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DTI and DOLE issue Supplemental Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19

On August 14, 2020, the Department of Trade and Industry (“DTI”) and the Department of Labor and Employment (“DOLE”) released Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04 or the Supplemental Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19 (“Supplemental Guidelines”). This issuance shall apply to all private establishments, regardless of economic activity, including those located inside special economic zones and under the jurisdiction of Investment Promotion Agencies.

The Supplemental Guidelines introduced new measures intended to minimize the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Below is a tabular comparison of the salient points of: (a) the DTI-DOLE Interim Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19 (“Interim Guidelines”) dated April 30, 2020; and (b) the Supplemental Guidelines:

	INTERIM GUIDELINES dated APRIL 30, 2020	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDELINES dated AUGUST 14, 2020
Protocols prior to entry into the workplace		
Masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All individuals are required to wear face masks at all times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All individuals are required to wear face masks at all times. Masks with vents are prohibited. Face masks should be provided by employers.
Face Shields		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face shields are also required and must be worn together with face masks when interacting with other individuals. These may be removed according to demands of work.
Detection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The temperature of all employers and workers must be checked and recorded in the daily Health Symptoms Questionnaire, which must be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upon entering the building premises/workplaces, employees shall accomplish the Health Declaration Form, as provided by the government, or any digital iteration thereof. This form shall be submitted to the Human Resources department for appropriate action and storage, and with compliance to the Data Privacy Act.

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	submitted to the designated safety officer prior to entry.	
Isolation and Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the person's temperature is above 37.5°C, or if their responses in the questionnaire need further evaluation, they shall be placed in an isolation area and should not be allowed to enter the premises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large and medium private establishments are encouraged to designate an isolation area other than company clinic. If there are individuals displaying symptoms, they must be directed to appropriate health system entry points such as barangay health centers, infirmaries, private clinics/hospitals or telehealth consultation. Employers shall establish referral networks.
Shuttle Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If feasible, employers shall provide shuttle services and/or decent accommodation on near-site location to lessen travel and people movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large and medium-sized private establishments are enjoined to provide shuttle services. Minimum public health standards (such as the wearing of use of face masks and face shields) should be observed in the shuttles.
Protocols while inside the workplace		
Disinfecting, Sanitation, and Washing Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are required to be made available to all employees, clients, and visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These should be placed in strategic locations There should be display of signages, visual cues, and reminders to practice proper handwashing and other hygiene behaviors for all individuals inside the workplace.
Adequate Ventilation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate ventilation should be strictly enforced inside the workplace and inside the shuttle.
Minimizing Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people inside enclosed spaces shall be limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will depend on the risk classification of workplace locality. The following restrictions shall be observed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10% of seating capacity for high/moderate risk areas or confined spaces; and 50% of seating capacity for low-risk areas or open areas.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safety officer may also determine the maximum number of employees allowed to stay at any given time.
Meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eating in communal areas is discouraged. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If not possible, physical distancing shall still be maintained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers shall adopt staggered meal schedules to avoid eating in communal areas. Dining in canteens are allowed as long as physical distancing is observed.
Mandatory advocacy awareness raising programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers shall provide the necessary company policies for the prevention and control of COVID-19, including a policy for COVID-19 testing, in consultation with workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to enforce the Supplemental Guidelines, the Occupation Safety and Health (“OSH”) Committee is required to facilitate webinars, virtual lectures, training on prevention and control of COVID-19, frequent updates on relevant information wherein employees and management shall be required to attend.
Treatment of Most-at-risk employees, or the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Senior citizens Pregnant women Individuals w/ underlying health conditions And those below 21 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly encouraged to be in alternative working arrangements, preferably work-from-home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They shall continue to observe work-from-home arrangements. If they are required to report for work, they must provide a certificate of fit-to-work from an OSH personnel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They may stay in the workplace for a limited number of hours.
Management of Asymptomatic and Symptomatic Employees in the Workplace		
Access to Health Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers shall enhance the health insurance provision for workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to previous measures, employers shall ensure that employees have access to telemedicine services. Large and medium private establishments are encouraged to provide their own telemedicine services, in the absence of health maintenance organization.

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Contact Tracing among Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers must assist the DOH and Local Government Unit contact tracing team by helping identify any persons at the workplace who may have had close contacts with the confirmed case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to previous guidelines, employers shall conduct contract tracing within the workplace to identify close contacts. The workplace CCTV may be used to determine close contacts.
Contact Tracing of Customers and Visitors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers and visitors shall also be required to accomplish a Contact Tracing Form. This shall be surrendered to the Human Resource Officer for future reference and safekeeping.
COVID-19 Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing is only an option for employers. Testing kits used and procured shall be the responsibility of the employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The following may undergo RT-PCR Testing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. <i>At least once every four weeks:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. All employees in hospitality and tourism sectors in tourist zones as identified by the Department of Tourism II. <i>Every three months:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. All employees of manufacturing companies and public service providers b. Frontline and economic priority worker, defined as those who: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Work in high-priority sectors, both public and private 2) Have high interaction with and exposure to the public 3) Live or work in Special Concern Areas The testing facilities shall utilize the appropriate Philhealth benefits, or benefits provided by health maintenance organizations or private Health Insurance for COVID-19 testing to reimburse the cost of testing.
Treatment of Symptomatic Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worker shall immediately proceed to the isolation area. Company protocols for transport for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers who are symptomatic and their close contacts must undergo RT-PCR testing. Employers shall inform the LGU's having jurisdiction over the workplace and respective residence/s of the symptomatic employees

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	<p>suspect COVID-19 cases and PCR Testing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospital will report to Department of Health for COVID-19 suspect. 	<p>and close contacts before testing for monitoring purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral of symptomatic individuals shall be coordinated to nearest health care facility Symptomatic employees with travel/exposure to COVID-19 shall undergo 14-day quarantine. They shall present a Certificate of Quarantine Completion from the step-down care facility or local health office Employers shall ensure that close contacts of employees whose RT-PCR test confirmed positive undergo a 14-day quarantine period.
Treatment of Asymptomatic Employees with Close Contact		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asymptomatic employees with close contact may either undergo: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> temporary treatment and monitoring in a facility for 14 days or home quarantine, with dedicated bathroom and isolation, for 14 days If they remain asymptomatic for 14 days, they may return to work without need for a test. They may be cleared by the local health officer or OSH physician.
Disinfection/Closure of Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the event that a worker is suspected as having COVID-19, workplace shall be decontaminated with appropriate disinfectant. After decontamination of the work area, work can resume after 24 hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If there is one confirmed case, the workplace shall be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> disinfected with an appropriate disinfectant solution; locked down for 24 hours prior to disinfection; during disinfection, all doors and windows should be opened to maximize ventilation; only opened 24 hours after the disinfection. In situations where there may be two or more confirmed cases from the same area, or what is referred to as “case clustering”, employers are encouraged to develop their own policies in order to ensure continuity of operations. The workplace must abide by the directives or advice of the local government unit, if applicable.

Previous guidelines continue to be in force, which include the following:

1. Providing referrals for psychosocial support for employees;

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2. Enforcement and monitoring of the OSH committee on compliance with the minimum public health standards and protocols;
3. Notification and reporting of COVID-19 test results to the Department of Health; and
4. Submission of the Work Accident/Illness Report, or the WAIR COVID-19 form, to DOLE

The DOLE, DTI, and concerned local government unit's health and sanitation offices are authorized to conduct inspection and post-audit mechanisms to monitor the workplace's compliance with the Supplemental Guidelines.

In case it is discovered that the workplace has violated the Supplemental Guidelines, it may be temporarily closed until full compliance is observed.

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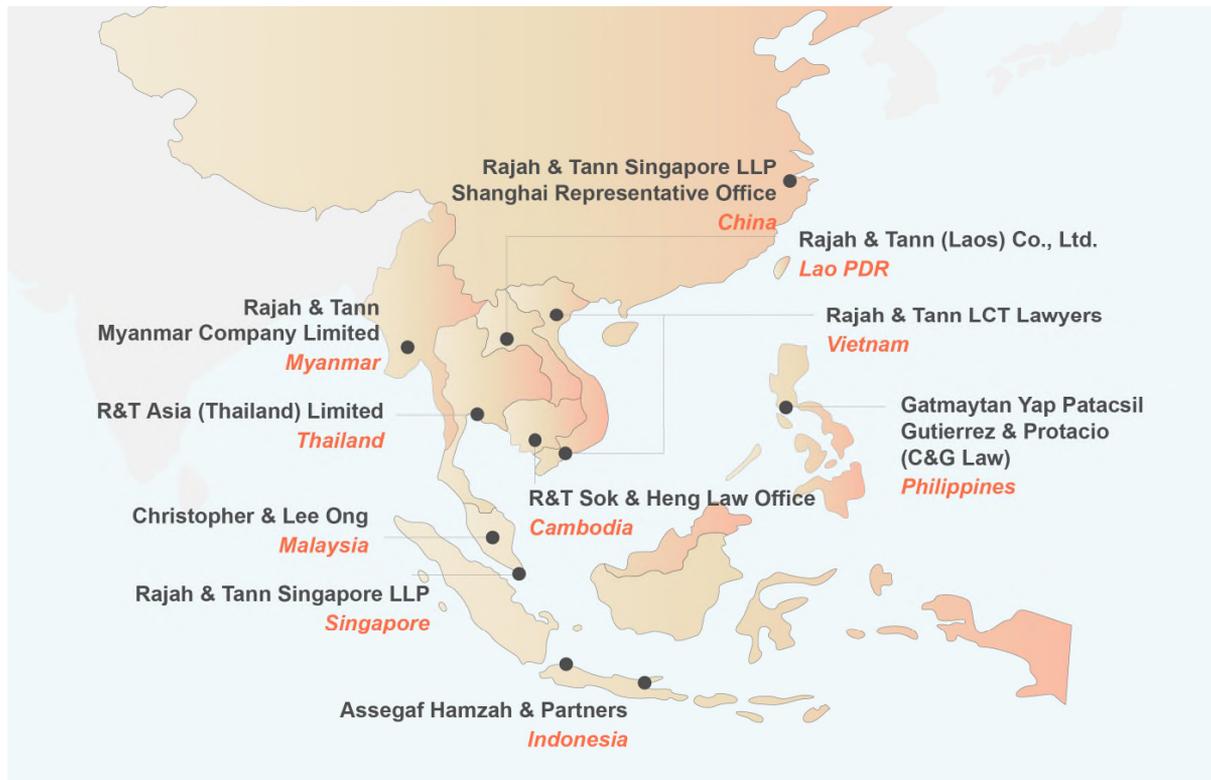
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