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Singapore
Update on Safe Management Measures at Workplaces
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1. Introduction

1.1 On 19 May 2020, the Multi-Ministry Task Force of Singapore announced that Singapore will be exiting the Circuit Breaker when it ends on 1 June 2020, and embark on a three-phased approach to resume activities safely. In view of the gradual easing of restrictions and resumption of permitted economic activities and businesses in Phase 1 which commenced on 2 June 2020[1], the tripartite partners of Singapore[2] have issued safe management measures (updated as of 1 June 2020) to be implemented by employers who are allowed to resume operations, to minimize risks of further community outbreaks ("**Safe Management Measures**"). Please also note that businesses which are permitted to commence operations in Phase 1 will be required to complete manpower declarations with the Ministry of Trade and Industry[3].

1.2 This update provides a summary of the general workplace Safe Management Measures that employers are required to

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[1]   Please refer to https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/guides/permittedserviceslist.pdf for the list of businesses which are permitted to operate in Phase 1. Phase 1 is expected to last until the end of June 2020 but may be shortened if the community transmission rates in Singapore remain law and stable.

[2]   The tripartite partners comprise of the Ministry of Manpower of Singapore, the National Trade Union Congress of Singapore and the Singapore National Employers Federation.

[3]   For more details in relation to manpower declarations, please refer to https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/faq/essentialworkers.

implement, communicate and explain to their employees before resuming operations[4]. Failure to implement and comply with such Safe Management Measures may potentially result in stop work orders, issued financial penalties or imprisonment[5]. Please note that the Safe Management Measures listed below are not exhaustive.

2. Key Requirements for General Workplace Safe Management Measures

2.1 The key requirements for general workplace Safe Management Measures to be implemented by employers are summarized as follows:

2.2 <u>Taking Care of Workers</u>

2.2.1 **Telecommuting the default mode of work**: The default mode of work must be telecommuting and employees should only go to the office where there is no alternative. Employers should provide the necessary IT equipment and solutions for telecommuting. Activities involving close and prolonged contact must be cancelled or deferred. Physical meetings are to be minimized and should be conducted virtually where possible. Where possible, employers should also temporarily redeploy vulnerable employees (e.g. older employees, pregnant employees, employees with underlying conditions) to roles which allow them to telecommute.

2.2.2 Where employees are unable to work from home due to the nature of their role/function, employers must ensure the following precautions are in place prior to resuming operations:

(a) **Staggered work and break hours**: Work and break hours must be staggered across three (3) one-hourly (1 hourly) blocks with no more than half of the employees reporting to work per block. Where possible, work hours should avoid having employees travel at peak hours. If staggering of work and break hours is not feasible, employers must implement alternative systems to reduce congregations of employees at common spaces (e.g. having different groups of employees to enter/leave via different entry/exit points.)

(b) **Shift/Split team arrangements**: Where feasible, employees should be split into teams, with each team restricted to one worksite. Cross-deployment and/or interaction between members of different teams are disallowed. Employers should maintain a list detailing the work arrangements, shift and team number of each employee.

(c) **Minimise socialising**: All social gatherings at the workplace are to be cancelled or deferred. Employers must ensure that employees do not socialise or congregate in groups at the workplace, including during meals or breaks by displaying signs and/or instructions at common spaces. Employees should also be reminded not to socialise outside of the workplace, both during working or outside working hours.

(d) **Wearing of masks at the workplace**: Employers must ensure sufficiency of masks for employees, including the need to replace them due to workplace conditions. Onsite personnel (e.g. visitors, employees, suppliers, contractors) are required

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[4]   Please note that workplaces in specific sectors such as Construction, Marine & Offshore, Process, Manufacturing, F&B and Retail may have additional requirements. Please refer to https://www.gov.sg/article/covid-19-sector-specific-advisories for advisories relating to specific sectors.

[5]   Under the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act of Singapore (No. 14 of 2020), failure to comply with Safe Management Measures could result in a fine of up to SGD10,000 or imprisonment of up to 6 months, or both. Repeat offenders will be fined up to SGD20,000 or imprisoned up to 12 months, or both.

to wear a mask and other necessary personal protective equipment at all times at the workplace, except during activities which require them to be removed.

(e) **Observing good personal hygiene**: Employees should be encouraged to observe good personal hygiene (e.g. washing of hands regularly and refraining from touching their face).

2.3   Taking care of the workplace

2.3.1 **Limiting access to workplace**: Workplace access should only be limited to essential employees and authorized visitors. Signs indicating that unwell personnel will be refused access should be displayed.

2.3.2 **Logging of entry and declarations via SafeEntry visitor management system**: The SafeEntry visitor management system must be deployed to log the entry of all personnel (including employees and visitors) entering the workplace. Employees and visitors must make the following declarations via the SafeEntry system[6] or via other means before being granted access:

(a)   they are currently not under a Quarantine Order or Stay-Home Notice;

(b)   they have not had any close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case in the past 14 days; and

(c)   they do not have any fever or flu-like symptoms.

2.3.3 **Safe distancing measures**: Physical spacing of at least one (1) metre must be maintained by employees, visitors, suppliers and contractors at all times. Employers should display signs or instructions requiring suppliers and contractors to observe safe distancing measures, and demarcate such distances at workplace premises with visual indicators or barriers.

2.3.4 **Regular cleaning of workspace**: Common spaces and equipment must be regularly cleaned. Employers should retain cleaning schedules and instructions to/documents from cleaning service providers. Cleaning agents (e.g. liquid soap, toilet paper) must be available at all toilets and handwash stations, whilst disinfecting agents (e.g. hand sanitisers, disinfectant sprays, paper towels and wipes) must be provided at human traffic stoppage points and common areas (e.g. entrances, reception areas, lift lobbies, meeting rooms, pantries).

2.3.5 **Minimising common physical touchpoints**: Use of common physical touchpoints (e.g. thumbprint scanner) should be avoided where possible.

2.4   Taking care of workers who become unwell at the workplace

2.4.1 **Regular health checks**: Checks on temperature and respiratory systems should be conducted for all onsite employees and visitors twice daily, or where relevant, and must be demonstrated to be in place, upon inspection.

2.4.2 **Recording of proximity data on phones**: Employees should be encouraged to download and activate the TraceTogether app[7] which aids in community-driven contact tracing.

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[6]   To make declarations via SafeEntry with NRIC, employers must display prominent signs informing all visitors and employees that they are making the required declarations by checking in via SafeEntry.

[7]   Data recorded by the TraceTogether app is stored on the user's phone, and is only uploaded when the user is suspected to have COVID-19.

2.4.3 **Monitoring of unwell employees and guarding against incipient outbreaks**: Employers must ensure that:

    (a)   where possible, employees do not clinic hop;

    (b)   employees submit records of medical certificate(s) and diagnoses (only for COVID-19 related symptoms, including acute respiratory infections) and the results of any COVID-19 related tests;

    (c)   employees who are unwell monitor their health closely before returning to work; and

    (d)   ensuring close contacts of employees who are unwell at the workplace to monitor their health more regularly.

2.4.4 **Managing unwell cases**: An evacuation plan must be prepared for suspected and unwell cases, as well as for other on-site personnel. Employers must record all unwell cases. In the event an employee is incapacitated or unconscious, employers should clear the area of other personnel, administer aid immediately, and call for an emergency ambulance to ferry them to the nearest hospital.

2.4.5 **Managing confirmed cases**: Employers must immediately vacate and cordon-off the immediate section of the workplace premises where the confirmed case worked, and carry out a thorough cleaning and disinfecting of all on-site areas and assets that were exposed to the confirmed case, in accordance with National Environment Agency Guidelines[8].

2.5   <u>Implement a system of Safe Management Measures at workplaces</u>

2.5.1 **Implementation of monitoring plan**: Employers must implement a detailed monitoring plan setting out the steps taken to ensure that requirements are communicated and adhered to, and how issues of non-compliance will be identified. Risk mitigation strategies and proposed steps to remedy and document issues of non-compliance should also be highlighted in the monitoring plan.

2.5.2 **Appointment of Safe Management Officer** ("**SMO**"): Employers are also required to appoint someone capable[9] of carrying out the duties of a SMO which include:

    (a)   coordinating implementation of Safe Management Measures (which includes identifying relevant risks, recommending and implementing risk mitigation measures and communicating measures to workplace personnel);

    (b)   conducting compliance inspections and checks, and documenting/reporting of non-compliance;

    (c)   taking immediate remediate action to remedy non-compliance; and

    (d)   maintaining records of inspections, checks and corrective actions taken which shall be made available upon request by a Government appointed inspector.

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[8]   Please refer to https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/public-cleanliness/environmental-cleaning-guidelines/cleaning-and-disinfection/guidelines/guidelines-for-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection for the guideline published by the National Environment Agency.

[9]   Unionised companies may appoint union leaders or workplace safety and health officers as SMOs.

2.6 For further details and a checklist of Safe Management Measures to be adopted at the workplace for resumption of business activities, please refer to https://www.mom.gov.sg/-/media/mom/documents/covid-19/annex-b-checklist-of-safe-management-measures.pdf.

This article has been adjusted from its original to suit N&A's format.

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