



ADVISORY ON SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES AT THE WORKPLACE

1. On 13 March 2020, the Ministry of Health (MOH) announced various social distancing measures to be taken to reduce the risk of local spread of COVID-19, including at workplaces. Such measures are to limit large crowds gathering in close proximity over prolonged duration.

Social distancing measures at the workplace

2. The tripartite partners – the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) – encourage employers to adopt social distancing measures at the workplace, where practicable, to provide a safe working environment for their employees. Employees are reminded to practice social responsibility by observing good personal hygiene, monitoring their own health conditions and staying at home to rest if unwell.

A. Work from home

3. Employers are encouraged to adopt telecommuting or videoconferencing to allow employees to work from home. Special attention should be paid to vulnerable employees (e.g. older employees, pregnant employees and employees who have underlying medical conditions) to enable them to work from home where feasible. Measures could include reviewing the work processes and providing the necessary IT equipment to employees.

B. Other arrangements

4. There are job roles or functions where it is not feasible for the employee to work from home, such as frontline operations and fieldwork at construction sites, shipyards or plants. Other arrangements apart from telecommuting are possible and should be considered:

- a. Reduce duration and proximity of physical interactions: If there is a need for physical meetings, the number of attendees could be limited and the duration shortened. They could also be dispersed to more than one meeting venue, and linked up through video-conferencing or tele-conferencing. Where possible, employers could also provide for wider physical spacing (of at least 1m apart) for work stations and between seats in meeting rooms.
- b. Stagger working hours: Employers are encouraged to implement staggered working hours where feasible to reduce possible congregation of employees at common spaces such as entrances/exits, lifts, pantries/canteens etc. and allow employees to commute to and from work at off-peak hours. For example, if the normal working hours are from 9am to 6pm, employers can stagger reporting times at one-hour intervals between 7.30 am and 10.30 am, with corresponding staggered timings for end of work. Timings of lunch and other breaks can also be staggered.
- c. Defer or scale down non-critical events: There may be other workplace activities which involve close and prolonged contact amongst participants which are not critical to business operations, such as welfare activities or celebratory functions. If these events cannot be

deferred, employers should limit these to no more than 250 participants at any point in time and put in place precautionary measures such as temperature/health screening and online registration. During such events, employers should reduce the crowding of participants and improve ventilation where possible. For example, participants could be seated at least 1m apart, and be advised to reduce contact with others (e.g. avoid shaking hands).

- d. Implement or enhance shift arrangements: For suitable workplace settings such as in manufacturing, employers can consider deploying employees in shifts, if such arrangements are not yet in place, while extending operational hours to maintain production output.¹ Employers should consider clear separation of employees on different shifts, such as implementing human traffic management measures and stepping up cleaning of common areas during shift changeovers.
5. Prior to implementing the above measures, employers should clearly communicate and explain them to employees. Unionised companies should engage their unions on such arrangements.
6. For further queries, please contact:

a. Ministry of Manpower

MOM Contact Centre, Tel: (65) 6438 5122

Online Enquiry via this link: www.mom.gov.sg/feedback

Website: www.mom.gov.sg

b. Ministry of Health

MOH General Hotline, Tel: (65) 6325 9220

Online Enquiry via this link: www.crms.moh.gov.sg/modfeedback.aspx

Website: www.moh.gov.sg

¹ Employers will still be required to comply with the provisions in the Employment Act (EA) on working hour limits (e.g. hours of work excluding breaks cannot exceed 12 hours in a day) for employees covered under Part IV of the EA.