

Operational guidelines on preparedness and response for COVID-19 outbreak for work settings

Government and Private Banks

Please follow the relevant sections of the General Guidelines (published in this webpage) in addition to the following specific measures.

Responsibilities of the employer/management

- All banks are advised to develop a COVID-19 preparedness plan specific to their setting.
- All departments, branches and offices shall identify a suitable focal point to monitor the control activities implemented against COVID-19.
- Implement a COVID-19 incident reporting system in house to ensure smooth operations in the bank.
- All workers in the facility have to be permanent or traceable staff. Care should be taken regarding the cleaning and security staff. Provide them with training on COVID-19 prevention since they too are an important group of workers in smooth functioning of banks. Their names, addresses, contact details and identity numbers must be documented in a register.
- Washrooms must be kept clean and in good working order. Ensure an adequate number of hand washing stations to sustain the increase in workers practicing good hygiene.
- Ensure proper and safe waste disposal in the workplace.

Important operational arrangements

- Banks should limit the number of customers attending the premises by encouraging only essential transactions during this period. Introduce/ promote the use of automated teller machines, cash deposit machines, drive through facilities, digital banking and by providing more access to online banking systems such as internet banking and telebanking etc.
- Establish client / staff friendly policies and practices, such as limiting operations to essential processes and flexible working hours (e.g., staggered shifts) and working from home.
- It is recommended to split officers performing the same critical job functions into smaller teams. Position them in different locations to maintain business continuity whenever possible.

Physical distancing

- Ensure keeping everyone at least one meter physically apart.
- Work stations should be arranged in order to keep a distance of at least one meter between workers.
- Limit the number of clients/visitors to maintain at least one meter distance inside the bank. Arrange them in a queue at least one meter apart.
- Limit the number of passengers in a lift to maintain adequate space among each other. If possible, mark the floor of lifts indicating where people should stand. Promote the use of stairs. Prevent queues at lifts.
- Postpone non-essential trainings. Use digital platforms for trainings as much as possible.
- Consider conducting management and board meetings using digital platforms as much as possible. Place signage about physical distancing around the branch/department.

Hand hygiene

- Anyone entering the bank premises should wash their hands with soap and water properly before entering. (Foot operated tap is the best for the wash basin). Alternatively a hand sanitizer with alcohol (minimum 70% v/v Alcohol) can be used.
- Keep hand sanitizers in strategic locations (near cash counters, accounts opening and other relevant service areas) to be used by clients/staff members after using common equipment/stationery/documents.

Health and safety of workers/clients/visitors/supporting staff

- Educate and train all staff on COVID-19 protective behaviours. Posters and health education messages to be displayed.

- Conduct temperature screening of all the staff/supporting staff/clients/visitors at the time of entrance to the branch/department. A non contact medical grade thermal scanner is recommended. Any person recording a temperature above 98.4 0F or 37 0C should be re-checked after 10-15minutes of rest. If positive for second time send him/her back and advise to seek medical advice. Keep a daily record of such workers.
- All staff/clients and visitors shall wear masks properly while inside the bank. They should refrain from touching the mask or their faces, while wearing it.
- Staff members handling currency notes and coins and in sections where customers are encountered shall wear disposable gloves. After removing the gloves it has to be discarded into a garbage bag inside a pedal operated closed bin. Hands should be washed with soap and water subsequently.
- Discourage workers from using other workers' mobile phones, pens and other common telephones, fax machines, desks, or other work tools and equipment, whenever possible. . If any object has been shared it must be cleaned with soap and water or with minimum 70% v/v alcohol based sanitizer.
- Encourage customers to register for electronic payment slips/receipts instead of paper receipt, if such facility can be provided by the bank.
- Discourage workers, customers, and visitors from shaking hands/hugging and adopt other non-touch techniques of greeting.
- Entrance and exit doors and doors between sections should be kept open or keep dedicated persons to open and close the doors to reduce unnecessary handling by the staff/customers.
- Provide a brief and regular forum to allow workers to express their concerns and ask questions and encourage peer-support amongst colleagues.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- Frequently touched surfaces including reception desks, tables used for filling bank slips, ATM machines, pens etc should be cleaned regularly using appropriate detergent solutions. Once cleaned, they should be disinfected regularly using appropriate disinfectant solutions as mentioned above.
- Use the hand sanitizer after using the finger print scanner. Finger print scanner shall be disinfected before and after each shift. If possible revert to non touch methods such as Near Field Communication (NFC) for recording of attendance of staff.
- Cleaning staff should be regularly educated and updated of the importance of their duty, the new guides and protocols and their safety.
- Instruction to be followed by cleaning staff should be clearly displayed in languages they understand.

Special instructions for customers and visitors

- All customers using ATM machines and other facilities should be advised to wear face masks and maintain a distance of 1m from other customers/ staff in queuing.
- Customers should wash the hands with soap and water or use 70% (v/v) alcohol based hand sanitizer before entering and after completion of the transaction/work.
- Instructions to customers should be clearly displayed at or before the entrance as well as within the premises.

Director General of Health Services

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