

COVID-19: Adjusted alert-level 4

Members will recall that the Health and Safety Committee met on 30 June 2021 where concern was raised over the failure of the Department to issue a circular explaining new measures in accordance with adjusted level 4. This was as a result of the Department failing to provide any direction when the country was put on level 3. The Committee felt that it was becoming a habit for the Department to fail to provide direction during these difficult times and has the potential to cause unnecessary tension.

Although the circular had been drafted and labour also had opportunity to make inputs, it was said that the HOD was still considering some issues before approving the circular. Labour maintained that the matter needed urgent attention as the delay to approve the circular perpetuated non-compliance with prevailing COVID-19 regulations. Subsequently, employees took matters in their hands and forced the HOD to provide leadership and ensure that the Department complies with regulations. Finally, the HOD signed and issued *Circular 103 of 2021* on 5 July 2021. Amongst others, it provided the following directives:

- The Department must introduce remote work, conclude working from home agreements with all officials working from home and provide tools of trade. The list of identified workers to work from home will be approved by the HOD.
- Officials who must be physically present at work should be placed on weekly rotational roster or work-shift basis.
- Officials with comorbidities may be granted permission to work from home upon completion of the prescribed forms and submission of a medical certificate from a medical practitioner.
- Business travelling during curfew hours and travelling to Gauteng will be approved by the HOD on case-to-case basis.
- Visits by members of the public must be minimised and where unavoidable, be subject to prior arrangements.
- Physical meetings, workshops and training are not allowed. Unavoidable meetings must be approved by the HOD.

Members are advised to take care amidst the third wave and increasing number of infections.

GENERAL MANAGER

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CIRCULAR 103 OF 2021

TO:

**SENIOR MANAGEMENT
ALL OFFICIALS**

PROVINCIAL ADJUSTMENT TO RISK ADJUSTED ALERT LEVEL 4 REGULATIONS

1. PURPOSE

To bring to the attention of all officials measures to be implemented to ensure compliance with alert level 4 as pronounced by the State President on 27 June 2021 and the DPSA Circular No 05 of 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Noting that the country was experiencing the surge of the wave of COVID-19 infections the President announced that the country would be placed on adjusted alert level 3 with effect from 16 June 2021. Subsequent to the 15 June 2021 pronouncement the President noting an alarming continual increase in the number of COVID-19 infections pronounced again on 27 June 2021 that the country would be placed on adjusted alert level 4 with effect from 28 June 2021. To give effect to this the Minister of COGTA issued regulations in terms of the Disaster Management Act

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through Government Gazette no 44772 dated 27 June 2021. The DPSA in turn issued circular no 05 of 2021 dated 28 June 2021 aimed at guiding Departments in decongesting the workplaces by limiting the number of employees physically present on site.

2.2. In this regard clause 2.1.1 of that circular states that *“The Accounting Officer should ensure reduction of the occupancy rate to not more than 30% at any given time, using shift work, rotation and remote working arrangements amongst others”*. Except for SMS members who must be in office daily to carry out departmental functions, including the audit process that is being conducted by the Auditor General South Africa all other officials should be encouraged to work remotely. Where the nature of the work of such officials does not allow them to work remotely then a shift-work arrangement should be in place so that less than 30% of the employees should be physically present in the office where such officials share office space.

2.3. Where employees are working remotely then a *“Remote Working Contractual Agreement should be in place in order to manage accountability, performance and liabilities. There must be clear deliverables that the manager and employee agree to, which can be tracked and accounted for.”* (clause 2.1.4)

3. INSTRUCTIONS/NOTIFICATION

3.1. All officials are to familiarise themselves with the contents of DPSA circular no 05 of 2021 entitled “STATE OF DISASTER COVID-19: PUBLIC SERVICE ADJUSTMENTS TO RISK ADJUSTED LEVEL 4 REGULATIONS” and the Disaster Management Regulations as contained in Government Gazette no. 44772 dated 27 June 2021.

3.2. All supervisors should revise the classification of the officials under their units and the work that they perform that was done under alert level 4 in compliance with DPSA

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circular no 15 of 2020 and the return to work plan of the Department that was issued on 03 August 2020.

3.3. That return to work plan required that officials be classified as either SMS, SMS support, Frontline Services, Back-Office Administration, Back-Office professional or School Support Services.

3.4. An indication should be made for each official whether they will work from home or be required to be physically present in the office. Where the officials must be physically present in the office they should be placed preferably on a weekly rotational roster or work-shift basis, if they have to come into the office daily. This refers mostly to officials who need transversal systems that cannot be accessed off-site (PERSAL, BAS, LOGIS) for their work, officials who work with documents that cannot be handled electronically or taken off-site or those who perform any function that must be performed on-site.

3.5. Officials identified to work from home should only do so upon approval by the HOD.

3.6. Officials working from home should be provided with tools of trade to ensure that service delivery is not compromised.

3.7. A Remote Working Contractual Agreement should be signed with all officials working from home.

3.8. To comply with clause 2.2.1.5., which provides that the Department must ensure that human contact is minimised and to comply with the directive of the President that prohibits all forms of gatherings:

3.8.1. Holding of physical meetings is henceforth suspended. Where a physical meeting is absolutely unavoidable prior permission for holding such a meeting should be

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obtained from the Head of Department, except for a meeting called to clarify the contents of this circular and implementation thereof. The application to hold such a meeting will only be considered if

- 3.8.1.1. it concerns business critical operations that pose a threat to the Department's business continuity and service delivery capabilities
- 3.8.1.2. acceptable reasons are provided why it cannot be held virtually
- 3.8.1.3. clear indication is provided as to the health protocols that will be in place to minimise the risk of the spread of the COVID-19 virus and
- 3.8.1.4. it will be held on Departmental premises.

NB: *The holding of meetings, workshops, training, etc. at conferencing facilities is not allowed.*

- 3.8.2. All visits by members of the public to Departmental offices should be kept to a minimum and should only be by prior arrangement if they cannot be avoided.
- 3.9. Clause 17(4)(b) provides that travelling to Gauteng Province is only permitted for work purposes and on condition that a permit in this regard has been granted. To obtain the approval officials should complete "Form 4", "Form 6" and "Form 7" of the annexure to the Disaster Management Regulations which should be approved by the HOD.
- 3.10. All other officials who due to work purposes will be travelling during the curfew hours of 21h00 until 04h00 should obtain permission to do so by completing "Form 7" of the Disaster Management Regulations that must be approved by the Head of Department. Such approvals will be granted on a case by case basis.
- 3.11. Officials with comorbidities may be granted permission to work from home upon completion of the prescribed form and submission of a medical certificate from a medical practitioner.

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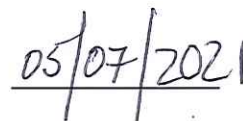
- 3.12. Requirements of the Minimum Information and Security Standards should be complied with at all times by officials who are working remotely.
- 3.13. If for any reason any supervisor is unable to comply with the provisions of the DPSA circular no 04 of 2021 that inability should be immediately brought to the attention of the HOD who, as required by clause 4 of the same circular, should provide reasons for such failure to the Minister of Public Service and Administration.
- 3.14. Where any provision of this circular is in conflict with the DPSA circular no 05 of 2021, the Disaster Management Regulations or the directives as issued by the Department of Basic Education then the provisions of those documents will prevail.
- 3.15. The contents of this circular should be brought to the attention of all officials.

NB: Please note however that health and safety in schools is regulated by the Standard Operating Procedures and Directions as issued by the Minister of Basic Education from time to time.



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HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



DATE