

ABC (PTY) LTD.

DEALING WITH THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC POLICY

THE PANDEMIC ILLNESS

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS

**References: World Health Organisation (W.H.O.);
National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)**

1. **Coronavirus** or **Covid-19**, as it has emerged as a human illness in late 2019 and early 2020, is a new strain of virus which is very contagious. Generally Human Coronaviruses are common throughout the world and are a large family of viruses which cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to influenza (flu) and more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and now Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).
2. The name Corona comes from the word “crown” because under a microscope the bacteria resembles a crown with spikes coming out of the circle. The word “virus” comes from the Latin word “venom” because the tiny bacterial agents cause the infections. The Coronavirus was first discovered and named in 1968 so it has been around a long time.
3. The disease spreading around the world at the moment is just one type of coronavirus and is referred to as Covid-19 because it was identified in 2019. It originated in China. It is a new strain in the coronavirus family; namely Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus or SARS-CoV. It is thought to have been passed on to humans from animals kept in markets.
4. Why it has created such concern around the world and has been referred to as a pandemic is because, as stated above it is very contagious (spreads easily) and because it is so new there is no vaccine yet to prevent it from infecting people.

HOW IS COVID-19 TRANSMITTED?

5. Humans can be infected by Covid-19 from other persons who have the virus. The illness can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with Covid-19 coughs, sneezes or breathes the germs out. These droplets can land on the person or on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people can then catch Covid-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth and so transmit the germs into their bodies. People can also catch Covid-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with Covid-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets or by touching each other’s hands, for example when you shake hands.

Because germs can be spread in this way it is important to keep a “social distance” of at least 1 to 2 meters (3 - 6 feet) away from another person who may be sick.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

6. Covid-19 is a respiratory illness, so it will affect your breathing and nasal passages and ultimately your lungs. The common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms such as sore throats, coughing, high body temperatures around or above 38°, and in more severe cases shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. If not treated properly infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.
7. This is sometimes a difficult illness to detect because a person may be infected with the virus but show no symptoms. On the other hand, a person with a sore throat or runny nose may just have a cold or a milder form of influenza (flu) and not the infectious Covid-19.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE COVID-19

8. If you think you have the symptoms for Covid-19, the first thing to think of is not to be in contact with other persons because you can easily transmit the germs to others. Do not rush off to the clinics or hospitals before you are sure of the symptoms and they are persisting. If you have a family doctor contact him or her by telephone and ask their advice. The reason for this is because if everyone flooded the hospitals and doctor's rooms and clinics they would not be able to cope. You may just have a cold and you may be advised to self-medicate and control the infection.
9. If you do not have a family doctor or are very worried about the symptoms you experience, then you can call the Covid-19 toll free number **0800 029 999** for advice. Once they have listened to your concerns they may refer you to a Testing Centre where you would need to go to and have tests taken. You will need to fill out the forms they present you with and co-operate with the testing process.
10. The Covid-19 Call Centre or your doctor may request that you self-quarantine for a period of time before going for a test. If you only have a cold or a lesser form of flu and your body's immune system is low and you go to a test centre where there are other people with the illness you are at risk of being infected.
11. If you do go for a test you will receive the results within 2-3 days. If you are tested positive then you will be instructed to report for treatment. This is obligatory. If you do not report for treatment and refuse to co-operate with the authorities, this will lead to you being prosecuted and forced to undergo treatment.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO TO AVOID CATCHING COVID-19

12. Remember prevention is always better than cure. Take precautions to avoid high risk situations. Comply with the authorities' regulations and advisories on avoiding contamination.

13. Cleanliness and sanitation are critical requirements on preventing contamination. Wash your hands regularly either with sanitizers or soap and water if you do not have access to sanitizers. Avoid being in contact with persons who might be vulnerable carriers of the illness. Keep a “social distance” of about two meters from other persons when a number of persons are congregated in closed areas. If you sneeze or are coughing, then do so into a handkerchief or cloth or your bended elbow or cover your mouth with your hands. Never sneeze or cough without covering your mouth. If you do sneeze into your hands immediately sanitize them by washing with soap and water or spraying them with sanitizer.

THE WORKPLACE

EMPLOYER’S RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

14. The employer is responsible in terms of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to ensure, as far as is reasonably practical, a safe working environment which is without risks to the health of its employees. The dealing with a pandemic of this nature would also be covered by the Hazardous Biological Agents Regulations which fall under this Act. The company shall take whatever steps are reasonably necessary to ensure the safety and health of its employees under the current circumstances.
15. Risk Assessment and Hazard Identification is an on-going occupational requirement in the workplace. Management shall strictly implement protocols required to ensure effective protective and control measures are put in place to combat the contamination of the workplace from the Covid-19 virus. Management reserves the right to issue directives and communiques to ensure these measures are complied with.

CLASSIFICATION OF EXPOSURE RISK

16. Not all workplace environments would be classified as High Risk Exposure. It does depend on the nature of work conducted, the industry type, number of persons employed and potential for exposure. The general classifications are the following:
 - Very High Exposure Risk
 - High Exposure Risk
 - Medium Exposure Risk
 - Lower Exposure Risk

The two High Exposure Risk categories are mainly associated with the medical and healthcare industries whilst the Low Exposure Risk workplaces are those where there would be little or no working contact with other persons.

We accept that our business would fall within the **Medium Exposure Risk Category**. This still means that management takes serious consideration in preventing and eliminating all risks of Covid-19 contamination.

EMPLOYEES’ RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

17. All employees are required to take seriously the rules and requirements of the Company in ensuring a safe and hazard free environment.
18. Any employee who ignores or compromises any instruction to implement measures in terms of this Policy or who jeopardizes the health and safety of any fellow employee or employees will be subject to disciplinary action.
19. All employees are required to bring to management's attention any incident, activity or situation which may be considered a risk factor affecting the health and safety of fellow employees or customers, clients or members of the public who attend the workplace.

ISSUING OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

20. Based on a Risk Assessment Analysis for the company's operations and different divisions management may instruct that, in certain circumstances, special PPE must be worn or may be worn by designated staff members. This PPE may include facemasks and rubber gloves.
21. Arrangements will be made for the use of sanitizing material such as Hand Washes, Sprays and Wipes to be placed at strategic positions. All staff are required to utilize these sanitizers and in a responsible way. For example, only one squirt of the alcohol-based sanitizers is necessary to cleanse one's hands.
22. Any staff member found to have taken unallocated or excessive protective or hygienic equipment for their own personal use outside of company premises will face disciplinary action.

TIME OFF WORK AND LEAVE ALLOCATION

23. The advent of this pandemic illness together with the measures adopted or recommended by the Health Authorities and Government Decrees have given rise to four types of atypical Leave Provisions. These are:
 - **Normal Sick Leave** in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act;
 - **Quarantine Leave** as required for a potential illness carrier or Person under Investigation (PUI) as required by the Health Authorities / Department of Health.
 - **Isolation Leave**, either Self Isolation or Employer Imposed.
 - **Special (Stay-at-Home / Lockdown) Leave** imposed in terms of the Disaster Management Act.
24. In the event of an employee falling ill either due to any form of influenza or the Covid-19 virus itself and requiring hospitalization or home medication and supported by a Medical Practitioner's Certificate confirming the illness will be entitled to statutory Sick Leave as provided for in terms of the BCOE Act. This will be fully paid sick leave. In the event that the employee surpasses his / her Sick

Leave entitlement for the sick leave cycle any excess leave required will be unpaid. The employee will be entitled to claim UIF benefits for this excess leave.

25. In the event that the employee is required by the Medical Authorities to be placed in a quarantine facility or home quarantine having been assessed by the Authority then statutory paid Sick Leave entitlements will apply for the duration of the quarantine period. The employee must produce proof of the institutionalized quarantine by the Authority.
26. Isolation Leave may be granted by the Employer either on application by the employee to be placed on Self Isolation Leave for justifiable grounds for a stipulated period or at the requirement of the Employer for the employee to stay away from the workplace due to the potential threat associated with the Covid-19 illness. Under certain circumstances, where practical, the employee may be required to continue working the normal office hours from home. Under these circumstances Sick Leave shall not be applicable and the employee shall be paid normal or re-negotiated working hour rates. Where the employee is not able to work remotely from his isolation abode and paid Sick Leave is not applicable the employee may be eligible for a UIF claim.
27. Where an employee wishes to take Self Isolation Leave in circumstances which the employer considers not justifiable the employee may take paid annual leave or unpaid time off. The employer shall consult with the employee as to why he believes he needs to proceed on Self Isolation Leave or where the employer considers it non justifiable and why this is so.
28. In all above circumstances regarding time off from work as prescribed above the employee has a duty to inform, consult with, seek permission or notify with written proof, depending on the circumstances, his direct line manager or any senior manager in the company before and during his period of absence from the workplace.
29. In the event that an employee has been absent from the workplace for an extended period of time and on return claims he has had the Covid-19 virus and been under treatment he must produce written proof of such illness. The employer reserves the right to require the employee to undergo a medical test to ascertain his infectious status before resuming work in the workplace under such circumstances.

NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

30. In the event that the Government imposes a National Lockdown in terms of the Disaster Management Act which requires all non-essential businesses to close down for a stipulated period then the following shall apply:
 - 30.1 An employee who is able and required to continue working from home to maintain the functions of the workplace shall continue to be paid his/her normal remuneration. Where the employer considers it not necessary for the employee to be available remotely for the normal daily working time the

employer reserves the right to consult and agree with the employee on reduced paid working hours.

- 30.2 An employee who has annual leave due to him/her and who wishes to redeem such leave may do so by agreement with the employer and shall be paid remuneration as part of his/her annual leave allocation. If due to financial constraints on the business at that time the employer may find it unfeasible to pay due annual leave.
- 30.3 If neither of the above applies time off in compliance with the State Regulations shall be unpaid. In line with the prescribed Regulations the employer shall make application to the Department of Labour Unemployment Insurance Fund for employees to claim UIF benefits under the Department's Temporary Employee Remuneration Scheme (TERS).
31. In the event that the employer is designated as an essential service provider either wholly or partially and the employer is not able to provide enough sustainable work during its normal operational working time the employer reserves the right to consult with employees regarding the imposition of Short-Time working conditions. Employees will only be paid for the time served. If eligible the employer will apply to the Department of Labour UIF (TERS) for relief for non-remunerative time.

POST LOCKDOWN RESUMPTION OF WORK

32. The business shall recommence operations in accordance with Government notification on the total or partial lifting of restrictions in terms of the National Disaster Management Act.
33. All employees shall be expected to return to work unless as otherwise prescribed by management. Management may specify that certain vulnerable employees, such as those over a certain age, those known to be suffering from some health incapacity such as treatment for cancer, tuberculosis, or pregnant staff members, should not immediately return to work.
34. Any employee who, during the national lockdown period has developed symptoms aligned with the Covid-19 illness must, prior to returning to work, notify management of his/her condition and the steps taken to diagnose the condition and may not return to work until such time as the employee has been given a clean bill of health by a medical practitioner in writing.
35. For a period of at least 6 (six) weeks following the resumption of operations, or such longer period as may be determined by management or regulatory measures, the following shall be adopted in the workplace for the purpose of monitoring and preventing the possible spread of the Covid-19 illness:
- 35.1 Sanitizing material, whether sanitizing disinfectants or soap and water, shall be placed at all entry points into the company premises and at strategic points within the company premises;

- 35.2 Staff may be required, depending on the nature of their work to wear face masks. Even if not required an employee may choose to wear a face mask whilst at work;
- 35.3 A digital thermometer shall be kept in the workplace and employees may be randomly tested for abnormal temperature readings. Any employee requesting a temperature check may receive one.
- 35.4 Where practical social distancing shall be implemented in working areas and meeting facilities. When attending meetings of a business nature all attendees, including visitors, may be required to wear facial masks.
- 35.5 The company shall establish a special database of all employees' updated personal records including home addresses, next of kin, cell phone numbers and private e-mail addresses. The reason for this is if a staff member does become infected at any stage in his/her normal lifestyle with the Covid-19 illness the company has a record of those other persons he/she may have come into contact with during normal working duties.
- 35.6 A separate register of all visitors to the company's premises, with their contact details shall be established and no person who refuses to complete the register shall be allowed on to the premises. Visitors may also be required to undergo a temperature test and the company reserves the right of admission to anybody whose body temperature is excessive.
36. If any employee shows any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst at the workplace that employee must immediately co-operate with measures to deal with the situation by:
- 36.1 Reporting his/her condition to management;
- 36.2 Wearing appropriate protective equipment including a face mask;
- 36.3 Isolating himself / herself from fellow workers;
- 36.4 Allowing his/her workplace to be sanitized;
- 36.5 Leaving the workplace responsibly and seeking medical attention for diagnosis of his condition.
- 36.6 Informing management of the results of medical testing undertaken.
37. In the event that the business and operational requirements of the company are adversely affected by the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic the employer reserves the right to implementing measures to save the economic viability of the business. These measures can include but may not be limited to the following:
- 37.1 implementation of Short Time working conditions for all or selected working divisions;

- 37.2 implementation of Lay-Off working conditions for all or selected working divisions;
 - 37.3 salary sacrifices / remuneration reductions for all or selected pay grades in the company;
 - 37.4 retrenchment of staff members.
38. In such circumstances the employer shall follow all statutory and good labour practice requirements before implementing such measures which shall include prior notification, consultations, consideration of alternatives, and if possible, agreement on changes to working conditions and conditions of employment.

IMPLEMENTATION & AMENDMENTS

39. In implementing this Policy no employee shall be unfairly discriminated against nor treated in a more favourable position than any other employee save for where health considerations of that employee and his/her fellow employees are concerned and/or the current and future viability of the business undertaking may be detrimentally affected.
40. Management reserves the right to amend, add to or substitute any part or the whole of this Policy given the anticipated changing scenario envisaged following the outbreak of this or any future pandemic of a similar nature.
