

COVID-19 GUIDELINES

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In light of the current global novel coronavirus (COVID-19 global pandemic) and noting the potential impact to our member companies, the Energy Chamber of Trinidad and Tobago has compiled the following recommendations based on guidelines from the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health.

We encourage you to share the below recommendations within your networks, to employees and via communication channels including social media, and your company's website(s).

RESTRUCTURING OF YOUR WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE

- Where possible, implement a remote work policy that covers:
 - when you expect your team to be online or available
 - how to communicate. e.g. via email, Zoom, webinars or video calls, etc.
 - what deliverables each team member is responsible for completing.
- Working at home is especially important for employees in groups that are at a higher risk of becoming infected with the coronavirus. You should also advise your team that where possible, they should designate a separate area within their household for work in order to minimize distractions and increase productivity.
- Postpone any face to face meetings and explore virtual options e.g. teleconferencing, Go To Meeting, Zoom etc.
- Consider staggered working hours or a shift system where working remotely is not possible. A shift system ensures that if there is suspected exposure to one group, the other group can still continue to work, once there is sanitization of exposed areas.
- Consider reducing your opening hours to minimize contact with persons and potential risk exposure to your employees.

- Where employees are required to report to work, try to encourage them to maintain a distance of at least six (6) feet from each other.
- For employees who cannot work remotely, you will need to be flexible, compassionate and understanding with their time, without jeopardizing the sustainability of the business. Try to be as understanding as possible in the event of unforeseen situations which may cause your employees to be absent from work. As an example, you can communicate with your employees as follows:

As you are no doubt aware, the COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented and unpredictable challenge for all workplace stakeholders – employers / employees and their trade union representatives. The reality we face is that the situation remains fluid on a national scale, and, as such, we consider it necessary to remain flexible with workplace policies so as to facilitate the inevitable need for adaptation. This will require a review of our leave policies to determine the manner in which COVID-19 related time away from work will be treated.

Employers are reminded that “pandemic leave” only applies to the public services and they therefore should not use this terminology for COVID-19 related time away from work.

- All persons visiting your offices should be screened before allowing entry e.g. through the use of a questionnaire (See Appendix A) to determine possible risk of infection. You should consider restricting public access to your offices.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION TO MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES

- Set up a reliable system for smooth and steady flow of information throughout the workplace e.g. set up a WhatsApp group to provide regular updates. Communication can also be done via emails and telephone.
- Encourage employees to only rely on news from credible sources. If it does not come from an official and credible source, it is not to be shared.
- Discourage your employees from sharing “fake news”. Fake news will be a source of fear and panic which is not needed at this time.

- Establish protocols for sick employees and advise them who to contact if they will not be at work.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

- Develop a Business Continuity Plan.
 - In the event of unforeseen situations which may cause your employees to be absent from work, have a contingency plan in case you suddenly become short-staffed
 - Consider cross training of staff members so in the event of infection with COVID-19, there will be no major negative impacts to your company's operations.
 - For critical services, identify personnel that can be hired should regular employees become ill and/or are in self-isolation.
 - Communicate with and ensure essential suppliers have their material(s) and personnel on-hand and are able to respond and support as required.

EXPLORE WAYS TO MINIMISE OPERATIONAL COSTS

There is still a level of uncertainty pertaining to the duration of the current pandemic so to reduce the potential economic fallout:

- Consider ways to reduce operational costs such as utility costs (electricity, water etc.).

FOLLOW AND ENCOURAGE GOOD HYGIENE HABITS

Practice good hygiene and stop the spread of the virus by following the health and safety tips provided by the WHO and the Ministry of Health. Encourage your employees to adhere to the following:

- No handshakes: Use a non-contact method for greetings.

- Provide adequate supplies of soap, water and hand sanitizer for employees, including employees who are away from office working on remote job sites.
- Employees should be instructed to wash their hands when they arrive and every time they enter the premises, as well as frequently throughout the day.
- If hand washing is not practical, hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol content should be used.
- Try not to touch your face.
- Cough / sneeze into the crook of your elbow or into a tissue. If using tissue, dispose of same in bins provided and thoroughly wash hands.
- Wear cloth / surgical / N 95 or other recommended mask fully covering the nose and mouth. Note that infected persons can be asymptomatic so the proper wearing of masks should be emphasized.
- Constantly and regularly disinfect surfaces, including doorknobs, handrails, tables and desks.

Keep your employees and your customers safe by being as proactive as possible about cleanliness.

SICK EMPLOYEES TO STAY AT HOME

- Instruct your employees to stay at home if they feel sick. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 infection are:
 - dry cough
 - high fever
 - tiredness

Less common symptoms include:

- aches and pains
- sore throat
- diarrhoea
- conjunctivitis
- headache

- loss of taste or smell
- a rash on skin, or discoloration of fingers or toes

Serious symptoms include:

- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- chest pain or pressure
- loss of speech or movement

On average, it takes 5-6 days from when someone is infected with the virus for symptoms to show. However, it can take up to 14 days. In the event of a suspected infection, the employee must be immediately quarantined and contact made with the Ministry of Health for testing. The result of the test will determine the duration of time required to be spent at home.

- Employees who have been in close contact with a suspected case must self-isolate and remain at home, until the suspected individual has been tested and cleared. If the suspected individual is tested positive, persons with whom the employee interacted must also self-isolate and be tested. Contact tracing within the company can be achieved through the use of a questionnaire (See Appendix A).
- Employees who think they may have symptoms or concerns about their risk of exposure to the virus should call the Ministry of Health's 24hr Hotline: 877-WELL/877-9355.

OTHER PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

- Establish a method e.g. a questionnaire, to screen all persons visiting your facility before allowing entry. See Appendix A.
- Provide hand sanitizer stations throughout the business premises and / or sinks and soap and notices instructing employees to wash/sanitize hands.
- Provide frontline personnel like receptionists, cleaners and security with adequate and appropriate PPE and training.

MAINTAIN MENTAL HEALTH

Communicate with employees that they should:

- Stay connected with friends, family and co-workers
- Eat Healthy
- Conduct physical activity
- Establish routines

COMMUNICATE TRANSPARENTLY WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

- Everyone is facing this crisis together, so be transparent about what your business is going through. Customers can empathize with your company facing a crisis as long as you communicate with them properly and manage expectations.

SHIFT YOUR SALES STRATEGY ONLINE

- Consider shifting your sales strategy to an online one to avoid heavy losses. If you are suspending operations at your physical location, find ways to generate sales and keep your employees earning a paycheck by selling via digital channels such as social media, putting your email list to good use or using a video tool to reach new leads.

PLAN FOR THE LONG TERM

- Speak to your suppliers, investors, partners and local officials on a daily basis to learn how you can start to implement safeguards that will help you stay above the red while officials work to contain COVID-19. It might be a while before your business gets back to business as usual.

Appendix A: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Questionnaire

NAME: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

COMPANY: _____

CITY OF RESIDENCE: _____

COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE: _____

1) Have you travelled to any of the following countries / territories in the past twenty-one (21) days? (Y/N)

USA, India, Brazil, UK, Europe, South America _____

2) Have you come into contact with anyone who travelled to any of the countries mentioned above or any other person suspected of being infected with COVID-19 in the past twenty-one (21) days? (Y/N) _____

a) If you replied Yes, please specify

3) Have you had any of the following symptoms in the past twenty-one (21) days? (Y/N)

Fever _____

Dry Cough _____

Runny Nose _____

Sore Throat _____

Headaches _____

Shortness of breath _____

Loss of taste or smell _____

General feeling of being unwell _____