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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
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GUIDELINES ON 2019 NOVELA CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV) PREVENTION AND CONTROL AT THE WORKPLACE

Pursuant to RA 11058 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, DOLE DO 198, these guidelines are issued to assist private sector workplaces in their preparedness and response to the 2019-nCoV.

I. COVERAGE

These guidelines shall apply to all employers and workers in the private sector.

II. WORKPLACE HEALTH

As a precautionary measure at the workplace, all employers are directed to:

1. Provide information about 2019-nCoV including its transmission, disease outcome, and treatment options to their workers;
2. Clean the work areas with disinfectant and make sure that water, soap and sanitizer are available in all washrooms and toilets;
3. Avoid or reduce direct exposure of workers to animals, environments and objects which may be possibly carrying the 2019-nCoV;
4. Ensure food in canteens or similar areas is properly prepared, handled and cooked;
5. Emphasize to all workers the everyday actions to stay healthy and keep a clean workplace, such as:
 - Cover the nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing;
 - Wash hands frequently with soap and water or cleansing of hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizers;
 - Spit at proper places;
 - Avoid close contact with sick people;
 - Increase the body's resistance by having adequate rest and at least eight (8) hours of sleep;
 - Drink plenty of fluids; and
 - Eat nutritious food.

6. Monitor the health of workers particularly those with fever and other flu symptoms and those who have traveled to or worked in countries affected with the 2019-nCoV.

Workplace with Imminent Danger Situations

In workplaces where workers are evidently at risk of infection as in health-care and other frontline services, the employer shall take immediate protective measures to avoid, correct or remove such imminent danger. A screening program on 2019-nCoV must be installed in accordance with the Guidelines issued by the Department of Health (DOH). Screening or triage shall follow a procedure using a checklist that may include questions related to:

1. Recent travel to China or a country or place on the WHO list with local transmission or outbreak of 2019-nCoV;
2. Recent contact with a confirmed or suspected 2019-nCoV; and
3. Affliction by such symptoms as fever greater than 38 degrees Celsius and flu-like symptoms such as cough, difficulty of breathing or shortness of breath.

Workers in said workplaces must take extra precautionary measures which include strict hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Employers shall ensure that PPE (e.g. respirators such as N95, gowns, gloves) is properly worn by the workers while at work and disposed of accordingly after use.

Concerns and/or reports on 2019-nCoV shall be coordinated with the Department of Health.

Guidance to Employers for Care of Workers Who Are Sick or with Fever:

- A. In the event that a worker is suspected as having 2019-nCoV, the employer shall:
 1. Provide the worker with a face mask to prevent risk of spreading the infection;
 2. Isolate the worker immediately in a separate well-ventilated room in the workplace, away from other workers;
 3. Refer the worker to the company healthcare provider or to the nearest local health center or hospital for laboratory confirmation if the history, signs and symptoms are consistent with a suspected case of 2019-nCoV;
 4. Report the worker to the Department of Health by calling the DOH at numbers: 8-711-1001 and 8-711-1002
 5. Ensure the implementation of recommendations provided by the DOH on the management and transport of suspected case of 2019-nCoV;
 6. Observe *respiratory precautions when taking care of patients with flu or flu-like illness*; and



7. Decontaminate the work area with appropriate disinfectant (e.g. chlorine bleaching solution and 1:100 phenol based disinfectant).
- B. In the event that a worker is sick or has fever but is not suspected to have 2019-nCoV, the employer must advise the worker to take prudent measures to limit the spread of communicable diseases, as follows:
1. Stay at home and keep away from work or crowds;
 2. Take adequate rest and take plenty of fluids;
 3. Practice personal hygiene to prevent spread of disease; and
 4. Seek appropriate medical care if there is persistent fever, when difficulty of breathing has started, or when he/she becomes weak.

III. LEAVE OF ABSENCE/ENTITLEMENTS

Leave of Absence

For workers who are requested by their employers to stay at home or who are served quarantine order for reasons related to 2019-nCoV, the following arrangements may be considered during the period of absence:

1. Worker's leave of absence may be charged to their annual sick/vacation leave credits under the company policy or practice or as stipulated in their collective bargaining agreement, if there is any. If the worker's leave credits have been used up, employers could consider granting leave of absence without pay. However, employers are encouraged to exercise flexibility and compassion in granting additional leave with pay.
2. By mutual agreement, employers and workers could also agree on other arrangements for the worker's leave of absence.

For workers who need to take a leave to take care of their children or parents afflicted or suspected of having 2019-nCoV, or choose to stay away from work on their own accord due to contact with a confirmed or suspected 2019-nCoV to avoid its transmission, employers are encouraged to adopt a flexible and enlightened approach in granting time-off which may include use of leave credits, if there is any. For workers who have used up their vacation or sick leave credits, employers could consider granting them leave of absence without pay.

Hospitalization Benefits

In addition to existing company health-care benefits PhilHealth members and their dependents infected with 2019-nCoV may avail of PhilHealth hospital benefits.

Social Security / Employee's Compensation Benefits

A worker who contracts 2019-nCoV in the performance of his/her work is entitled to sickness benefits under the Social Security System and employees' compensation benefits under PD 626 (EC Law).



In the event that the worker is not qualified to avail of the benefits under SSS or PhilHealth due to the fault of the employer, the employer shall shoulder all the medical expenses until full recovery.

IV. ASSISTANCE TO BE PROVIDED BY DOLE

For workers in the country, the Bureau of Working Conditions (BWC), the Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) and the DOLE-Regional Offices (DOLE-ROs), in collaboration with the Department of Health, shall provide the following:


1. Information on 2019-nCoV and workplace concerns including issues related to OSH Standards and General Labor Standards;
2. Technical assistance in the form of risk assessment, use of protective equipment including a respirator program, workplace improvements to reduce the likelihood of droplet of infection and contamination by materials possibly infected by the virus; and
3. Capability-building of 2019-nCoV focal persons in the workplace.

For overseas Filipino workers (OFW), the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB) shall ensure that information on 2019-nCoV prevention and control are provided during the pre-departure orientation seminars.

The DOLE agencies concerned shall make a regular progress report on the prevention and control of 2019-nCoV spread in the workplaces. The BWC shall ensure the observance of these guidelines.

V. EFFECTIVITY

These guidelines shall take effect immediately.



SILVESTRE H. BELLO III
Secretary

31 January 2020