

**Government of India
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**

SOP on preventive measures to contain spread of COVID-19 in offices

1. Background

Offices and other workplaces are relatively close settings, with shared spaces like workstations, corridors, elevators & stairs, parking places, cafeteria/canteens, meeting rooms and conference halls etc. and COVID-19 infection can spread relatively fast among officials, staffs and visitors.

There is a need to prevent spread of infection and to respond in a timely and effective manner in case suspect case of COVID-19 is detected in these settings, so as to limit the spread of infection.

2. Scope

This document outlines the preventive and response measures to be observed to contain the spread of COVID-19 in office settings. The document is divided into the following sub-sections

- i. Generic preventive measures to be followed at all times
- ii. Measures specific to offices
- iii. Measures to be taken on occurrence of case(s)
- iv. Disinfection procedures to be implemented in case of occurrence of suspect/confirmed case.

Offices in containment zones shall remain closed except for medical & essential services. Only those outside containment zones will be allowed to open up.

3. Generic preventive measures

The generic preventive measures include simple public health measures that are to be followed to reduce the risk of infection with COVID-19. These measures need to be observed by all (employees and visitors) at all times. These include:

- i. Individuals must maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet (*2 gaj ki doori*) in common places as far as feasible.
- ii. Use of face covers/masks at all times. They must be worn properly to cover nose and mouth. Touching the front portion of mask/face covers to be avoided.
- iii. Practice frequent hand washing with soap (for at least 40-60 seconds) even when hands are not visibly dirty. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (for at least 20 seconds) can be made wherever feasible.

- iv. Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed. This involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/sneezing with a tissue/handkerchief/flexed elbow and disposing off used tissues properly.
- v. Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting any illness at the earliest to the immediate supervisory officer.
- vi. Spitting shall be strictly prohibited.
- vii. Installation & use of Aarogya Setu App by all employees.

4. Specific preventive measures for offices:

- i. Entrance to have mandatory hand hygiene (sanitizer dispenser) and thermal screening provisions.
- ii. Only asymptomatic staff/visitors shall be allowed entry.
- iii. Any officer and staff residing in containment zone should inform the same to supervisory officer and not attend the office till containment zone is denotified. Such staff should be permitted to work from home.
- iv. Drivers shall maintain physical distancing at all times particularly within rooms/ spaces designated for drivers. They shall follow required do's and don'ts related to COVID-19. It shall be ensured by the service providers/ officers/ staff that drivers residing in containment zones shall not be allowed to drive vehicles.
- v. There shall be provision for disinfection at-least twice a day of the interior of the vehicle using 1% sodium hypochlorite solution/spray. A proper disinfection of frequently touched surfaces i.e. steering, door handles, keys, etc. should be taken up.
- vi. Advise all employees who are at higher risk i.e. older employees, pregnant employees and employees who have underlying medical conditions, to take extra precautions. They should preferably not be exposed to any front-line work requiring direct contact with the public.
- vii. All officers and staff / visitors to be allowed entry only if using face cover/masks. The face cover/mask has to be worn at all times inside the office premises.
- viii. Visitors with proper permission of the officer who they want to meet, should be allowed after being properly screened.
- ix. Meetings, as far as feasible, should be done through video conferencing.
- x. Posters/standees/AV media on preventive measures about COVID-19 to be displayed prominently.
- xi. Proper crowd management in the parking lots and outside the premises – duly following physical distancing norms be ensured.
- xii. Valet parking, if available, shall be operational with operating staff wearing face covers/ masks and gloves as appropriate. A proper disinfection of steering, door handles, keys, etc. of vehicles should be taken up.
- xiii. Any shops, stalls, cafeteria/canteen etc., outside and within the office premises shall follow physical distancing norms at all times.

- xiv. Specific markings may be made with sufficient distance to manage the queue and ensure physical distancing in the premises.
- xv. Proper cleaning and frequent sanitization (at-least twice a day) of the workplace, particularly of the frequently touched surfaces must be ensured.
- xvi. Ensure regular supply of hand sanitizers, soap and running water in the washrooms.
- xvii. Number of people in the elevators shall be restricted, duly maintaining physical distancing norms for which purpose proper marking be made on the floor of the elevators.
- xviii. For air-conditioning/ventilation, the guidelines of CPWD shall be followed which mentions that the temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30° C, relative humidity should be in the range of 40- 70%, intake of fresh air should be as much as possible and cross ventilation should be adequate.
- xix. Large physical gatherings continue to remain prohibited.
- xx. Effective and frequent sanitation within the premises shall be maintained with particular focus on lavatories, drinking and hand washing stations/areas.
- xxi. Cleaning and regular disinfection (using 1% sodium hypochlorite) of frequently touched surfaces (doorknobs, elevator buttons, handrails, benches, washroom fixtures, etc.) shall be done in office premises and in common areas at-least twice a day.
- xxii. Proper disposal of face covers / masks / gloves left over by visitors and/or employees in covered bins, shall be ensured.
- xxiii. In the cafeteria/canteen/dining halls:
 - a. Mandatory placement of hand sanitizers at the entrance to ensure personal hygiene.
 - b. Staff to take their temperature regularly and check for respiratory symptoms. They must see a doctor if feeling unwell or having flu-like symptoms.
 - c. Adequate crowd and queue management to be done to ensure physical distancing norms for which purpose markings be made on the floor of cafeteria/canteen/dining halls.
 - d. Staff / waiters to wear mask and hand gloves and take other required precautionary measures.
 - e. The seating arrangement to ensure a distance of at least 6 feet between patrons as far as feasible.
 - f. In the kitchen, the staff to follow physical distancing norms.

5. Measures to be taken on occurrence of case(s):

Despite taking the above measures, the occurrence of cases among the employees working in the office cannot be ruled out. The following measures will be taken in such circumstances, when one or few people(s) who share a room/close office space is/are found to be suffering from symptoms suggestive of COVID-19:

- a. Place the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others at the workplace. Provide a mask/face cover till such time he/she is examined by a doctor.

- b. Immediately inform the nearest medical facility (hospital/clinic) or call the state or district helpline.
- c. A risk assessment will be undertaken by the designated public health authority (district RRT/treating physician) and accordingly further advice shall be made regarding management of case, his/her contacts and need for disinfection.
- d. The management of cases and contacts will be done as per the existing protocol (<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/FinalGuidanceonMangaementofCovidcasesversion2.pdf> and <https://ncdc.gov.in/showfile.php?lid=570>).

6. Management of premises

- i. If there are one or two cases reported, the disinfection procedure will be limited to places/areas occupied and visited by the patient in past 48 hours and work can be resumed after disinfection as per laid down protocol.
- ii. In case of larger number of cases are being reported at the workplace, the whole block or building, as the case may be, should be disinfected.