




PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2020-041

TO : ALL PEZA ECOZONE DEVELOPERS/OPERATORS
ALL PEZA-REGISTERED ENTERPRISES
ALL PEZA ZONE ADMINISTRATORS / ZONE MANAGERS/ OICs

FROM : BGen CHARITO B. PLAZA MNSA, PhD
Director General 

DATE : 30 July 2020

SUBJECT : **Guidance for PEZA Locators with Probable / Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Case Detected at the Workplace**

With the increasing number of probable / suspected / confirmed cases of COVID-19 in PEZA-registered Ecozones, we encourage all PEZA-registered locators, developer/operator especially the IT developers to strictly adhere to relevant Department of Health (DOH) policies which include the following:

- Department Circular No. 2020-0131 dated 11 March 2020, guidance for institutions if a PUI or confirmed COVID-19 case is detected within their premises;
- Department Memorandum Circular 2020-20 dated 23 April 2020, guidelines on local isolation and community-based management of mild covid cases;
- Department Administrative Order 2020-15 dated 27 April 2020, guidelines on risk-based public health standards for covid mitigation; and,
- Department Memorandum No. 2020-0258 dated 29 May 2020, updated interim guidelines on expanded testing.

A. Reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace through the following:

- 1) Remind all employees and personnel to:
 - a) Practice good physical hygiene
 - b) Practice physical distancing
 - c) Monitor their health including temperature checks at least twice daily
 - d) If unwell, do not go to work and/or go on sick leave. In addition, visit a healthcare professional immediately and inform their supervisors or the HR department/administrators immediately
- 2) Explore alternative work arrangements.
- 3) Perform enhanced disinfection of workplace premises

Source: DOH AO 2020-15: Guidelines on risk-based public health standards

B. Manage probable / suspected / confirmed COVID-19 case in the workplace

- 1) If an employee is feeling unwell, exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, or receives positive COVID-19 test results whether through RT-PCR or swab test, isolate the employee immediately and cordon-off the workplace area of the concerned employee and those who may be considered as close contacts.
- 2) The employer, through its Administrative Office or the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Committee and the like shall conduct preliminary contact tracing of close contacts using the policy provided by the DOH. All close contacts will be advised to be on home quarantine for 14 days from last exposure to the confirmed case and will strictly monitor their temperature and symptoms during the duration of quarantine. Their health condition shall be monitored by the company doctor or company nurse during the duration of the quarantine.

Source: DOH DC 2020-131: Guidelines for institutions of confirmed COVID-19 case within their premises

- 3) The Administrative Office or the OSHC shall report to the Local Government Unit through the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) and to the City or Municipal Health Officer for validation of the contact tracing conducted by the employer and to be able to access relevant resources of the LGU which may include COVID-19 isolation facilities or testing centers.
- 4) Employers should cooperate and provide the necessary assistance and support to the BHERT or MHO / CHO contact tracing team by helping identify any persons at the workplace who may have had close contact with the confirmed case. The BHERT is also tasked with the issuance of Certificate of Quarantine Completion, thus, the patient and close contacts will need to coordinate with their respective BHERTs for their place of residence.
- 5) Ideally, if their medical condition allows it and if they have their own personal vehicle, the probable / suspected / confirmed COVID-19 case and close contacts may transport themselves to their home for quarantine measures or to a nearby hospital if seeking medical attention. If they will need assistance in transport, the employer shall arrange for the safe transport of the patient and close contacts bearing in mind the safety protocols that need to be followed to ensure that the driver will have minimal exposure. This may be done through the use of N95 masks for the driver and patient, if this is not available, double layer of surgical masks may be used. Limit close contact by maximizing the distance between the patient / close contact and the driver and travel with windows open to allow for air circulation.
- 6) Employers should immediately vacate and cordon-off the prescribed section of the workplace premises where the confirmed case worked. There is no need to vacate the building or the whole floor if there had been no sustained and close contact with the confirmed case;
- 7) Carry out a thorough cleaning and disinfection of that section of the workplace premises particularly those that come in frequent contact, using 0.1% bleach.
- 8) For employees who may not be able to remain physically at their workplaces if they have been asked to vacate their work stations or are pending assessment by the LGU's contact tracing officers, employers are urged to enable flexible work arrangements or treat such absences in accordance with Department of Labor and Employment guidelines.
- 9) Employers shall provide timely information to employees on latest developments and reassure employees and other relevant persons, e.g. customers, of the measures being taken to ensure their well-being at the workplace.
- 10) Employers should regularly keep in touch with an employee who is a suspect or confirmed case or was placed on quarantine.
- 11) The right to privacy of health information of the patient and close contacts shall be protected at all times in accordance with the Data Privacy Act. Processing of health information is allowed for the purpose of contact tracing and monitoring, quarantine and isolation, mandatory reporting to the public health authorities or treatment and coordination purposes.

C. Requirements for return-to-work of COVID case and close contacts

- 1) The DOH policy on expanded testing no longer requires testing of symptomatic COVID-19 patients who have clinically recovered and have completed at least 14 days of isolation with no symptoms provided that a licensed medical doctor clears the patient.

- 2) For asymptomatic patients and close contacts, they may be released from quarantine without the need for testing after 14 days as long as they remain asymptomatic for the entire duration of the quarantine. It is suggested that the patient and close contacts shall secure the Certificate of Completion of Quarantine from the BHERT.

Source: DOH DM 2020-258: Interim guidelines on expanded testing

D. Role of IT Building Owners / Operators in reducing transmission

For IT Building Owners/Operators it is important to:

- 1) Identify suspected cases early on to prevent infections; body temperature measurement helps to minimize the risk of infection in buildings.
- 2) Enable physical distancing by not allowing individuals to enter an area which has reached the maximum numbers that will ensure the required minimum distance between people.
- 3) Regularly clean and disinfect buildings, focusing more on jointly used areas.
- 4) Cooperate and provide the necessary assistance and support to the joint DOH and LGU's contact tracing team by helping identify any persons at the workplace who may have had close contact with a confirmed case.
- 5) Aside from the preventive measures to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 as stated above, we also encourage all IT developers/operators to allocate a decent space within the IT Park/Center for the use of its tenants who wish to conduct COVID testing for its employees. If this is not possible, the IT developers/operators shall allow PEZA-registered enterprises to conduct the COVID testing within their office premises and also allow the service vehicle of medical professionals to use the tenant's parking spaces.

E. Notification of the Zone Manager and the PEZA Head Office

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned DOH Circular, all ecozone developers/operators/locators shall immediately inform their PEZA Zone Manager and the PEZA Head Office through email of any **confirmed COVID cases** within the PEZA economic zone. Reporting shall follow the suggested format in **Annex A**.

The Environmental Safety Group (ESG) at Head Office will collate the data as part of new reporting requirements required from Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) as part of the REBUILD PH! Strategy, please provide a copy of the accomplished report to ensd@peza.gov.ph

F. Definitions

- 1) Close contact – a person who may have come into contact with the probable or confirmed case two days prior to onset of illness of the confirmed COVID-19 case if symptomatic or use date of sample collection for asymptomatic cases as basis, until the time the patient is isolated, contact is further defined as:
 - a. Face-to-face contact with probable or confirmed case within 1 meter and for more than 15 minutes;
 - b. Direct physical contact with a probable or confirmed case;
 - c. Living together or direct care at home for a patient with probable or confirmed case
- 2) Confirmed COVID-19 case – any individual who tested positive for COVID-19 through laboratory confirmation at the national reference laboratory, subnational reference laboratory, or a DOH-certified laboratory testing facility
- 3) Probable COVID-19 case – a suspect case whose COVID-19 test is inconclusive; tested positive for COVID-19 by a laboratory other than those mentioned for confirming cases; suspect case who exhibited COVID-like symptoms but who died without undergoing any confirmatory testing
- 4) Suspected COVID-19 case – a suspect case exhibits severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) or has influenza-like illness (ILI) or exhibits fever with cough or shortness of breath or other respiratory symptoms and classified as vulnerable group or health care worker

For strict compliance.