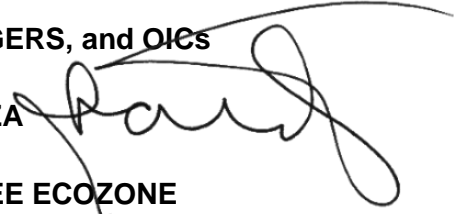




PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

FOR : ALL ECOZONE DEVELOPERS/LOCATOR ENTERPRISES
PEZA DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERALS
ZONE ADMINISTRATORS, ZONE MANAGERS, and OICs

FROM : DIRECTOR GENERAL CHARITO B. PLAZA 

SUBJECT : GUIDELINES IN SETTING UP COVID-FREE ECOZONE

DATE : 15 MAY 2020

I. RATIONALE/BACKGROUND

As we approach the lifting of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) due to COVID-19 and move to the General Community Quarantine (GCQ), it is imperative that we remain wary of the capacity of the virus to rebound and inflict more disruption and suffering in our economic zones. As we consider transition, we must acknowledge there are no 'quick wins'. Complexity and uncertainty lie ahead, which means that we are entering a period where we may need to rapidly adjust measures and even extend and scale-up safety 'cushions' in order to maintain a covid-free ecozone.

These guidelines are being issued to set the standards in putting-up the necessary facilities to prevent the spread of the corona virus inside public and private ecozones including continuous implementation of covid-19 preventive measures in order to maintain a covid-free ecozone.

II. OBJECTIVE

This Order aims to insulate the ecozones from covid and other pandemic and to make self-contained ecozones more resilient and sustainable in case of disasters or calamities that might arise in the future. Thus, ensuring continued operation of all locator companies inside the ecozones as well as the safety of all its workers and the general public.

III. SCOPE

This Order shall apply to all public and private ecozone developers/operators including ecozone locator companies.

IV. IMPLEMENTING MECHANISM

A. General Guidelines

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority in coordination with the Philippine Ecozones Association (PHILEA), the ecozone developers and locator enterprises, guided by the national government through the Department of Health (DOH), shall endeavor to ensure that the following minimum national health system capacity standards for COVID-19 preparedness and response in all PEZA ecozones are met:

1. Ecozone developers/operators shall regularly disinfect the economic zone's premises such as the common areas, roads, bridges, sidewalks, ancillary facilities and utilities infrastructures such as waste treatment facilities, substations, power and water generation facilities, including parks, greens and buffer zones. Disinfectant chambers through installation of gantry facilities within the main gate of the zones may also be provided to ensure spraying of incoming trucks/vehicles.
2. Registered enterprises shall regularly disinfect their premises especially the workplace and production areas where majority of the workers are located. This is in addition to wearing of masks and other protective gears, provision of alcohol and sanitizers in strategic areas in the workplace, and strict observance of social distancing. Disinfectant chambers or sanitizers within the main entrance of the locator's building/factory may also be provided for the incoming workers and guests.
3. Work from home arrangement, maintaining a skeletal workforce on site, provision of housing for the workers either inside or near the zone, social distancing, and use of shuttle services to ferry the employees shall be strictly complied with. For this purpose, directives on physical distancing, thermal scanning, provision of face masks and other protective equipment for employees and provision of alcohol, sanitizers and frequent sanitizing of the workplace shall always be observed. If possible, doctors and nurses should be available in the ecozones.
4. In accordance with the DOH guidelines, covid testing centers and isolation facilities in all public and private PEZA ecozones shall be in place.
5. Registered enterprises are encouraged to develop an Infectious Disease and Response Plan or Business Continuity Plan that will guide the management and the workers against COVID-19.
6. An Ecozone-Wide Emergency Response Plan should be implemented which would include basic orientation about COVID-19, how it spreads and affects the work place, its symptoms, who are considered as high risks, steps to reduce exposure and development of policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of infected workers.
7. Comply with the risk-based public health standards set by DOH, sector-specific policies and plans by other NGAs, and other relevant rules and regulations

B. Specific Guidelines

B.1 Disinfection of Ecozones

Developers/locator enterprises who have yet to develop their own Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan are enjoined to immediately clean and regularly disinfect the workplace, production facilities, common use areas in compliance with the government's COVID-19 prevention and quarantine measures. This is on top of the implementation of Basic Infection Prevention Measures such as proper hand hygiene, thermal scanning, encourage respiratory etiquette and social distancing measures. Salient points

1. **Cleaning and Disinfection.** The DOH as well as the US Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) recommends surface cleaning and disinfection of areas reasonably expected to catch respiratory droplets during coughing, sneezing or hand contact. These areas include walls, floors, windows, toilet bowl, bathroom surfaces, doorknobs and the like. Though the use of misting and spraying solutions may help, this process is not mandatory, since traditional cleaning and disinfection with the use of ordinary bleach or 70% ethyl alcohol is known to be effective against surface deposited virus.
2. **Chemicals for Disinfection.** Ordinary bleach is effective against the human coronavirus, if other cleaning agents will be used, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has listed more than 350 products that meet the EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 or the human coronavirus which causes COVID-19. The list provides the active ingredient, product name, type of formulation and suggested contact time to make the product application effective. The EPA regularly updates the list through this link: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
3. **Safety of Cleaning Staff.** It is suggested that the Safety Officer shall ensure that the cleaning staff shall use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and check up on the proper use and disposal of PPEs. It is also strongly recommended that the cleaning staff shall be under 60 years old with no underlying health conditions since they have higher infection rates than younger individuals and if infected, will have more serious outcomes.

B.2 Offices /Workplaces

In accordance with the DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0016 dated 04 May 2020 on Minimum Health System Capacity Standard for Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Strategies, the minimum requirements for offices/workplaces shall be met:

B.2.1 To increase physical and mental resilience

- Practice respiratory etiquette at all times. Use tissue or the inner portion of the elbow to cover the nose and mouth when sneezing/coughing. Practice proper disposal of tissue after use. Employers may provide tissues within easy reach in all workstations and communal spaces.
- Health emergencies can put people in extreme stress. Individuals may reach out to a professional through the telemedicine hotlines. Employers must provide mental and psychosocial support such as but not limited to providing mindfulness activities/sessions, in-house counseling sessions, online counseling, and support groups to its employees.
- Employers to promote work-life balance through proper scheduling of activities and rotation of workforce.
- Employers must provide alternative work arrangements to the elderly, individuals with underlying conditions, and pregnant women for the duration of Covid-19 health event.
- Provision of temporary accommodations to employees, if necessary, including financial, transportation, food, and other services to employees as needed.

B.2.2 To reduce transmission

- Employers shall provide handwashing facility, hand sanitizers, and dispensers with alcohol-based solutions in all entrances, exits, areas with high foot traffic and facilities.
- Employers must ensure daily monitoring and availability of hand soaps, sanitizers, and other disinfectants in restrooms and in all entrances and facilities.
- Ensure routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and objects, and routine cleaning and replacement of disinfectant solutions in foot baths.
- Management shall allocate appropriate PPEs to employees (i.e. essential workforce) on duty depending on the nature of work and contact with the general public.

B.2.3 To reduce contact

- Employers must limit face to face meetings as much as possible and adopt WFH arrangements.
- Allow flexible dining policy in the work space/cubicle during lunch break; or limit the number of individuals who can eat in the pantry at a given time.
- If WFH are not possible, practice physical distancing in the workplace (at least one meter apart from each co-worker).
- Employers provide cloth masks to employees.
- Employers should provide modified alternative structure and arrangements.
- Suspension of office meetings, conferences, and other large gatherings.

B.2.4 To reduce duration of infection

- Employers must subject all employees to temperature checks prior to entering the building/office spaces and proper referral to appropriate facility for symptomatic employees.

- Employers must monitor all employees daily to ensure proper detection of employees with symptoms.
- Employees with mild flu-like symptoms shall adopt a WFH arrangement for the duration of Covid-19 health event.

B.3 Covid Testing Centers and Isolation Facilities

As the covid-19 pandemic has focused the attention on the scarcity of capable testing facilities in the country, PEZA in accordance with the DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0014 dated 07 April 2020, shall initiate the setting up of covid testing centers in all public and private ecozones.

1. Ecozone developers shall provide an enclosed area of at least 500 square meters for the covid testing facility to cover both rapid antibody test and PCR based testing.
2. A Covid Test Service Provider shall set up the testing center to facilitate two types of tests to give options to locators: Rapid Antibody Test and PCR based test, in accordance with the DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0014.
3. Ecozone developers shall also provide a temporary isolation facility inside the ecozone which will serve as a segregation area for those workers that will be found positive for covid. Infected workers shall be turned over immediately to hospitals for treatment or sent home or to an LGU facility for quarantine procedure. The temporary isolation facility can be a makeshift tent or vacant facility which can accommodate 5 to 10 people.

B.4 Shuttle Services of ecozone workers

In accordance with the DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0016 dated 04 May 2020 on Minimum Health System Capacity Standard for Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Strategies, the minimum requirements for shuttle services shall be met:

B.4.1 To increase physical and mental resilience

- Operators and drivers may designate a specific area for the elderly, individuals with underlying conditions, and pregnant women within the vehicle and waiting area.

B.4.2 To reduce transmission

- Ensure routine disinfection and cleaning of vehicle.
- Ensure routine monitoring and replacement of hand sanitizers and dispensers with alcohol-based solutions in all shuttle services.
- Drivers, and conductors who are in contact with passengers must wear cloth masks at all times.

B.4.3 To reduce contact

- Physical distancing of at least one meter apart shall be observed in all shuttle services.
- Markings and temporary barriers in shuttle services shall be implemented.

B.4.4 To reduce duration of infection

- Operators and drivers of shuttle services must subject passengers to temperature checks prior to entering the vehicle.

B.5 Provision for temporary housing of ecozone workers

In accordance with the DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0016 dated 04 May 2020 on Minimum Health System Capacity Standard for Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Strategies, the minimum requirements for accommodation facilities shall be met:

B.5.1 To increase physical and mental resilience

- The facility management may provide tissues and alcohol hand rub in communal areas and amenities. All toilet facilities should have adequate water and soap for handwashing.
- The housing facility shall have available designated areas or facilities for the elderly, individuals with underlying conditions, and pregnant women.

B.5.2 To reduce transmission

- Ensure routine disinfection and cleaning of the housing facility, including frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Ensure routine monitoring and replacement of hand sanitizers and dispensers with alcohol-based solutions in all rooms, communal areas, and amenities.
- Replacement of foot baths in all entrances (1:10 bleach solution; 1 liter bleach mixed with 9 liters of clean water).

B.5.3 To reduce contact

- Physical distancing of at least one meter apart shall be observed in all areas of the housing facility.
- Red marking tapes on the floor of front desks, buffet, and other amenities shall be placed to guide guests to stay at least one meter apart from each other.
- Installation of temporary barriers in concierge, front desks, etc.

B.5.4 To reduce duration of infection

- The facility management must subject all occupants/guests and employees to temperature checks prior to entering the housing facility.

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Other related issuances not consistent with the provisions of this Order are hereby revised, modified, or rescinded accordingly. Nothing in this Order shall be construed as a limitation or modification of existing laws, rules and regulations.

VI. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

Should any provision of this Order or any part thereof be declared invalid, the other provisions, insofar as they are separable from the invalid ones, shall remain in full force and effect.

VII. EFFECTIVITY

This Order shall take effect immediately.