

GETTING YOUR WORKPLACE/ ORGANIZATION READY



version 2.0

Introduction

The first cases of an unknown cluster of pneumonia were reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on 31 December 2019. Since then, it has spread rapidly, initially within China and subsequently across the rest of the world.

On 30 January 2020, the WHO declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. In light of the accelerated international spread, severity and growing mortality rate of the disease, WHO declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

This is the first pandemic caused by a coronavirus. Global data up to 6 April shows that there are 1,277,962 confirmed cases, 69,555 deaths and 264,439 recoveries recorded.

The Maldives has been implementing precautionary measures in order to prevent community spread. In addition to the public health authorities, the government, businesses, and the public have a role to play in controlling this disease.

This document is intended for workplaces and organizations, including service providers of all sizes, to guide them towards integrating into a whole-of-society approach in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Maldives, and in building preparedness in the event of community spread. The document highlights on how these organizations may contribute to help keep people safe, and to mitigate the potential economic impacts as a result of disruptions to business caused by necessary physical distancing measures.

The following guideline have been adapted from WHO and CDC.

Those affected by SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, show symptoms of respiratory illness. In more than 80% of cases, the symptoms are mild. In approximately 20% of cases, severe symptoms requiring hospitalization can manifest. The virus can prove fatal in approximately 2% of cases, and is typically most dangerous to the elderly and to those who have underlying medical conditions such as diabetes or chronic lung, heart and kidney diseases.

When a person who is infected coughs or exhales, droplets containing the virus are released. If a person is at a distance of less than two meters away from an infected person when they cough, the uninfected person may inhale these droplets and get infected. Further, if they touch surfaces contaminated with droplets

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The mainstay of prevention is respiratory hygiene and handwashing. These may be low-cost, low-tech measures, but are the most effective.

Among the most effective ways of preventing the virus' spread are to practice good respiratory hygiene and washing hands frequently with soap and water or using hand-sanitizer.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 within the Workplace/ Organization



As of 2nd April, there are 19 confirmed cases in the Maldives. There has been no evidence of community spread in the Maldives thus far. The following measures will help to ensure that all employees and customers are safe and prepared.

1. Cleaning the workplace

- Commonly touched surfaces (such as desks, tables, counters, doorknobs) and objects (such as mobile phones, telephones, keyboards) should be wiped with regular cleaners.



- Public areas such as lifts, toilets and waiting areas should be cleaned frequently.

- High-traffic areas should be wiped and cleaned frequently (e.g. counters where customers regularly queue, workstations used in multiple shifts).

- Places where large public gathering regularly occur, such as ATMs, banks, shops, airports, universities, schools, and other such places should be cleaned at least twice a day or once every shift.

- Bleach solution can be used to disinfect frequently used objects, surfaces and areas. To make bleach solution, mix 1/2 cup bleach with 1000 ml water (120 ml bleach:1000 ml water).

2. Sick employees to remain at home

- Anyone with respiratory symptoms (runny nose, cough, sore throat or fever) should be encouraged to stay at home until symptoms disappear without the use of fever reducing medi-



- Ensure your sick leave policies take into account public health guidance and needs.

3. Promote regular handwashing

- Put hand sanitizer bottles or dispensers in communal areas around the workplace/organization and ensure they are regularly refilled. Make sure they are accessible to all staff and especially available in areas where there is high flow of staff/customers, e.g. at customer service



- Display handwashing posters at your workplaces/organizations.

- Ensure handwashing facilities with soap and water are available for all staff.



4. Promote good respiratory hygiene



- Ensure masks and tissues are available for staff and customers experiencing respiratory symptoms.

- Ensure there are closed bins (ideally foot-operated) with liners for safe disposal of masks and tissues.

- Display posters advising good respiratory hygiene in common areas.

5. Travel

- Always refer to updated travel advisories and press releases.

- Make sure your organization is briefed on the latest global disease situation.

- Employees with chronic diseases such as diabetes, lung diseases, heart disease, kidney disease should avoid travelling.

- While travelling, employees should ensure that they have hand sanitizers on hand, clean hands regularly and stay at least 3 feet away from those who have respiratory symptoms.



- Ensure employees are familiar with the guidelines and instructions issued by the Government of Maldives to prevent and control COVID-19. All employees should strictly adhere to all local restrictions and guidelines.
- Employees should keep in mind that local conditions at any destination may require ad hoc measures. Employees may be placed under isolation if a case is identified among their contacts while on the trip.
- If any employee develops fever, cough or breathing difficulty, visit any flu clinic or call the COVID-19 hotline 1676 immediately.

6. Events

- As of now, public gatherings and events have been prohibited under the State of Public Health Emergency which was Declared on 12th March 2020



- As COVID-19 continues to spread globally and with the situation evolving daily, workplaces and organizations are advised to closely follow the public announcements and advisories issues by the Health Protection Agency.

7. Take-away and Delivery Services

- In adherence to general workplace guidelines, staff with fever and cough must not make deliveries.

- Those experiencing fever and cough must refrain from receiving deliveries.

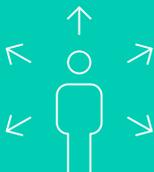


- If possible, resort to contactless deliveries, i.e., asking food to be left on the ground floor inside apartment buildings or at the door outside individual apartments.

- Use where possible, cashless transactions and avoid hand contact.

- Once a food package is received, remove the food from the external packing (which should be properly disposed of or recycled) and put the food on a plate or container. Immediately wash hands with soap and water.

8. Physical distancing measures



- Physical distancing measures apply to everyone, to minimize opportunities for the virus to spread. Individuals should maintain a distance of at least 3 feet between them.

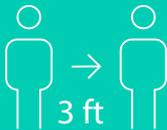
This advice applies to both inside the workplace/organization and in the external public areas where customers may need to queue.

- Encourage using online platforms for services whenever possible.

- Regulate entry so that the premises/



- When possible, use floor markings inside to facilitate customer compliance with the physical distancing advice of at least 3 feet between individuals, particularly in the most crowded areas, such as serving counters, waiting queues and cash registers.



- Use vertical signage to direct customers into lanes if feasible to facilitate movement within the premises while maintaining at least 3 feet distance.

- Make regular announcements to remind customers to follow physical distancing advice and to clean their hands

Actions to take if Community Spread of COVID-19 is in the Maldives

In the event of community spread of COVID-19 within the Maldives, the following measure may be put in place:

-If an employee or customer tests positive, employees who were in contact with them would be isolated or quarantined for a minimum 14 days and the workplace would need to be temporarily closed for deep-cleaning.



All workplaces/organizations should develop their own business continuity plans for all of the above scenarios. The objectives of the plan would be to:

- Reduce disease transmission among staff.
- Protect those who are at high risk for complications (those with underlying health problems).
- Maintain services/business operations as far as possible, especially if it is an essential service.

The plan should at a minimum:

- Identify a staff responsible (focal point): The focal point would be responsible for communicating to the rest of the staff in the event of an employee becoming sick and would also be responsible for liaising with health authorities.
- Follow a clear mechanism to identify, isolate and inform health authorities if an employee with travel history or contact with a positive case becomes ill while at work.

- Assessment of the essential functions of the workplace/organization that need to continue even if physical distancing measures are in place (these would be essential services to the public such as waste collection and management, utilities, communications, health services and the provision of necessities such as groceries). This should consider how much the community depends on the functioning of the workplace/organization.
- Assess if the functions can be scaled down, and at what level.
- Build a mechanism to maintain organizational functions in case many employees are unable to attend work, due to being infected, being quarantined or having to take care of sick family members. Consider the possibility of working from home, for at least essential functions. Consider also staggered shifts, rather than keeping all employees together at work at the same time.
- Build a mechanism for communicating with employees and record updates daily.
- Consider how organizational functions will be affected if workplace/organization (or one floor or one area of workplace) needs to be closed temporarily for deep-cleaning, in the event that an employee or customer tests positive, and plan accordingly. Deep cleaning may take a day or two, depending on the type and size of the establishment.
- Procedures for triggering the plan and informing employees.
- Address the mental health of employees.

Employers should take into consideration the following:

- Ensure all employee contacts and their emergency contacts are up-to-date.
- Consider cross-training to enable more staff to perform critical functions.
- Once the business continuity plan is developed, all employees should be familiar with the plan and know their roles.
- Consider sick leave policies to reflect public health guidance at the time (e.g. not mandate everyone to get medical certificates from doctor if authorities are advising people with symptoms to stay home).
- Make leave policies flexible to adhere to the spirit of public health guidelines, and in line with employment regulations.
- Consider putting information about COVID-19, and information about handwashing, respiratory etiquette and other important information from authorities on the intranet of the workplace/organization.
- Employers should stay up-to-date on the latest developments of the disease, and the latest public health guidance.
- Some employees may be living in accommodation provided by the employer. In the event of a staff being diagnosed with COVID-19 or being put in isolation, the employer must provide suitable arrangements for accommodation in line with public health guidance.



#Coronavirus #COVID19