**Summary of Covid-19 Occupational Health & Safety Measures in the Workplace – More than 10 Employees**

All workplaces (excluding medical and health services) operating under level 4 and providing essential goods and services need to comply with the new COVID-19 OHS Directive.

**OHS COMPLIANCE**

* Undertake a risk assessment that takes into account the workplace’s specific circumstances
* Notify all staff about the COVID-19 OHS Directive.
* Ensure that there is strict compliance with the COVID-19 OHS Directive and risk assessment plan through monitoring and supervision.
* Notify staff that if they are sick or have possible COVID-19 symptoms, they must not come to work and must take their paid sick leave in terms of the BCEA.
* Appoint a manager or senior staff member to address employee/workplace representative concerns and to keep them informed and to consult with the health and safety committee.
* Employers with more than 500 staff must submit a record of their risk assessment together with a written COVID-19 policy to its health and safety committee and to the Department of Labour.
* Take any other measures required by the employer’s risk assessment.

**WORKPLACE READINESS**

* As far as is practical, reduce the number of staff at the workplace through rotation, staggered working hours, shift systems, remote working arrangements or similar measures.
* Arrange the workplace to ensure minimal contact between staff and as far as possible, ensure that there is a minimum of 1,5m between staff whilst working. The minimum distance may need to be longer depending on the workplace circumstances or nature of the sector.
	+ If it’s not practical to arrange work areas at least 1,5m apart, then the employer must arrange physical barriers between work areas to form a solid barrier; or
	+ If necessary, supply staff with appropriate PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) based on the risk assessment at no cost to the employee.
* The employer must ensure that social distancing measures are implemented through supervision in the workplace and common areas inside and outside the immediate workplace through queue control (e.g. canteens and lavatories).
* These measures may include dividing the workforce into groups or staggering break-times to avoid concentration of staff in common areas.
* Take measures to minimise contact between staff as well as between staff and members of the public. Where reasonably practical, the employer must ensure that:
	+ There is a distance of 1,5m between staff and members of the public or between members of the public, or
	+ Put in place physical barriers or provide staff with face shields or visors.
	+ If appropriate, undertake symptom screening of persons other than staff entering the workplace.
* If appropriate, display notices advising persons other than staff entering the workplace of the precautions they are required to take.
* Require member of the public, including suppliers, to wear masks when inside the employer’s premises.
* The employer must keep the workplace well ventilated by natural or mechanical means to reduce the SARS-CoV-2 viral load.
* Where reasonably practicable, have an effective local extraction ventilation system with high-efficiency particulate HEPA air filters, which is regularly cleaned and maintained, and its vents don’t feed back in through open windows.
* Ensure that filters are cleaned and replaced in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions by a competent person.
* Biometric systems must be disabled or made COVID-19 proof.

**EMPLOYEE WELLNESS – TRAINING**

* Provide staff with information that raises awareness about COVID-19, its transmission, personal hygiene, social distancing, use of masks, cough etiquette, and where to go for screening or testing.

**EMPLOYEE WELLNESS - SCREENING**

*  Staff must be screened at the time of reporting for work to ascertain whether they have any COVID-19 observable symptoms, namely:
	+ Fever, (or ≥ 38°C measured temperature), cough, sore throat, redness of eyes or shortness of breath (or difficulty in breathing).
	+ Staff must report whether they suffer from any of the following additional symptoms: body aches, loss of smell or loss of taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fatigue, weakness or tiredness.
	+ Staff must inform the employer immediately if they experience any of the above symptoms whilst at work.
	+ The employer must comply with the Department of Health’s “Guidelines for symptom monitoring and management of essential staff for COVID-19 related infection”.
* If the staff member presents with these symptoms or advises the employer of these symptoms:
	+ the employer must not allow the staff member to enter the workplace or report for work;
	+ If the staff member is already at work immediately:
		- Isolate the staff member, provide the staff member with a FFP1 surgical mask and arrange for the staff member to be transported in a manner that doesn’t place other staff or members of the public at risk, so that the staff member can either self-isolate or be medically examined; and
		- Assess the risk of transmission, disinfect the area and the staff member’s workstation, refer those staff who may be at risk for screening and take any other appropriate measure to prevent transmission.
	+ Ensure that the staff member is tested or referred to an identified testing site.
	+ Place the employee on paid sick leave or if the employee’s sick leave has been exhausted, apply for the COVID-19 illness benefit.
	+ Ensure that the employee is not discriminated against on the grounds of having tested positive for COVID-19.
	+ If there is evidence that the employee contracted COVID-19 as a result of occupational exposure, lodge a COIDA claim for compensation.
* If a staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19, an employer must:
	+ Inform the Department of Health by phoning 0800 029 999 as well as the Department of Labour.
	+ The employer must investigate the cause, including any control failure and review its risk assessment to ensure that the necessary controls and PPE requirements are in place.
* If a staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and isolated in accordance with the Department of Health guidelines, an employer may only allow a staff member to return to work on the following conditions:
	+ The staff member has undergone a medical evaluation confirming that the staff member has tested negative for COVID-19.
	+ The employer ensures that personal hygiene, wearing of masks, social distancing, and cough etiquette is strictly adhere to by the staff member; and
	+ The employer closely monitors the staff member for symptoms on return to work.

**EMPLOYEE PERSONAL PROTECTION PRECAUTIONS**

* At no cost to staff, the employer must ensure that there is sufficient quantities of hand sanitizer based on the number of staff or other persons with access to the workplace at the entrance of, and in, the workplace which the staff or other persons are required to use.
* Hand sanitizer must have at least 70% alcohol content and meet the Department of Health’s recommendations.
	+ If the employee works away from the workplace, but not at home, then he must be provided with an adequate supply of hand sanitizer.
	+ If a staff member interacts with the public, the employer must provide the staff member with sufficient supplies of hand sanitizer at that staff member’s workstation for both the staff member and the person with whom the staff member is interacting.
* The employer must take measures to ensure that all work surfaces and equipment are disinfected before work begins, regularly during the working period and after work ends. All areas such as toilets, common areas, door handles, shared electronic equipment must be regularly cleaned and disinfected.
* The employer must ensure that:
	+ There are adequate facilities for washing hands with soap and clean water.
	+ Only paper towels are provided to dry hands – the use of fabric towelling is prohibited.
	+ The staff are required to wash their hands and sanitize their hands regularly while at work.
	+ Staff interacting with the public are instructed to sanitize their hands between each interaction with the public.
	+ Surfaces that staff and members of the public come into contact with are routinely cleaned and disinfected.
	+ All persons must wear cloth masks when in public. Accordingly, every employer must provide its staff, free of charge, with a minimum of two cloth masks that comply with the DTI’s recommended guidelines, for the employee to wear while at work and while commuting to and from work.
	+ Any other staff (contractors, self-employed persons or volunteers) must also wear masks in the workplace.
	+ The number of replacement cloth masks must be determined by the employee’s working conditions, particularly where masks may become wet or soiled.
	+ Staff must be informed, instructed, and trained on the correct use of cloth masks.
	+ Employers must make appropriate arrangements for the washing, drying and ironing of cloth masks in accordance with the DTI’s guidelines.
* The use of masks does not replace the necessary accredited PPE where required by the risk assessment.

**MONITORING & ENFORCEMENT OF DIRECTIVE**

* The employer must assist with administrative support to the Department of Health’s contact tracing measures.
* The employer must regularly check the Department of Health’s, NICD’s, and National Institute of Occupational Health’s websites whether any additional PPE is required given the nature of the workplace or the staff member’s duties.
* The Department of Labour’s inspectors will enforce the Directive. Contraventions of the Directive may lead to fines of R50 000 or to imprisonment for not more than a year, or both.

Resources:

<http://www.labour.gov.za/department-of-employment-and-labour-unveil-guidelines-to-deal-with-covid-19-at-workplaces>

<http://www.gpwonline.co.za/Gazettes/Gazettes/43257_29-04_Labour.pdf>