



A Better Place For All

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## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY COVID -19 POLICY

<b>Date Approved:</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> MAY 2023
<b>Effective Date:</b>	2023/2024

### 1. PURPOSE

On 17 March 2020, the Department of Employment and Labour issued guidelines for employers to deal with COVID-19 at workplaces. The Department of Employment and Labour appealed to employers to use the prescriptions of the OHS Act in particular the Hazardous Biological Agents Regulations governing workplaces in relation to Coronavirus Disease 2019 caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Hence this policy seeks to;

- Stipulate measures that must be taken by the Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma Local Municipality in order to protect the health and safety of employees and members of the public who enter the municipality.
- Ensure that the measures taken by the NDZ Municipality under the OHS Act and are consistent with the overall national strategies and policies to minimise the spread of COVID-19.
- Ensure that all persons who may be directly affected by their activities (such as customers, clients or contractors and their employees who enter their workplace or come into contact with their employees) are not exposed to hazards to their health or safety. This obligation also applies to self-employed persons (for example, plumbers or electricians) whose working activities bring them into contact with members of the public.
- This policy is based on infection transmission prevention and specific occupational hygiene practices that focus on the need for the Dr NDZ

municipality to implement measures to mitigate or eliminate the transmission of the virus in the workplace.

## **2. SCOPE AND APPLICATION**

This policy will apply to:

2.1 All Councilors, employees, clients, visitors and contractors of the Municipality and no exception to the policy will be made.

2.2 All buildings, premises or enclosed spaces occupied, owned, leased or controlled by the Municipality.

2.3 All workplaces, which include all Municipal buildings, corridors, lobbies, toilets or any other common areas frequented by employees.

## **3. DEFINITIONS**

**"BCEA"** means the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997 (Act No. 75 of 1997);

**"COVID-19"** means Coronavirus Disease 2019

**"Disaster Management Act"** means the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002)

**"OHSA"** means the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act No. 85 of 1993);

**"PPE"** means personal protective equipment

**"virus"** means the SARS-CoV-2 virus

**"employee"** means any person who works in an employer's workplace including an employee of the employer or contractor, a self-employed person or volunteer

**"Dr NDZ Municipality"** means any or place where a person performs work.

## **4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

- Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997 (Act 75 of 1997)
- Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act 57 of 2002 and Regulations)
- Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995)
- Local Government Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act 85 of 1993 and Regulations)
- Compensation for Occupational Injury and Diseases, 1993 (Act 130 of 1993)

- Medical, Dental and Supplementary Health Service Professions Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974) or South African Nursing Council as referred to in the Nursing Act, 1978 (Act 50 of 1978)
- Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act No. 55 of 1998);

## **5. COMMUNICATION**

The policy and related information pertaining to Covid - 19 shall be communicated to all municipal employees using the full range of communication methods available to the municipality including workshops and or trainings

## **6. ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES**

6.1 If employees are sick or have symptoms associated with the COVID–19 they must not come to work and to take paid sick leave in terms of section 22 of the BCEA

6.2 The Dr NDZ Municipality will minimize the number of employees at the workplace at any given time through rotation, staggered working hours, shift systems, remote working arrangements or similar measures in order to achieve social distancing.

6.3 The Dr NDZ Municipality will take measures to minimize contact between employees as well as between employees and members of the public.

6.4 The Dr NDZ Municipality will provide employees with information that raises awareness in any form or manner, including where reasonably practicable leaflets and notices placed in conspicuous places in the workplace informing employees of the dangers of the virus, the manner of its transmission, the measures to prevent transmission such as personal hygiene, social distancing, use of masks, cough etiquette and where to go for screening or testing if presenting with the symptoms.

6.6 Employees also have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and to obey the health and safety rules and procedures laid down by the employer. Any employee who fails to do this may be subjected to disciplinary action.

## **7. EMPLOYER'S DUTY-WHERE AN EMPLOYEE HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH COVID 19**

7.1 Inform the Department of Health and the Department of Employment and Labour;  
and

7.2 Investigate the cause including any control failure and review its risk assessment to ensure that the necessary controls and PPE requirements are in place; and

7.3 Ensures administrative support to any contact-tracing measures implemented by the Department of Health.

## **8. SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES**

8.1 The Dr NDZ Municipality will arrange the workplace to ensure minimal contact between employees and as far as practicable ensure that there is a minimum of one and a half metres (1.5m) between employees while they are working, for example, at their workstations. The number of employees present in the workplace at any time will be reduced to assist in achieving the required social distancing.

### **8.2 If it is not practicable to arrange workstations to be spaced at least one and a half metres apart, the Dr NDZ Municipality will-**

8.2.1 Arrange physical barriers to be placed between workstations or erected on workstations to form a solid physical barrier between employees while they are working; or

8.2.2 If necessary, supply the employee free of charge with appropriate PPE based on a risk assessment of the working place.

8.3 The Dr NDZ Municipality will ensure that social distancing measures are implemented through supervision both in the workplace and in the common areas outside the immediate workplace through queue control or within the workplace. These measures may include dividing the workforce into groups or staggering break-times to avoid the concentration of employees in common areas.

## **9. SCREENING AND TESTING**

### **9.1 The NDZ Municipality will-**

9.1.1 Screen all employees, at the time that they report for work, to ascertain whether they have any of the observable symptoms associated with COVID-19, namely fever, cough, sore throat, redness of eyes or shortness of breath (or difficulty in breathing);

9.1.2 If an employee body temperature record above 37% degrees, such people shall be refuse entry and be advised to go for screening and testing

9.1.3 Require every employee to report whether they suffer from any of the following additional symptoms: body aches, loss of smell or loss of taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fatigue, weakness or tiredness; and

9.1.4 Require employees to immediately inform the employer/Supervisor if they experience any of the symptoms in sub-clauses 9.1.1 and 9.1.3 while at work.

## **9 SYMPTOMS**

**If an employee presents with Covid 19 symptoms, or advises the employer of these symptoms, the Dr NDZ Municipality will –**

9.2.1 Not permit the employee to enter the workplace or report for work; or

9.2.2 If the employee is already at work immediately-

9.2.2.1 Isolate the employee from other staff members to the isolation room designated by the employer, provide the employee with a FFP1 surgical mask and arrange for the employee to be transported in a manner that does not place other employees or members of the public at risk either to be self-isolated or for a medical examination or testing; and it is compulsory for the employee to adduce medical Covid19 results to the employer.

9.2.2.2 Assess the risk of transmission, disinfect the area and the employee's workstation, refer those employees who may be at risk for screening and take any other appropriate measure to prevent possible transmission.

9.2.3 Affected employee will be placed on a paid sick leave in terms of section 22 of the BCEA or if the employee's sick leave entitlement under the section is exhausted, make application for an illness benefit in terms of clause 4 of the Directive issued on 25 March 2020 on the COVID-19 Temporary Employer Relief Scheme under regulation

10(8) of the Regulations promulgated in terms of section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act;

9.2.4 Discriminated against on grounds of having tested positive for COVID-19 in terms of section 6 of the Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act No. 55 of 1998) will not be permitted and any employee found or reported to be spreading or mocking about the Covid 19 results of any employee will be subjected to disciplinary actions which may lead to dismissal.

9.2.5 If there is evidence that an employee contracted COVID-19 as a result of occupational exposure, lodge a claim for compensation in terms of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 1993 (Act No. 130 of 1993) in accordance with Notice 193 published on 3 March 2020.

## **10 RETURN TO WORK**

If an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and isolated in accordance with the Department of Health Guidelines, the Dr NDZ Municipality may only allow an employee to return to work on the following conditions:

10.1 The employee has undergone a medical evaluation and adduce medical report from a registered medical practitioner or any other person who is certified to diagnose or treat patients and who is registered by the health professions council established by an act of parliament confirming that the employee has been tested negative for COVID-19;

10.2 Dr NDZ municipality will ensures that personal hygiene, wearing of masks, social distancing, and cough etiquette is strictly adhered to by the employee; and closely monitors the employee for symptoms on return to work.

## **11. SANITIZERS, DISINFECTANTS, AND OTHER MEASURES**

A hand sanitizer must be one that has at least 70% alcohol content and is in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Health. The Dr NDZ Municipality, free of charge, will ensure that –

11.1 There are sufficient quantities of hand sanitizer based on the number of employees or other persons who access the municipality at the entrance of, and in, the municipality which the employees or other persons are required to use;

11.2 Every employee who works away from the municipal buildings, other than at home, will be provided with an adequate supply of hand sanitizer.

11.3 All surfaces and equipment are disinfected before work begins, regularly during the working period and after work ends.

11.4 Areas such as toilets, common areas, door handles, shared electronic equipment are regularly cleaned and disinfected.

11.5 All biometric systems will be disabled.

11.6 There are adequate facilities for the washing of hands with soap and clean water; paper towels are provided to dry hands after washing – the use of fabric towelling is prohibited.

11.7 The employees are required to wash their hands and sanitize their hands regularly while at work.

11.8 The employees interacting with the public are instructed to sanitize their hands between each interaction with public.

11.9 surfaces that employees and members of the public come into contact with are routinely cleaned and disinfected.

## **12. Cloth masks**

The main benefit of everyone wearing a cloth mask is to reduce the amount of virus droplets being coughed up by those with the infection and transmitted to others and to surfaces that others may touch. Since some persons with the virus may not have symptoms or may not know they have it, the Department of Health requires that all persons wear cloth masks when in a public place. **The Dr NDZ municipality will –**

12.1 Provide each of its employees, free of charge, with a minimum of two cloth masks, which comply with the requirement set out in the Guidelines issued by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, for the employee to wear while at work and while commuting to and from work; and

12.2 Require any other person to wear masks in the municipality.

12.3 The number and replaceability of cloth masks that must be provided to an employee or required of other persons will be determined in accordance with any sectoral guideline and in the light of the employee or person's conditions of work, in particular, where these may result in the mask becoming wet or soiled.

12.4 The Dr NDZ municipality will ensure that employees are informed, instructed, trained and instructed as to the correct use of cloth masks.

12.5 The general requirement for employees to wear masks does not derogate from the fact that, where a risk assessment indicates that PPE is required, those categories of employees must be provided with the accredited PPE in accordance with Department of Health guidelines.

### **13. MEASURES IN RESPECT OF PUBLIC ACCESS**

The principal purpose of the measures contained in the following clause is to protect employees from being exposed to the virus through their interaction with the public and to protect members of the public from being exposed to virus through their interaction with employees or other persons present in the municipality. **The Dr NDZ municipality will-**

13.1 Arrange the workplace to ensure that there is a distance at least one and a half metres (1.5M) between employees and members of the public or between members of the public; or

13.2 Put in place physical barriers or provide employees with face shields or visors.

13.3 undertake symptom screening measures of persons other than the employees entering the workplace with due regard to available technology and any guidelines issued by the Department of Health.



13.4 Display notices advising persons other than employees entering the municipality of the precautions they are required to observe while in the municipality.

13.5 Require members of the public, including suppliers, to wear masks when inside the municipal premises.

#### **14. Ventilation**

Where reasonable and practical, a workplace do not have windows or sufficient ventilation **The NDZ Municipality will-**

14.1 Provide an effective local extraction ventilation (LEV) system with high-efficiency particulate air HEPA filters, which is regularly cleaned and maintained, and its vents do not feedback in through open windows.

14.1 Ensure that filters are cleaned and replaced in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions by a competent person.

14.2 Keep the workplace well ventilated by natural or mechanical means to reduce the SARS-CoV-2 viral load

#### **15. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

15.1 The Dr NDZ municipality will check regularly on the National Department of Health, National Institute of Communicable Diseases and the National Institute for Occupational Health whether any additional PPE is required or recommended in any guidelines given the nature of the workplace or the nature of an employee’s duties.

#### **16. OBLIGATIONS**

11.1 This policy does not reduce the existing obligations of the Dr NDZ municipality in terms of OHS Act nor prevent the Dr NDZ municipality from implementing more stringent measures in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

#### **17.COUNCIL APPROVAL AND EFFECTIVE DATE**

Approval of Policy by Council and Effective date: -----

MUNICIPAL MANAGER

  
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DATE

30/05/2023  
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