

URGENT ADVISORY - CORONAVIRUS DISEASE COVID-19

19 March 2020

The South African Forum of Civil Engineering Contractors (SAFCEC) takes note of the concern regarding the spread of the Coronavirus disease COVID-19 declared pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and in particular, President Cyril Ramaphosa's televised address declaring a National State of Disaster.

SAFCEC supports NEDLAC who is committing to save lives and the economy to invest in the health and safety of workers and agreed on cooperation and collaboration in six (6) action areas: -

1. Enhancing the public health further response;
2. Containing the virus;
3. Security of health suppliers and medical equipment;
4. Workplace adaption, e.g. manage issues like short time, shift work, changing working hours and lunch breaks to reduce too many workers congregating in one place;
5. Support to workers and companies who are negatively impacted by the virus; and
6. A need for a national medical response team.

In addition to NEDLAC recommendations and company level specific initiatives, there is an opportunity for government to launch the biggest and unprecedented COVID-19 Volunteer Campaign, to train and equip volunteers to perform screening of the virus on a massive scale, under the auspices of the Department of Health and officially designated institutions.

Given the nature of the construction industry and its strict health and safety regulatory environment in which we have always and continue to operate, we are an industry that is already well positioned to deal with such an unprecedented global pandemic. Personal protective equipment and trained health and safety practitioners within our member organisations - driven by existing health, safety, environment, risk and quality policies and procedures - already exist in our industry, all of which is prescribed by the **Occupational Health and Safety Act 1993** and in particular, Section 8 of the Act that places the onus on employers to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of their employees. The **Construction Health and Safety Accord** signed by Government, Organised Labour and Organised Business further reinforces these considerations. To access both these regulations, visit the SHERQ section under SAFCEC Services at www.safcec.org.za. Also available to members in this section is **Government Notice No. 318 Regulations Issued in Terms of Section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act of 2002** as gazetted on 18 March 2020 setting out the necessary steps to prevent an escalation of disaster or to alleviate, contain and minimise the effects of the COVID-19 disaster.

To ensure and maintain a safe and healthy working environment for employees and members of the public, SAFCEC advises all members and the industry to assess the workplace risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, giving due consideration to the response measures announced in the president's speech. Companies should therefore **determine mitigation measures to minimize risk as far as reasonably practicable, allowing work to continue safely and without harm to all relevant stakeholders, including clients, employees, contractors, suppliers, manufacturers and all interested and affected parties.**

Recognising that the public health system will not be able to respond to every possible COVID-19 incident identified in the workplace, SAFCEC recommends that government adequately trains (directly or indirectly) identified company personnel to perform daily workplace COVID-19 symptom screening. Government should

furthermore provide compulsory medical screening equipment in addition to the prescribed personal protective equipment (PPE) to those assigned to perform the screening. Companies shall keep record of all such screening, and should an employee show any positive symptoms related to COVID-19, then such an employee will be quarantined, and the **Department of Health Hotline 0800 029 999** immediately contacted. All identified cases should simultaneously be reported to the **SAFCEC National Office Safety, Health, Environment, Risk and Quality (SHERQ) Advisory Service** at sherq@safcec.org.za or +2711 409 0900. These recommendations are for purposes of a coordinated approach and common action to deal with identifying COVID-19 cases and risks within the industry and communities. South African contractors operating outside of the country are advised to contact the respective **South African Embassies** should the need arise.

SAFCEC encourages all members to obtain relevant information, recommendations and topics regarding the COVID-19 pandemic from the World Health Organization's (WHO) website (www.who.int) for use in the education of employees, and to display the information in prominent areas within every workplace. Such information should also be included in health and safety briefings both on project sites as well as offices. Detailed information on symptoms and protection can be found on the Corona Virus Q&A section of the WHO website (direct link: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses#>).

SAFCEC advises its members and the industry as a whole to acknowledge the associated risks of the virus, act accordingly, and to put into place extraordinary health and safety measures. SAFCEC members and the industry as a whole are further advised to avoid disinformation in social media and to reference the following sources for official, accurate information and updates: -

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| ▪ The World Health Organisation | www.who.int | Twitter @who |
| ▪ The National Institute of Communicable Diseases | www.nicd.co.za | Twitter @nicd_sa |
| ▪ National Department of Health | www.health.gov.za | Twitter @HealthZA |
| ▪ The Presidency | | Twitter @PresidencyZA |

As the industry body, SAFCEC wishes to ensure its members that it will continue to keep members abreast of all developments surrounding the pandemic and associated protocols that may arise from government and / or the ministry of health, through its SHERQ Advisory Service. Any concerns may be addressed to the SHERQ Advisory Service, as we continue to gather information on the impact that the virus may or may not have on the ability of members to safely carry out civil engineering contracts and projects.

For information dissemination purposes, the following: -

What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease was unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

Relevant Points from President Cyril Ramaphosa's Covid-19 pandemic speech: -

"Following an extensive analysis of the progression of the disease worldwide and in South Africa, Cabinet has decided on the

following measures:

- Firstly, to limit contact between persons who may be infected and South African citizens.
- We are imposing a travel ban on foreign nationals from high-risk countries such as Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and China as from 18 March 2020.
- We have cancelled visas to visitors from those countries from today and previously granted visas are hereby revoked.
- South African citizens are advised to refrain from all forms of travel to or through the European Union, United States, United Kingdom and other identified high-risk countries such as China, Iran and South Korea. This is effective immediately.
- Government will continue to regularly issue travel alerts referring to specific cities, countries or regions as the situation evolves based on the risk level.
- Any foreign national who has visited high-risk countries in the past 20 days will be denied a visa.
- South African citizens returning from high-risk countries will be subjected to testing and self-isolation or quarantine on return to South Africa.
- Travelers from medium-risk countries - such as Portugal, Hong Kong and Singapore - will be required to undergo high intensity screening.
- All travelers who have entered South Africa from high-risk countries since mid-February will be required to present themselves for testing.
- We will strengthen surveillance, screening and testing measures at OR Tambo, Cape Town and King Shaka International Airports.
- South Africa has 72 ports of entry in the country which are land, sea and air ports. Of the 53 land ports, 35 will be shut down with effect from Monday 16 March. 2 of the 8 sea ports will be closed for passengers and crew changes.
- Effective immediately, all non-essential travel for all spheres of government outside of the Republic is prohibited.
- We further discourage all non-essential domestic travel, particularly by air, rail, taxis and bus.
- Secondly, it is essential therefore that we minimize the risk of the spread of this virus by limiting contact amongst groups of people.
- While we appreciate the economic, religious, and cultural significance of social and community gatherings, the coronavirus is spread through contact between persons. As we have said before, the current circumstances require extraordinary measures to curb the spread of infections.
- Countries that have heeded the call to implement these radical measures, have fared much better than those that do not. Therefore, to encourage social distancing Cabinet has decided on these additional measures:
 - Gatherings of more than 100 people will be prohibited.
 - Mass celebrations of upcoming national days such as Human Rights Day and other large government events will be cancelled.
 - Where small gatherings are unavoidable, organisers will need to put in place stringent measures of prevention and control.
 - Schools will be closed from Wednesday, 18 March, and will remain closed until after the Easter Weekend. To compensate, the mid-year school holidays will be shortened by a week.
 - Government is working closely with colleges, universities and other public facilities such as Parliament, prisons, police stations and military installations to intensify hygiene control.
 - Visits to all correctional centres are suspended for 30 days with immediate effect.
- Government is aware of the confirmed case of a student who has tested positive for the coronavirus at Wits University. Those who have been in contact with the student will be quarantined. The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation is consulting with vice chancellors of universities and colleges across the country and will soon be announcing measures in this regard.
- We call on all businesses including mining, retail, banking, farming to ensure that they take all necessary measures to intensify hygiene control.
- We also call on the management of malls, entertainment centres and other places frequented by large numbers of people to bolster their hygiene control.
- Thirdly, to further strengthen our health response:
- Government is strengthening its surveillance and testing systems.



SAFCEC
READY TO DELIVER

National Office

12 Skeen Boulevard, Bedfordview, 2007 | PO Box 644, Bedfordview, 2008
Tel +27 11 409 0900 | Fax +27 11 450 1715
info@safcec.org.za | www.safcec.org.za

- We are in process of identifying isolation and quarantine sites in each district and metro.
- Capacity is being increased at designated hospitals in all provinces.
- We are also increasing the capacity of existing contact tracing processes.
- We are partnering with the private sector to set up a national tracking, tracing and monitoring system of all people infected with the coronavirus and those they have been in contact with.
- We are undertaking a mass communication campaign on good hygiene and effective prevention behaviour.
- Therefore, we are calling on everyone to:
 - Wash their hands frequently with soap and water or hand sanitisers for at least 20 seconds;
 - Cover their nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow;
 - Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.”

Webster Mabe
Chief Executive Officer

Refiloe Mallela
President