

FOR PSA MEMBERS: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

13-01-2021

Update: Return to work adjusted COVID-19 alert level 3

Pursuant to the announcement by the President of the Republic regarding the implementation of the adjusted alert level 3, the PSA observed that the Department failed to issue administrative protocols in this regard.

The PSA wrote to the National Steering Committee to convene a special meeting and issue a draft return-to-work circular to labour. Subsequently, a draft circular was shared with the PSA for inputs (*attached*). The date of the special steering committee meeting will be confirmed in due course.

Members are requested to provide inputs on the draft circular to the PSA through shop stewards by **18 January 2021**.

The PSA wants to take this opportunity to wish all employees who are affected or infected by COVID-19 a safe and speedy recovery.

GENERAL MANAGER



INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To:	ALL EMPLOYEES	Ref:	COVID 19 CIRCULAR NO ____ 2020
From:	THE ACTING DIRECTOR- GENERAL MR I FAZEL	Office:	CGO 7TH FLOOR
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SUBJECT:	COVID-19 CIRCULAR NO ____ OF 2021: REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RETURN TO WORK PLAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
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COVID 19 CIRCULAR NO ____ OF 2021

This circular serves to inform all staff of the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure about the review of the implementation of the return to work plan as set out in COVID 19 Circular 129 of 2020.

1. The Department introduced Circular 129 to accommodate 75-100% of all the officials in our facilities. On 28 December 2020, Alert level 3 was reinstated due to the second wave of covid-19 infections which has caused a surge in positive cases. Based on the new alert level the DPWI has taken an informed decision to review the above circular to reduce the number of staff in our facilities to curb the number of infections. Branches and Regions are therefore advised to limit and allow between 33-50% of the staff compliment and to implement a rotational plan accordingly.
2. **Staggered approach to return to work:**
 - 2.1 Clause 4.3.of COVID 19 Circular 129 of 2020: Due to the alert level 3 Vulnerable employees with comorbidities and those who are above the age of 60 must continue to work from home: The Department will advise accordingly when the alert level changes.
 - 2.2 All reception areas and open plan offices must be retrofitted with acrylic screens, where employees may not be able to effect adequate social distancing (open plan/shared offices).



- 2.3 Employees accommodated in shared offices where social distancing cannot be observed will continue on rotational basis until retrofitting has been implemented or alternative office accommodation is provided.

3. Critical Units to Ensure Safe Return Of Employees

- 3.1 Communications will be responsible for all the key messaging and notifications affecting the implementation of this Circular.

- 3.2 The Compliance Officer, Compliance Employees and Health and Safety Committee Members to oversee the implementation of safety and emergency protocols in the Department.

- 3.3 Facilities Management is expected to ensure that the workplace is ready and properly cleaned and that all employees have the required PPE.

- Cleaning of common areas and offices should be done twice a day.
- Officials are also encouraged to sanitise their working tools such as laptops, cell phones, etc.
- All employees should ensure that they sanitise the common equipment such as printers, copy machines, laminating machines, etc. before use.
- Kitchen appliances such as microwaves, fridges, kettles, etc. should also be sanitised before and after use.
- Pool vehicles should be sanitised before and after use.

4. Measures to Put In Place Before Employees Return To Work

- 4.1 The department must ensure that the environment is safe for all employees.

- 4.2 Adhere to the Health and Safety Protocols (Provision of PPE's, etc.)

- 4.3 Establish physical distancing measures within the workplace.

- 4.4 Rearranging workstations (open plan) to increase separation at least 1.5 meters apart; install acrylic screens

- 4.5 Restrict business travel (only essential travel and must be approved by the respective Branch Head or Regional Manager).



- 4.6 Regional Managers / Unit Managers at Head Quarters to authorize the access of visitors to ensure decongestion of the workplace.
- 4.7 Employees are still encouraged to clean their own workstations to minimise cross-contamination – officials to be provided with disinfecting disposable cleaning wipes or surface sanitizers.
5. Vulnerable Employees:
 - 5.1. Employees who are 60 years and older should be permitted to work remotely.
 - 5.2 All employees with identified uncontrolled risks and vulnerabilities should be permitted to work remotely, but they must apply to do so. Employees are required to apply or re-apply and the application must be considered by the Supervisor and approved by the Branch Head, Regional Manager or Director-General
 - 5.3 Documentation to be attached must be in line as set out in COVID 19 Circular 129 of 2020.
 - 5.4 All applications should reach the respective HR Units at Head Office and the Regions by 13 January 2021. All applications to work remotely must be fully completed and all documentation must be attached. Applications must be submitted to the Wellness Officer who will register the application and submit to the Supervisor who will consider the application and recommend to the Branch Head (Head Office Employees), Regional Manager (Regional Employees) or the Director-General (SMS members).
6. **Critical for all employees to comply with:**
 - 6.1 Social distancing is the ultimate defence in containing the spread of COVID-19. Staggered return to work to manage the number of employees at the same time at the office. Limit number of employees in common areas (tea rooms, conference rooms, etc). Limit the number of employees entering and leaving the building.
 - (a) Staggered arrival and departure should be put in place as follows:
 - (7h30 – 16h00)
 - (8h00 – 16h30)
 - (8h30 – 17h00)
 - (9h00 – 17h30)
 - (b) Implement staggering breaks or lunch schedules (12h00- 12h45 / 13h00-13h45).



- (c) All shortlisting and interviews can be done in a boardroom that allow for social distancing and which is well ventilated.
- (d) No catering is allowed during any meeting, shortlisting or interviews. Bottled water can be supplied.
- (e) ICT to continue providing IT technical support for those employees working from home. This means that the department will continue with video conferencing and virtual meetings, even for those employees who will be back at the office.
- (f) Face-to-Face meetings are not encouraged. Managers should play an important role in ensuring that all safety protocols are observed at all times.
- (g) **All employees must submit the online screening form to their respective managers on a weekly basis, unless the official is showing COVID-19 symptoms during the course of the week, then they will be required to submit the form indicating so. Failure to submit the screening form will result in disciplinary measures.**
- (h) The electronic/manual screening form must be submitted by visitors who are entering the building.
- (i) Should employees display any COVID-19 symptoms while at work, they should immediately inform their managers and be referred to the isolation room.
- (j) COVID-19 Q&A is accessible on the departmental COVID-19 Portal.
- (k) Only employees who are not showing COVID-19 symptoms should be allowed at the office.
- (l) The Public Service Disciplinary Code and Procedure shall be applied to employees of the Department who contravene COVID-19 Regulations.
- (m) Parents whose children cannot be accommodated in after care centres during this time may request time off in a regulated manner. (***Supervisors to manage the process***)

6.2 Education and communication:



- (a) The department will continue communicating the Health and Safety Protocols such as giving information to employees on how to stay hygienic and safe around others and any changes.

6.3 Critical to remember by all employees and managers:

- (a) Branch/Unit Heads and Regional Managers are required to submit Branch, Unit or Regional Office monthly productivity reports respectively to the Office of the Director General by the 10th day of the following month.
- (b) During this Level, it is vital for managers and staff to remember that their safety and that of others is the responsibility of everyone. This is the time to promote a caring culture within the department.
- (c) Employees are not allowed to visit each other during office hours without any valid and work related reason. Employees must not spend more than 15 minutes in each other's office, even during lunch time.

7. Enquiries

All rotation plan reviews must reach Chief Director HRM on or before 13 January 2021. All applications, in accordance with this Circular, to work from home must be submitted to the Regional HR Manager or the D: HRA at Head Office by 13 January 2021.

MR I FAZEL
ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DPWI
DATE: