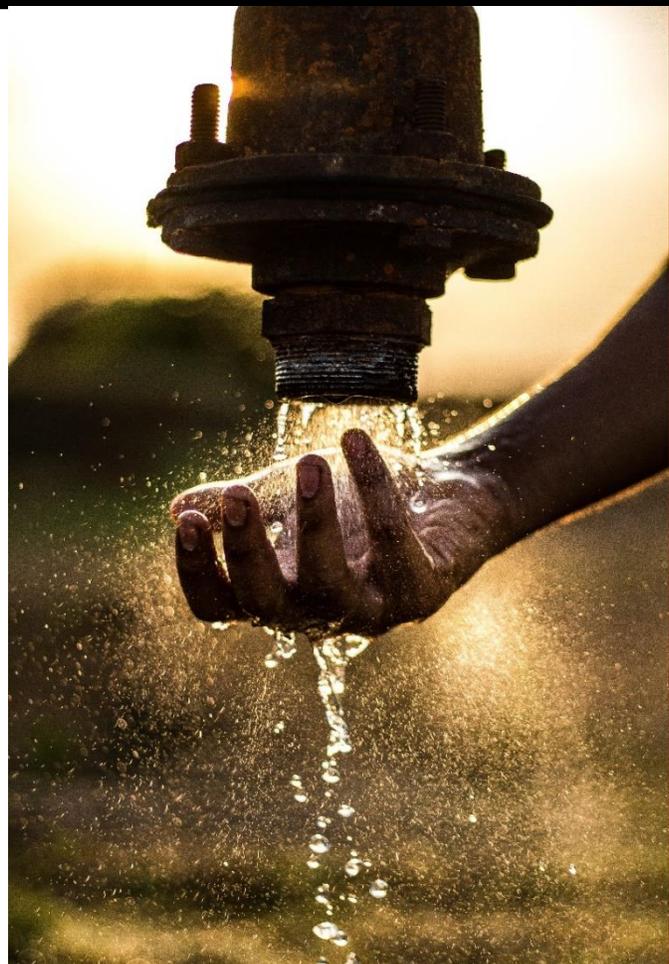


2020

# WORKPLACE RESPONSE TO COVID-19 GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES & EMPLOYERS

Preparedness | Prevention | Business Continuity



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus became a global threat to our health, wellbeing, and livelihood in January 2020 when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease in Hubei Province, China as a public emergency for international concern.

The World Health Organization officially declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic on the 11th of March 2020. The virus has led to directives on self-isolation, business closures, travel bans, etc. The virus is affecting the very core of many businesses around the world. There is a vast amount of information which at times gets confusing in understanding and implementation.

OML Africa has curated as much of the information provided by recognized agencies like WHO, ILO, etc. and has also added its experience of working with its clients to survive COVID-19 and as a result, has developed a practical cost-effective Workplace Response and Business Continuity to COVID-19. Businesses and Employers must play a role to protect their employees as well as their livelihood.

**Businesses and Employers must act now even if COVID-19 has not yet arrived in the country you operate or at your workplace.**

We have broken the stages of action into three levels, level one (1) Workplace awareness campaign, preparedness planning which involves response and business continuity planning; Level two (2) implementation of preparedness plan- response to COVID-19 in the workplace; and level three (3) business closure- implementation of a business continuity plan. We have provided templates to guide the process of business continuity planning.

The Workplace is a major entry point for COVID-19 preparedness and prevention.

## 2. LEVEL ONE: AWARENESS CAMPAIGN & PREPAREDNESS PLANNING

This is the period for creating awareness about the coronavirus, how it spreads, its treatment, and its prevention. This could be done through company announcements, through the print media, posting information on notice boards, WhatsApp groups, intranet, at staff briefing, etc. It is very important to note that this is the stage for the preparation of plans to respond to COVID-19 in the workplace.

This is also the period to plan your response to COVID-19 if it should enter your workplace and a plan for business continuity if temporary closure becomes an option. If temporary closure becomes an option the key question is how can the business continue to run safely as well as keep employees safe? In as far as possible the business continuity plan aims to keep the business running responsibly and to reduce or control financial losses.

### 3. LEVEL TWO: WORKPLACE PREPAREDNESS/CHECKLIST

At level two, it is about the prevention of cases in the workplace as well as controlling movement and spread where there are infected cases in the workplace. Therefore, the preparedness plan in response to COVID-19 in the workplace developed at level one should be fully implemented. The plan must also address how contact with infected individuals outside the workplace will be managed and how containment/ isolation will be handled where an infected individual has come in contact with other individuals within the workplace.

It is important to note that the level of your preparedness, the resources allocated to implement plans and the financial investment used to back plans will vary from Business to Business and Employer to Employer. It will depend on for example factors like the type of business, the number of employees, the size and complexity of the business operations, whether the business is an essential service provider, level of commitment and financial position, etc.

#### **These are key measures for Businesses and Employers to implement:**

- Sensitization through notices, social media platforms, staff durbars, workshops, fact sheets (Both in words and pictures to account for all levels of literacy in the organization). Information should also be put in different local languages to ensure equality of opportunity to information for all employees and to also widen the scope of the sensitization.
- Create posters to be posted at the entrance to offices/premises to raise awareness for employees, customers, and visitors.
- Provide infrared thermometer/test guns to run daily checks on employees before and after work. This should be done by trained medical personnel or a trained and approved first aid personnel. Do seek advice from a recognized medical institution as necessary.
- Provide running water and liquid soaps for handwashing; and make provision for alcohol-based (minimum 60% alcohol) sanitizers for sanitizing the hands after washing or where soap and water are not available.
- Access to paper towels or hand dryers to dry hands and closed bins to dispose of hand paper towels after use. Do avoid using fabric to dry hands because the virus can survive on fabrics for up to ten (10) hours. Additionally, fabric/material towels may be contaminated and may spread from person to person if more than one person is using the towel.
- Place handwashing instructions with words and pictures in key areas, such as the reception, staff canteen, staff kitchen, washroom/toilets/bathrooms, meeting rooms, production floors, sick bays, security posts, etc.
- In the absence of liquid soap and running water, water-based wipes can be used to clean hands before sanitizers are applied or just sanitizers can be used as an alternative.

- Access to tissues at workstations and all key areas in the organization as a preventative measure for the use of hands for sneezing. Please note sneezing can occur with allergies or due to dust and may not necessarily be related to a cold. The preventative action here is the use of hands.
- In addition or alternative to tissue boxes in key areas, provide pocket tissues can be provided to employees or employees can be informed to acquire pocket tissues of their own.
- Provide a protective nose mask (3-layer disposable mask recommended) to be worn by employees who have a cold or flu and have been asked to stay at home if deemed necessary.
- Provision of disposable gloves to minimize contamination where there is likely to be a lot of person to person contact. Please note that the use of disposable gloves can become counter-productive if the system of single-use per person is not applied.
- Provide disinfectant sprays to employees or cleaners to frequently disinfect workstation surfaces (e.g. tables, chairs, door handles, computers, printers, etc.) throughout the working day (e.g. before work, during work, and after work).
- Provision of bleach to sanitize toilet handles, sinks, taps, door handles, and any equipment that requires touch with the hands that can be contaminated.
- The virus attacks the immune system as an additional preventative measure employee should be encouraged to take or increase their intake. Alternatively, vitamin C chewy tablets can be provided to employees where affordability may be a barrier.

**Needed Materials and Equipment at the Workplace:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Running water</li> <li>▪ Liquid Soaps</li> <li>▪ A portable hand washing station</li> <li>▪ Pocket/Hand tissues</li> <li>▪ Disposable paper towels</li> <li>▪ Alcohol-based sanitizers (minimum 60% alcohol)</li> <li>▪ Disposable gloves</li> <li>▪ Resources such as posters, flyers, T-shirts, etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3-layer disposable surgical nose mask</li> <li>▪ Disinfectants, antiseptics, and bleach</li> <li>▪ Temperature test guns/ Infrared thermometer</li> <li>▪ Closed bins</li> <li>▪ Hand dryers</li> <li>▪ Vitamin C tablets</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

# WORKPLACE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

## GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES & EMPLOYERS

### 2.1 RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE – PREVENTION & PROTECTING OTHERS

- All Businesses and Employees as a matter of urgency should issue a handshaking and physical contact (e.g. hugs, holding hands, etc.) suspension in the workplace during COVID-19 to all stakeholders including employees, managers, customers, visitors, etc.
- Everyone entering (i.e. Managers, employees, customers, visitors, students, etc.) at the workplace (e.g. reception, security post, etc.) should clean/sanitize their hands with liquid soaps and running water or with an alcohol-based sanitizer before entering the workplace.
- Conduct temperature checks on all employees/ managers at all entry and exit points. Anyone with temperatures above 38oC should be immediately sent to the nearest COVID-19 testing center or hospital. (This action will be dependent on the directives that have been given by authorities in the country)
- All managers and employees should frequently clean their hands, at least 6 to 11 times daily (That is, before and after eating, after using the washroom/toilet, after blowing your nose, sneezing, coughing, contact with surfaces and people e.g. handshakes, hugs, etc.).
- All employees must, when coughing or sneezing, cover their mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue. The used tissue must be thrown away immediately into a closed bin. Where elbows are exposed employees should wash them afterward in the washroom/bathroom/toilets. Where elbows are covered with clothes employees should be informed to avoid letting people touch their elbows. Additionally, there are antiseptic products that can be added to water to bath offering protection of the skin. All employees/ managers should be made aware of antiseptic products for bathing, cleaning and disinfecting.
- All managers/employees must be informed to avoid close contact with anyone that has a cold/flu, cough, or fever within the workplace or outside the workplace.
- All employees and managers should be made aware to avoid handshakes, touching their nose, eyes, mouth with their bare hands or gloves.
- All managers/employees must be informed to use disposable gloves in areas where there is constant contact with people and materials as directed.
- All managers/employees must be informed to utilize skype/telephone conference calls in place of physical meetings, to control movement and the reduce risk of contact with an infected.
- All employees/managers using company or public transport should be informed to be vigilant; to cover their nose with a tissue or flexed elbow when sneezing or coughing on the bus or train.

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- All employees using the company or public transport should exit the bus or train if possible for example where a passenger is coughing and sneezing. Alternatively, as part of protecting others, employees could be guided to inform defaulting passengers where they feel comfortable to cover their mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue and dispose of used tissues on leaving the bus or train.
- All managers/employees or cleaners must be informed to regularly disinfect office door handles, and workstation surfaces, keyboards, printers, etc. with a disinfectant spray/ bleach throughout the day.
- Where washrooms/toilets surfaces are not being disinfected or are without sanitizers, all employees and managers should be informed to use tissue/ paper towels provided to open and close taps, water closet handles or buttons after use.
- All employees and managers should be informed to go to the doctor when they have a cold, flu, fever symptoms, or have difficulty breathing.
- All employees/managers should be informed not to come to work if they have a cold, flu, fever, cough, or are experiencing difficulty in breathing.
- All employees and managers should be informed when instructed to be on self-isolation the directive should be strictly adhered to without breaches. All employees and managers should be made to understand that self-isolation means having no contact with other people in the workplace and also family and friends as part of protecting the community.
- All employees/managers should be informed to avoid hangout, meetups or any form of interaction with individuals (friends, families, customers, etc.) with recent travel history to infected countries.
- All employees and managers should be informed that during self-isolation they should ensure they have plenty of food and water.

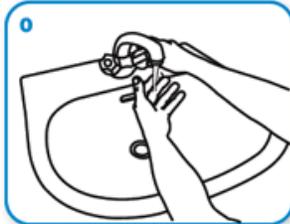
# WORKPLACE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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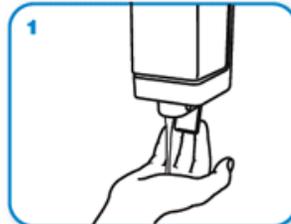
### 2.2 HANDWASHING TECHNIQUES

What is the best way to wash your hands properly?

The handwashing technique below should be displayed in all key areas (*source WHO*).



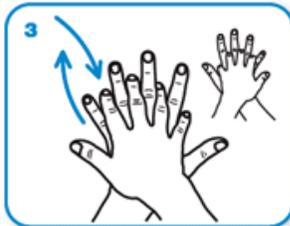
Wet hands with water



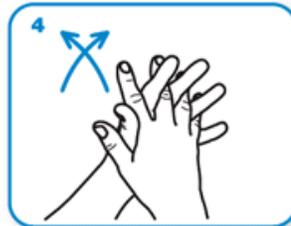
apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



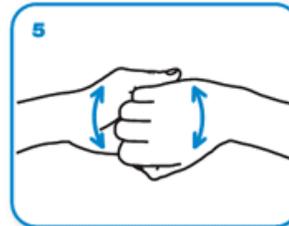
Rub hands palm to palm



right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa



palm to palm with fingers interlaced



backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



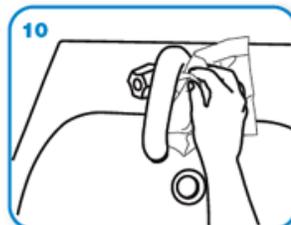
rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



Rinse hands with water



dry thoroughly with a single use towel



use towel to turn off faucet



...and your hands are safe.

#### **Summary of Handwashing Technique:**

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- Employees should always be informed to:
- Step 1: Wet hands with running water
- Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands
- Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including the back of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds.
- Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water
- Step 5: Dry hands with a clean cloth or disposable paper towel.
- Best Practices for Handwashing

### ***Employees should always be informed to:***

- Wash your hands often, especially before eating; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; and going to the restroom at least 6-11 times a day.
- If liquid soap and running water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
- Put antiseptics in water for bathing or for washing hands where sanitizers are not available.
- Wash hands with liquid soap and running water, if hands are visibly dirty.
- Preventative measures must be upheld at the workplace and home.

## 2.3 ACCESS TO COVID-19 RESOURCES

The World Health Organization has lots of pictorial information on COVID-19 that businesses and employers can print and use to sensitize their workplace. Businesses and Employers can also create their resources using the information available on COVID-19.

Businesses can create awareness through posters, flyers, videos, T-shirts, newsletters, fact sheets, etc. and share with their employees as well as their communities.

## 3. FACT SHEET FOR EMPLOYERS & EMPLOYEES

# WORKPLACE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

## GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES & EMPLOYERS

### COVID- 19 FACT SHEET

This is a series of facts curated from verifiable sources like WHO, ILO, UN, and reputable others. The fact sheet aims to simplify the information and bring focus to the facts to minimize panic and worry.

- Don't panic, Make sure you get information from agencies like the World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, etc. Don't share information from unknown sources.
- Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) is an infectious condition that means it can directly or indirectly spread from one person to another.
- COVID-19 has high infectivity but low mortality (e.g. reported mortality rate range of between 2% - 3%)
- Older people are twice as likely to have serious COVID sickness.
- The risk of death is only higher in older people above the age of 60 years and people with preexisting health conditions.
- Almost 80% of people who catch the virus have mild symptoms and recover from the disease in two (2) weeks and do not die.
- Most of the symptoms can be treated with timely medical care
- COVID appears to be relatively rare and mild in children/ young adults
- An infected person can infect/spread the virus to a healthy person through:
  - Eye, nose, and mouth via droplets produced on coughing or sneezing
  - Close contact with an infected person
  - Contact with contaminated surface, objects or items of personal use

**You can suspect to have COVID-19, only when you have:**

1. symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or flu
2. traveled to a Coronavirus affected area/country
3. Visited a health care facility or lab, where Coronavirus patients are being treated.

### COVID-19 Tests and Treatment

- Coronavirus is tested for when a doctor identifies an individual as a suspected case.

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- About 80% of infected people have recovered completely from the disease without needing special treatment.
- Symptom-based medical care is given to treat the disease and has proven effective
- There is no specific treatment or vaccination available for COVID-19 yet.

### Characteristics of COVID-19

- Coronavirus survives up to 8 - 10 hours over porous surfaces, (i.e. paper, treated wood, carbon, sponge, and fabric); and a little longer on non-porous surfaces (i.e. glasses, varnished woods, plastics, metals, etc.)
- The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to protect yourself, protect your family, and protect your community, by following the preventative measures communicated to you at work and by institutions/agencies handling COVID-19.
- As per experts, heat and warm weather is likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19, however preventative measure must still be maintained in warm weathers.

### General Care and Information

- Eat lots of oranges for Vitamin C or take Vitamin C to boost your immune system as additional protection.
- Always stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water within short intervals
- Travel only when necessary
- Avoid fear and anxiety that may lead to stereotyping, segregation. Victimization etc. There is no stigma attached to COVID-19 so please seek medical attention if it becomes necessary.
- Ensure you know all emergency numbers to call should you suspect you have been infected with COVID-19
- If you have to go to the hospital yourself do so with as little contact with others as possible.

## 4. LEVEL 3 BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN | SHUT DOWN

The workplace is a major entry point for COVID-19 preparedness and prevention.

Level three of the workplace response to COVID-19 is business continuity and closure. All businesses and Employers should put in place a business continuity plan for when it becomes necessary for business closure. This is particularly important for essential service providers. *See our document on COVID-19 Preparedness, Prevention and Business Continuity in the Workplace, Level 3, Guide, for Businesses and Employers.*

## INFORMATION PROVIDED BY ANITA WIAFE OF OML AFRICA

Contact us or follow us for more practical guides, tips, and information.

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### INFORMATION SOURCE

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- 1MG.com
- OML Africa