**

Only touch the face if hands have been washed. Avoid touching the face casually as our hands potentially bring germs to the face. Entry points for germs to enter the body are the eyes, mouth and nose, due to the mucous membranes. This is because there are germs all around us and they easily get onto our hands.

### **3.3 Handwashing**

This remains the most important message w.r.t. this virus. We need to wash hands frequently including before we prepare food, prior to eating, after a visit to the loo, after blowing our nose and before we touch our face. Wash hands with soap for 20 seconds. If water is unavailable or in short supply, use a hand sanitizer.

### **3.4 Surfaces and objects**

The more we clean surfaces and objects the safer we are. When people speak/ cough/ sneeze, droplets go into the air. These droplets are heavy and soon rest on whatever surfaces are below them. Simple cleaning with ordinary cleaners is effective. Use a tissue to press a lift's button.

### **3.5 Handshakes**

Consider alternatives to handshakes and hugs including the use of the knuckles/feet/elbows/backs.

### **3.6 If you get flu**

Seek permission to remain at home if you are sick e.g. fever or coughing or have the flu.

### **3.7 Sick leave**

Normal sick leave policies apply. Sick leave is also used for quarantine purposes. Contact the COVID-19 hotline to request a sick note if needed for quarantine.

### **3.8 If someone is sick**

Sometimes a person may take ill at work. Offer them a tissue or mask and keep a distance of 1-2 m from them.

### **3.9 Doctor's Rooms**

Call the COVID-19 Tollfree Hotline [0800-029-999](tel:0800-029-999) for advice first. Before going to the doctor call and make arrangements. If you arrive at the doctor's rooms and you have

COVID-19 it may be necessary for others to go into quarantine for 2 weeks. If you call first, they can prepare themselves for your arrival.

### **3.10 Vitamins**

Keep yourself as healthy as possible and take your usual multivitamins.

### **3.11 Flu Injection**

The flu injection does not protect us from COVID-19, however we are all advised to consider having the flu injection when it becomes available so we are not exposed unnecessarily to the “double whammy” of COVID-19 and flu.

### **3.12 Risk Register**

Consider keeping a register in your workplace/establishment, of people who have travelled or are at other risk of developing COVID-19. They should self-monitor if they are well. If they are contacts of confirmed cases, they need to contact the toll-free no. [0800-029-999](tel:0800-029-999) to discuss the need to self-quarantine.

### **3.13 When COVID-19 is suspected**

You may have COVID-19 if ...

You have one symptom and one epidemiological criteria – see below.

#### **a) *Symptoms of COVID-19***

Sudden chest illness with:

- Fever of 38 °C or higher, with or without chills/sweating (or history of fever);
- Cough (usually dry);
- Shortness of breath;
- Sore throat.

#### **b) *Epidemiological Criteria (14 days or less, before the onset of symptoms):***

- Close contact of one with COVID-19 (or a probable case);
- History of travel from areas of ongoing community transmission e.g. Italy;
- Was in a health care facility where patients with COVID-19 were being treated.

### **3.14 Percentages**

80% who test positive have a mild-moderate case of COVID-19. 20% have it more severely, needing medical support in hospital. 5% require ICU care. Only 2-3% die,

therefore one's chance of recovery is quite high. The elderly 75 years and older are at greater risk as well as those with chronic conditions. We should do all we can to educate, protect and care for our loved ones. We should try to keep safe from COVID-19 to protect our loved ones from germs we could unknowingly carry to them.

### **3.15 Quarantine**

When people are kept in a facility for 2-3 weeks e.g. after returning from China to check if they develop any symptoms.

### **3.16 Self-Quarantine**

When people are advised to keep themselves apart from others, at home, in case they have contracted COVID-19. If visiting the doctor call first and wear a mask. They should self-monitor during this time.

### **3.17 Self-Monitor**

Continue with your normal life at work but take your temperature twice daily and report if it is 37,3 °C or above. Look out for symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath.

### **3.18 Isolation**

Separation of someone with symptoms to ensure the disease is not transmitted.

### **3.19 Self-Isolation**

If someone develops symptoms and has reason to believe they could have COVID-19 they should immediately self-isolate e.g. at home, so as not to spread the germs and should contact the tollfree no. for advice. Call the doctor / clinic before attending so they are prepared for you.

### **3.20 Close contacts**

Face to face contact

- Together in a closed environment.
- Lives in same household.
- Works closely in the same environment.

### **3.21 Direct care**

Healthcare worker or other person providing direct care without the full PPE (gown, gloves, N95 mask, eye protection)

### 3.20 Casual Contact

You do not fit the description of close contact but had some exposure to one diagnosed with COVID-19.

### 3.21 Care and Concern

We are all urged to remember to be caring towards our colleagues and loved ones who take ill, keep in touch and provide emotional support.

### 3.22 In the Home

#### a) *Home Care of the Sick*

Let them use a room on their own if available and wear a mask if possible, open a window in the room if feasible, or open windows periodically, try to keep a distance of 1-2m, care givers to wear masks.

#### b) *Other Chronic Conditions*

We are considered to be at greater risk if we have other chronic conditions. Most people have one or other chronic condition they are living with and managing. Be extra vigilant in taking steps to adhere to your treatment plan and to look after yourself.

#### c) *HIV and COVID-19*

If someone has HIV but is on ARV's and looking after themselves, a high CD4 will help protect them from opportunistic infections, including flu and COVID-19.

## 4. How to stay informed

- Find the latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

- Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.epi-win.com/>

- Public COVID-19 Hotline: [0800-029-999](tel:0800-029-999)

## 5. Coping with stress during the 2019-ncov outbreak

- It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis. Talk to people you trust can help.

- If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.
- Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions. If you feel overwhelmed, talk to someone. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.
- Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website etc.
- Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and other employees spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.
- Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.

## **6. Attachments**

Included are the following for your attention:

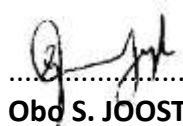
### **Annexure 1**

Contact details of the Section Municipal Health Services of the Central Karoo District Municipality

### **Annexure 2**

Posters that can be placed / put up in your workplace

Kind regards



**Obo S. JOOSTE**  
**MUNICIPAL MANAGER**

**Enquiries:** G. E. van Zyl  
Manager Municipal Health Services



## ANNEXURE 1

Surname	Initials	Designation	Responsible Area	E-mail	Tel. no.
Van Zyl	G. E.	Manager 	District	gerrit@skdm.co.za	023-4491060
Belwana	M. L.	Office Assistant 	Office admin	mbelwana@skdm.co.za	023-4491063
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# Coronavirus COVID-19



Coronavirus  
**COVID-19**  
Public Health  
Advice

## The Facts

### Most at Risk

- Anyone who has been to an affected region in the last 14 days **AND** is experiencing symptoms
- Anyone who has been in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in the last 14 days **AND** is experiencing symptoms

### Prevention



#### Wash

your hands well and often to avoid contamination



#### Cover

your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing and discard used tissue



#### Avoid

touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands



#### Clean

and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

### Symptoms

> A Cough > Shortness of Breath > Breathing Difficulties > Fever (High Temperature)

### Affected Regions

Check the list of affected regions on [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

### What to do if you are at risk

I've been to an affected region in the last 14 days and

#### I **HAVE** symptoms

1. Stay away from other people
2. Phone your GP without delay
3. If you do not have a GP  
Phone 112 or 999

I **DO NOT HAVE** symptoms  
For advice visit [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

I've been in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in the last 14 days and

#### I **HAVE** symptoms

1. Stay away from other people
2. Phone your GP without delay
3. If you do not have a GP  
Phone 112 or 999

I **DO NOT HAVE** symptoms  
For advice visit [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

For Daily Updates Visit

[www.gov.ie/health-covid-19](http://www.gov.ie/health-covid-19)  
[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

# COVER YOUR COUGH AND SNEEZE THE RIGHT WAY



**DO**

Use a tissue and place it immediately in the bin.  
Wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser.



**DO**

Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve.  
Germs won't spread through your clothing.



**DON'T**

Cough or sneeze into your hands. You'll end up  
spreading germs to everything you touch.

# COVER YOUR COUGH AND SNEEZE

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS THAT MAKE PEOPLE SICK

