

PRINCE ALBERT
Munisipaliteit / Municipality

COVID-19 WORKPLACE POLICY

Goedgekeur / Approved:

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SUMMARY

This Policy provides guidelines for the management of the workplace in the COVID-19 period until an approved vaccine or treatment is available and available to all members of the public and employees of the Municipality as directed by the Minister of Health or other Governmental directive. Personal workplace behaviours need to be adjusted and implemented until such time as the COVID-19 pandemic is considered under control and manageable. This policy will remain in place and will be amended from time to time as directives from the Department of Health and/or Department of Labour directs otherwise, at which time this policy will be reviewed, in consultation with organised labour under the auspices of the Local Labour Forum.

THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

- To ensure that the Policy is kept up to date in accordance with directives from the Department of Health or the Department of Labour, or any Collective Agreements.
- To ensure the distribution of Personal Protective Equipment through the line Departments to employees.
- To ensure that line management implements the requirements outlined in this policy.
- To report on all COVID-19 related health and safety matters to the Portfolio Committee on a monthly basis.

THE ROLE OF THE MANAGER

- To monitor and review the provisions of this policy and to ensure compliance.
- To actively encourage and motivate staff to adjust to the new working environment and social distancing requirements.
- To ensure that adequate funds are available and that any remedial action is taken timeously.
- To manage and report compliance and to provide active advice to senior leadership of improved work methods to facilitate new workplace requirements.
- To actively lead and play the role of change agents in this transition to new workplace “rules”

1. PREAMBLE

It is now common knowledge that the workplace environment must change in order to safeguard employees and members of the public from exposure to and possible infection of the COVID-19 virus.

The World Health Organisation and the National Department of Health and Provincial Departments of Health will, in the coming months and years, provide guidance regarding key preventative measures for safe social and workplace interactions.

All the prevention and protection measures listed in this policy is subject to the successful procurement of the respective items. It is noted that the worldwide limit of PPE stock is impacting on the national provision of PPE items.

It is also noted that National Treasury have centralised the procurement of PPE in order to ensure that critical PPE stock reach Very-High risk and High-risk frontline healthcare workers in geographic areas where the pandemic requires urgent intervention.

Should any PPE item listed in this policy not be available to a staff member, an individual assessment will be done in conjunction with the Director of the affected Directorate.

There are key recommendations and protocols that are already known and recommended, such as social distancing; handwashing hygiene; wearing masks; additional protective equipment and clothing; and sanitising protocols. These measures are outlined in the policy sections below.

2. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

2.1. SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing protocols are the most effective deterrent to combat the spread of the virus. Access to the municipal offices and job sites will be restricted with social distancing spacing indicated by markers.

2.1.2. Proximity to others

No more than 15 employees may gather at any time. In addition, the following measures are to be implemented at the workplace.

2.1.2.1. Offices

There should at least be 2 metres distance between people when interacting with each other. This must be the case at the workplace as well where possible. For office bound employees this will be easier to achieve as most employees operate from their own workstation where there is at minimum a 2 metres distance between workstations. When approaching an employee in that employees' workspace the person entering the workspace must remain at least two metres from the employee. There must be a marker that indicates where the person should not proceed beyond.

2.1.2.2. Meeting rooms

In boardrooms the person sitting at a chair at the boardroom table is considered a workstation and the 2 metres distance must be maintained. All boardrooms must have paper towels and at least one sanitiser dispenser.

2.1.2.3. Operational Working Teams

When employees gather for work in the mornings and afternoons, they must maintain the 2 metres distance from each other. When the work-teams split up into their respective work-teams they may not be able to maintain the required 2 metre distancing as they perform functions that are by its nature not individual but require teamwork, where they often must work closely together. This can not be avoided.

2.1.2.4 Council, Portfolio or stakeholder meetings/ engagements

All meetings will take place virtually, where at all possible. The Joint Operational Command (JOC) for Prince Albert and the Central Karoo District will take place in person, with social distancing and all hygienic prevention measures in place.

2.1.3. Handshaking

Handshaking in the tradition way is for the immediate future not permitted at the workplace. Employees may, if deemed essential use the elbow technique, although for the current stage of the pandemic, this is also not encouraged as it violates the 2 metres distancing requirement. A mere verbal acknowledgement should be encouraged.

2.1.4. Hugging

Hugging others, like handshaking is a natural and very instinctive human instinct. This cannot be allowed at the workplace for the immediate period. Employees are not to hug other employees or members of the public at the workplace.

2.1.5. Seating arrangements

All seating arrangements for meetings must comply with the 2 metres distancing requirement. This applies to halls, meetings, training settings, etc. A seat must be regarded as a workstation. At any event other than a meeting in an office, there must be paper towels available and at least one hand-sanitiser dispenser.

2.2. HYGIENIC PRECAUTIONS

2.2.1 Handwashing

Regular handwashing remains a key factor in keeping the virus from spreading. The recommended time and method of handwashing must be followed. Hands must be washed for at least 20 seconds with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser. Hands must be washed regularly, including and after any contact with packages, documents, money or equipment handled by someone else

2.2.2. Handling Documents

For employees handling high volumes of documents they must be encouraged and given the opportunity to regularly wash their hands.

2.2.3. Working with tools

Employees working with tools that are shared should ensure that they regularly wash their hands.

2.2.4 ICT

All staff that have the ability to work from home, will within the available budget and provision of ICT, be provided with ICT support and equipment to do so. All ICT equipment must be cleaned at least three times a day with a special cleaning solution provided by the Municipality. Hands must still be washed before and after using equipment.

2.3. ACCESS CONTROL AND WEARING OF MASKS

2.3.1 Access Control

No entry will be provided to any office, building or job site, without a person wearing a mask or suitable cover for his/her nose or mouth.

All persons entering any office, building or job site, will be screened and should any symptoms be presented, refused access to the relevant premises.

Access to municipal offices are restricted to minimum entry points. Visitors must stay at least two metres apart. Clear markers will be placed at entry points and office staff are encouraged to place indicators in their offices to indicate the required distance to be kept from their work stations.

Direct contact is discouraged and queries are encouraged to take place via phone, e-mail or virtual meetings.

The Municipal Offices will be open weekly from 09h00 to 13h00 to allow the public to undertake personal queries.

2.3.2 Wearing of masks

Two masks must be made available to all employees and said employees will sign for the receipt there of. It is the responsibility of all staff to wear the masks safely and keep it safely. It is imperative that material masks be washed and ironed every day after use. This is the responsibility of the employee.

2.3.3 Common Areas

It is highly recommended that all employees wear masks as advised by the WHO and the Department of Health. There are common areas at work, such as corridors, toilet facilities, boardrooms, etc. It is required that employees wear masks in these common areas.

2.3.4 Personal Workstation

Once an employee is in her/his private workstation, then the mask is no longer required. It is at the discretion of the employee and how she/he manages her/his own workstation whether persons entering the workstation should wear a mask or not. There is a responsibility upon the owner of the workstation to manage interaction in the workstation. All employees are responsible for the cleaning of their own work stations at regular intervals. Cleaning material will be supplied on request to their supervisors. This is in addition to the normal office / workplace cleaning. Employees are encouraged to clean their equipment, including often touched surfaces such as computers, phones, calculators, door handles and light fixtures, regularly.

2.3.5 Employees in the field

Employees that work "outside", must always wear masks, especially when interacting with members of the public or each other. The supervisors of the project must monitor the wearing of masks and protective clothing.

2.3.6 At-Risk employees

At-Risk employees will be identified by the HR department via a risk assessment. At-Risk employees are encouraged to work from home and their exposure to others, when this is not possible, must be limited. These employees must always be supplied with and wear masks.

2.3.7 Returning to work/ Working from home

All staff will remain at home, until called in specifically to work. Work hours will be limited and restricted to minimise any contact with others. Where possible staff will work from home. Where staff have to work from the office or at the job site, if possible, staff will work in one-week shifts. All staff must stay at their place of residence and be available to work at all times as they may be called to work at any time. The shift schedule will be communicated by the relevant supervisor. Should it be needed that you come to work outside of your allocated shift because of operational requirements, you may not refuse, except if you present with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or have any other illness that disqualifies you to work. All staff returning to work will be issued with an essential service permit as issued by the employer and must keep it with them at all times during their workday or when travelling to and from work.

No staff member is permitted to use the essential services permit for any other activity or trip, other than what is work related. No staff member may use the essential services permit for travel across regional or provincial boundaries, except if they were specifically authorised to perform a municipal function outside the municipal boundaries.

2.3.8 Illness

No worker that presents with any flu-like or COVID-19 symptom will be allowed to work. Such an employee must report their symptoms / ill-ness to his/her supervisor and stay home. The normal sick-leave procedures will apply.

3 ADDITIONAL PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

3.3.3 At-risk employees

Employees identified as “at-risk” employees must be issued with and wear additional protective equipment and clothing.

3.1.2.1 Screening

All employees will be screened, including temperature checks, before allowed to enter their workplace.

3.1.2.2 Masks

All employees in this category must wear masks.

3.1.2.3 Protective Overalls

Sanitation employees must wear additional protective clothes, gloves and eye protection, where necessary. Any shortfall in PPE must be reported to the supervisor who then reports it to the relevant manager and the Municipal Manager.

3.3.4 Office-bound and other employees

Office-bound employees that work with high-volume documentation and/or money may choose to wear protective clothing such as an apron and/or gloves. They must regularly clean their work stations and area, wash their hands and do everything in their power to ensure that they do not sneeze or cough on documentation.

4 SANITISING PROTOCOLS

4.3.3 Tools and Equipment

Tools and equipment used and shared must be wiped clean with a disinfectant cloth after every workday.

4.3.4 Vehicles

All municipal vehicles must be issued with a sanitiser and a disinfectant cloth to enable them to clean their vehicles. Prior to handing the vehicle over to another user the current user must wipe the steering wheel and other areas with the disinfectant cloth. Prior to the new user driving the vehicle she/he must apply sanitiser to her/his hands and wipe the steering wheel and gear-lever, etc. with the disinfectant cloth.

4.3.5 Hands

Prior to entering a workplace each employee and visitor is required to apply sanitiser / water and soap to her/his hands.

4.3.6 Document handling

Recycling of envelopes must be stopped until advised otherwise. Envelopes must be disposed after single use. Employees are encouraged to use hand sanitiser regularly.

4.3.7 Office equipment

4.3.7.1 Photo-copy machines

All office equipment must be wiped clean with a disinfectant cloth regularly, preferably after each use by the person last using it. A disinfectant wipe/cloth must be made available at each office machine such as photo-copying machines.

4.3.7.2 Computers

Where computers are shared a disinfectant wipe must be available for the user to wipe the keyboard prior to use and again after use. Employees are encouraged not to share their computers with others and always keep their keyboards clean.

4.3.7.3 Telephones

Employees are responsible for the regular cleaning and disinfecting of their office telephones.

4.3.7.4 Door handles, floors and light fixtures

Where possible and where there is no security or confidentiality risks, doors should remain open. The cleaning staff will increase their efforts to regularly disinfect door handles, floors and light fixtures.

4.3.7.5 Personal Workspace

Each employee is responsible for keeping her/his own workspace clean, disinfected and tidy. Each employee is also the master of his own workspace and can determine what protective measures other employees must adhere to prior to entering her/his workspace - within reason.

5. AWARENESS

The employer will undertake continues awareness through the following means:

- Email communication

- Safety Forum representative communication
- Information Posters
- Formal Education sessions
- Social media (Facebook etc)
- Website
- Whatsapp
- SMS messaging
- Whatsapp Groups
- Circulars

6. Work Travel

The PAM can cancel or re-schedule work travel – unless that travel is critical. Whilst the PAM may not dictate to an employee how they should travel during their annual leave, employees will be encouraged to avoid travel until the situation improves.

Heads of Departments, in consultation with the Municipal Manager of the PAM, will decide whether or not meetings will be attended, according to circumstances.

7. SICKNESS

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997 entitles employees to paid sick leave, regulated by the employment contract.

Where employees contract COVID-19, they should be permitted to take sick leave subject to the normal notification requirements and subject to your right to obtain proof that the employee is in fact sick. This would normally be supported by a medical certificate from a qualified medical practitioner confirming that the employee is ill and will be more work for a stated or anticipated period of time.

Where an employee exceeds their sick leave entitlement, then the balance of the employee's leave will be unpaid unless agreed to the

contrary. However, the employee would be entitled to claim unemployment insurance benefits (UIF).

If an employee is placed under quarantine, and confirmed by a medical practitioner, it will be considered a special leave. (As stipulated in relevant agreements / legislation / State of Emergency requirements etc.)

It would not be appropriate for the PAM to consider incapacity proceedings against employees infected by COVID-19 unless the disease causes more long-term impacts on the employee's health and thereby affects their ability to do their job. Should this become necessary, normal incapacity principles would apply.

The Code of Good Practice requires the PAM to evaluate the seriousness of the illness, the likely period of absence, the nature of the employee's job and whether a temporary replacement may be secured. The employee must be given a hearing before any adverse action is taken.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, the PAM Management must inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain the confidentiality of the infected employee. Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify the PAM's Municipal Manager and should contact a health practitioner if they have had any contact with the infected person.

The PAM will monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace and implement plans to continue our essential functions in case we experience higher than usual absenteeism.

The PAM will, in certain circumstances, cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.

If the PAM has reasonable grounds to believe that an employee might be infected, the PAM is entitled to require that employee to remain at home and to undergo medical testing before returning to the workplace. The WHO regards 14 days as a reasonable period of self-quarantine.

In that event, and unless the employee is confirmed as sick by a medical practitioner, this should be treated as special paid leave, rather than sick leave or annual leave, given that the leave is enforced by the PAM.

The PAM is entitled to require that such employees work remotely where possible and subject to the PAM providing employees with the reasonable resources in order to perform these work functions. The PAM will also be entitled to require employees under such conditions to report in to the PAM.

Cleaning and disinfection after person(s) suspected/confirmed to have covid-19 have been in the PAM Offices etc.

- The PAM will close off areas used by the ill persons and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize the potential for exposure to respiratory droplets.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area and wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
- Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
- Contact tracing will be done and all potential contacts will be informed, screened and advised to self-isolate.
- No person that would have been identified for possible contamination after contact tracing, will be allowed back to premises for a period of 14 days.

7. COPING WITH STRESS DURING THE 2019-NCOV OUTBREAK

It is normal to experience extreme stress during the pandemic period. Supervisors must monitor stress of their employees in the work place. Supervisors are also expected to check in on staff via phone or sms.

Employees that experience extreme stress must contact the HR department for assistance.

8. CO-MORBIDITIES OF EMPLOYEES

An assessment of underlying illness has been undertaken of all employees to determine co-morbidities. A risk assessment of all staff members was undertaken to determine high, medium and low risk and staff will be issued

protective clothing and limited contact accordingly. Staff with co-morbidities will as far as possible work from home.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:

- 9.1 That this COVID Policy be approved and applied to all employees and political office-bearers;
- 9.2 That the preventative measures in this policy be communicated to all staff and that Directors ensure that these measures are adhered to as far as practically possible;

Recommended approved by the Municipal Manager on

Policy approved by the Executive Mayor on