

FOR PSA MEMBERS: SOUTH AFRICAN REVENUE SERVICE (SARS)

28-04-2020

Feedback: Special NCF

Lack of VPN access

The PSA reported that members who opted to be on standby and would be able to work from home are not being equipped with VPN access. The employer reported that VPN licenses are limited and that it had to follow a procurement process to obtain enough licenses in response to the sudden increased demand. The employer indicated that it is doing everything possible to conclude the process and issue VPN access to employees.

Pregnant women and employees with serious medical conditions

The PSA expressed concern that employees in this category are not receiving priority to be equipped to work from home. The employer reiterated its previous directive that where such a situation prevails, the employee must engage the line management to negotiate and establish the terms of reasonable accommodation to be made. The employer indicated that where this directive has been followed and not resolved by management, it can be escalated to Employee Relations Management for investigation and resolution. The employer reminded that members must provide medical reports in support of the particular high risk involved before reasonable accommodation will be considered.

All SARS functions not deemed essential service

Labour expressed concern that more and more employees are being brought back to work and will result in breaches of social distancing of 1.5 to 2 meters, thereby placing members at risk. The last directive issued by the Commissioner indicated that a third of employees will be brought back on a rotational basis. A debate further unfolded where it was alleged that certain functions in SARS are not essential for purposes of the *Disaster Management Act*. The employer pointed out that the Commissioner was given authority to determine the extent of essential services in the organisation and the fact that all SARS functions flow from each other and each is integrated to deliver on the collective mandate. In view thereof, service delivery of SARS towards economic and fiscal stability would render SARS an essential organisation.

Whilst more and more employees are required back at work, the employer assured that social distancing will be strictly maintained together with required PPE, and where employees are able to work from home they will continue to do so, provided that the required performance is maintained.

Transport and risks involved

Labour expressed concern that special arrangements relating to reimbursement of transport costs for employees to report at work have been abandoned. Especially those who use of public transport are at risk and the employer should allow them to either make use of SARS vehicles, where possible, or

be reimbursed for alternatives such as uber services. The employer advised that, where members experience challenges with transport to work, line management must be approached with details of the challenges experienced to be looked at on an individual basis. It also indicated that because of the cost involved, SARS cannot afford to continue the general practice of reimbursing employees for travel costs as considered for the first period of the lockdown.

Permits

The employer emphasized that electronic permits on devices will be accepted by authorities. Such permits must be presented together with SARS ID, RSA ID or driver's license to authorities. These permits must also be presented to SARS security to allow entry into SARS buildings.

PPE

Members must monitor the availability of, and access to PPE (personal protective equipment and sanitisers) at their specific workplaces. Any shortcomings must be reported to PSA representatives for immediate attention.

SARS taking over UIF function

The employer reported that it still needs to formulate the administrative details of how this added function will be executed where after labour will be consulted.

Voluntary screening and testing

The employer reminded that the SARS COVID-19 task team is exploring options for temperature screening upon entrance to SARS buildings. As soon as a resolution is reached, labour will be consulted.

Post-lockdown operational plan

The PSA requested the post-lockdown work plan to be shared, reflecting how business functions will continue going forward to ensure minimum risk to employees versus maximum service delivery. The employer advised that a plan is being formulated and finalised in the SARS COVID-19 task team where the PSA is represented. Details will be shared once finalised.

The PSA team would like to assure members of the Union's commitment to intensely engage the employer during this trying time to ensure that your best interests and wellbeing are served and balanced with that of SARS in the interest of the country. Your endurance and commitment thus far towards the noble cause are noted and sincerely appreciated. Let's continue to work together to ensure that the wellbeing as SARS employees and PSA members is protected, in consideration of our fellow citizens who are facing hardship and severe distress during this time.

GENERAL MANAGER