

SAFE RETURN TO WORK GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS

5th June 2020

INTRODUCTION

This protocol provides guidance to employers and their workers on preventive measures for a safe return to work in the context of COVID-19. The content in this tool is adapted from the International Labour Organization's (ILO) established principles and methods on occupational safety, health and risk management and from the International Organization of Employers (IOE) return to work guidelines.

The Federation of Kenya Employers issues these guidelines and protocols for consideration by its members while making return to work decisions and in implementing return-to-work plans.

1: FORM A PLANNING TEAM TO ORGANIZE RETURN TO WORK

- Convene a joint occupational safety and health committee. If none is in place, constitute one composed of equal representation of both the employer and employees.
- Train the members on the basic principles for the formulation and implementation of occupational safety and health preventive and control measures.
- Develop a work plan that includes steps to be taken to organize a safe and healthy return to work. This plan should be part of the business continuity plan.
- Effectively communicate to all workers in the company about the team and its work.

2: DECISION ON WHEN TO REOPEN, WHO RETURNS TO WORK AND HOW

- Conduct a risk assessment to establish the safety preventive and control measures in place and those needed to determine the safe return to work.
- Implement the prevention and control measures before resuming business activity and determine if your sector/business is fit for teleworking
- Put in place policies and procedures to determine the number of workers and visitors in the workplace.
- Where possible, plan for gradual/staggered or a phased out reopening i.e. from a minimum level to a normal level of operations.

- If a phased approach is taken, identify critical personnel who will need to be present at the workplaces during the reopening process.
- Identify focal points to monitor prevention and control measures.
- Maintain ongoing communication with employees throughout, keep them informed of the policies and measures being taken

3: IMPLEMENT ENGINEERING, ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

Put in place a hierarchy-of-controls strategy that prioritizes engineering, organizational and administrative controls to prevent disease transmission.

Avoid physical interaction

- As much as possible, promote working from home and teleworking.
- Ensure physical distancing of at least 2 meters at all times and in all work-related situations.
- Consider putting in place queue management and access control management systems where appropriate
- Put in place physical structures to ensure physical separation between workers who share a workspace, as well as between workers and customers or suppliers.
- Determine and signal the maximum capacity at the workplace and its different areas like meeting rooms, offices, workshops, dining rooms, elevators, bathrooms, changing rooms and other common spaces) in order to ensure at least minimum physical distancing at all times.

Ventilation

- Ensure that the workplace is well ventilated on a daily basis through natural ventilation by opening the windows. Where employees work in shifts, repeat the natural ventilation between each shift.
- For mechanical ventilation, maintain recirculation with outdoor air. Avoid the use of individual fans.
- Regularly ensure proper maintenance/installation of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

To avoid concentration of workers

- Where collective transport is used, consider an increase in charter services to ensure a minimum separation of 2 meters between persons.
- Consider a staggered or flexible arrival and departure times to avoid the use of mass transport at peak hours and crowding at entrances and exits.

- Adopt work rotation measures, including alternating working days,
- Where working in shifts is embraced, provide a gap between the arrival and departure of one shift to another.
- Limit the number of workers allowed in common areas such as dining rooms, snack bars, rest and changing rooms
- Organize one-way systems.
- When activities resume minimize external visits and re-evaluate this measure continuously.
- Temporarily restrict meal preparation services on site and consider packaged options.

Training and Communication

- Communicate to your employees about the processes and measures taken before and after reopening the workplace.
- Make them aware of laws that protect them should there be a situation that places their health and life in danger as well as the need to immediately inform their direct supervisor.
- Put signage in visible places of the workplace with the preventive measures to be taken against COVID-19.
- Communicate and address all issues related to cleaning and disinfection of premises.

4: REGULAR CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- Before reopening, thoroughly clean and disinfect the premises.
- Use of alcohol based surface cleaning disinfectants as guided by the Ministry of Health Kenya.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, especially in areas where there is huge traffic and common areas
- Increase trash collection and keep machines and surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Promote a culture of commitment to keep the workspace tidy among employees and encourage frequent sanitation breaks.
- Discourage employees from sharing of items such as office supplies and tableware.
- Put in place cleaning and disinfection procedures for goods/supplies/mail/packages received.
- Make cleaning schedules and checks visible to all workers/clients.

5: PROMOTE PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Provide workers with the conditions and means necessary for frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 40 seconds or with a disinfectant gel with a minimum of 60% alcohol (alcohol gel 60%) for at least 20 seconds. i.e. free flowing water and soap at designated areas
- Prioritize the use of liquid soap dispensers instead of soap tablets.
- Put signage for proper hand washing methods
- Install handwashing facilities or alcohol gel 60% at the entrance and across the workplace/premises. If possible, install alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations.
- Prioritize the use of paper towels instead of fabric towels or where possible electric airjet drying devices.
- Inform workers of the need to avoid physical contact when greeting, and avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth without having previously performed hand hygiene and disinfection.
- Inform workers of the need to cover the mouth and nose with a disposable handkerchief when coughing or sneezing, or, if possible, with the inner face of the forearm/elbow, and then cleaning the hands appropriately.
- Inform workers to avoid sharing food, drinks, kitchen and personal toilet items.
- Restrict or reduce the use of cash by privileging other means of payment.

6: PROVIDE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) AND INFORM WORKERS OF ITS CORRECT USE

- Based on the risk assessment and levels of risk, identify appropriate PPE related to the tasks and health and safety risks faced by workers
- Provide PPEs to workers free of charge and in sufficient number,
- Provide information/instructions, procedures, training and supervision.
- Maintain, clean, disinfect and store PPE according to instructions.

7: HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

- Constantly monitor the health status of workers, conduct basic screening tests like temperature checks at the entrance of your businesses
- Develop protocols and procedures for cases of suspected and confirmed infection
- Ensure confidentiality of medical and private data, in accordance with the law
- Define protocols for stay at home for employees with symptoms or confirmation of infection.
- Identify workers who have had close contact with people infected with COVID-19 and put in place structures for adherence to the directives by MoH.
- Communicate confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection to the MoH as per the laid out guidelines

8: CONSIDER OTHER HAZARDS, INCLUDING PSYCHOSOCIAL

- Regularly communicate the changes made at the workplace due to COVID-19 and any evolving situation.
- Where possible, provide for psychological counselling services for employee in case of need.
- Promote wholistic health and wellness in the workplace through enough rest, balance of physical and mental activity and adequate work-life balance.
- Promote procedures that support disconnecting from work for those employees working from home or tele working.
- Promote a safe and healthy working environment free from violence and harassment.
- Put in place prevention and control measures for the use and storage of chemicals.
- Ensure the operation of safety-critical systems and personnel (maintenance, first aid, emergency services, etc.)
- Risk management measures to ensure continuous improvement, assess the risks every time work changes, and a constant monitoring and evaluation of the measures implemented.

9: REVIEW EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANS

- Develop an emergency plan adapted to COVID-19
- As part of the business continuity plan, review and update the emergency and evacuation plan in view of the new changes at the workplace

10: PERIODIC REVIEW OF PREVENTIVE AND CONTROL MEASURES

- As the situation evolves, periodically monitor and review the prevention and control measures to determine whether they have been adequate to avoid or minimize risk,
- Identify and implement corrective actions for continuous improvement.
- Keep a record of work-related injuries, illnesses and incidents, worker exposures, monitoring of the work environment and workers' health.

11. SUSTAIN THE RIGHT CULTURE POST COVID-19

- Reassure employees of safety measures taken by your enterprise
- Provide information on where your employees can get the authentic information and updates e.g. reliable websites, radio stations or company intranet
- Consider training opportunities to help employees manage the after effects of Covid-19

- Consider virtual or physical work-based learning to encourage a culture of continuous learning at the enterprise level

12. EMBRACE THE NEW REALITIES OF WORK

- Review policies and procedures to guide handling of communicable diseases in the workplace
- Reflect on the crisis and come up with practical recommendations on the lessons learned
- Consider operations and work that can continue with employees tele-working
- Put in place tele-working procedures including how performance will be managed
- Ensure the employees have proper equipment and software to facilitate working from home
- Consider forming strategic partnerships with new allies such as thought leaders , academia and thinktanks in enriching your knowledge and information for business sustainability and resilience
- Anticipate the changing preferences and consumption behaviours of various stakeholders moreso customers
- Where necessary, consider changing ways in which business is done, the products offered and how services are offered. Strategies may change

The Federation of Kenya Employers is committed to serving its members during and after this pandemic to help in business recovery. Our services are:

- Labour Relations & Employment Issues
- Legal Advice and Representation
- Learning & Development
- Organizational Development
- Policy Research and Advocacy
- Partnerships and projects to build enterprise expertise

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