

# BACK TO WORK PROTOCOL

DUBAI GOVERNMENT HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

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## Introduction:

Rapid developments in the emerging COVID-19 pandemic crisis have introduced a radical shift in the business practices across the globe particularly how governments function and offer services. Governments and international organizations have asked citizens around the world to adopt social distancing as the necessary protocol in the past few months after the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic besides implementing a number of other work-related precautionary measures to restrict the spread of the disease. The world of business was severely affected during this crisis, and therefore, all segments of society - including companies, institutions, employers and governments must play a role in protecting employees, workers, their families and the community as a whole. The newly acquired awareness level based on the COVID-19 pandemic experience has also reshaped the work culture by changing the ways of doing business. One example of this is widely used innovative ways to bring employer and employees together through online work environment. Therefore, job tasks are performed without having to come to the workplace. Precautionary measures have achieved a sufficient reduction in COVID-19 infection rates, and various entities began to allow a gradual resumption of work activities, gradually starting with actions deemed necessary to protect health and the economy. However, regardless of how work activities are resumed, it is very likely that some precautionary measures will remain in place for some time to avoid a sharp increase in infection rates. As part of Dubai Government Human Resources Department's efforts to develop proactive policies in government agencies, the Department has prepared a Back-To-Work Protocol for government employees. This protocol includes guidelines and precautionary measures in line with the best practices and international standards to be followed when employees start resuming work.

This Protocol aims to:

1. Highlight the roles and responsibilities for those involved in implementing it.
2. Ensure mental wellbeing of employees through enhanced sense of security after returning to work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.



## Pre-Work (Home)

### **Ensure peace of mind:**

- Be fully confident that government departments are ready to welcome back employees after taking all necessary precautions to sterilize the place and office spaces.
- Promote a sense of security through self-education and replacing negative thoughts with positive ones allowing to ease tension and resuming work effectively.
- Adopt reliable sources of information and avoid rumors.
- Follow instructions and guidelines issued by the relevant authorities and maintain a healthy daily routine such as getting enough hours of sleep and maintaining regular physical activity.

## Actions

### 1. Personal Measures



Pre-Work (Home)



#### Department

- Ensure all employees use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as face masks and hand disinfectants.



#### Employees

- Stay home and restrict your outdoor movement when experiencing any Flu like symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, body aches and headaches.
- Inform your workplace if you have been in contact with a confirmed COVID19 case and provide necessary medical documents.
- Wash hands frequently with water and soap for a period of no less than 20 seconds.
- Ensure covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow.
- Practice social distancing by keeping a distance of at least 2 meters from other people.
- Wear face mask before leaving home and avoid shaking hands while greeting others.
- Inform your supervisor/HR Department if you experience any infection like symptom.

## Actions

### 2. Test & Isolate



Pre-Work (Home)



#### Department

- Dedicate a communication channel / phone number for employees to report the Flu or illness symptoms that they might experience.

### 3. Increase Awareness

- Use online channels to spread awareness and mental wellbeing
- Update information about the mechanism of work and new government directives.
- Develop online modules and trainings to ensure employees have acquired reasonable understanding of new guidelines and safety procedures.
- Proactively survey employees to gather feedback on measures being adopted and to inform about new workplace safety measures.
- Follow up on decisions and circulars issued by the authorities on dealing with any new developments regarding the pandemic.



#### Employees

- Visit the doctor and get the necessary treatment and DO NOT resume work unless you are given permission/clearance.
- Complete and submit any online surveys or trainings and/or reading materials on safety measures as and when requested.
- Follow the instructions/guidelines issued by the authorities or any measures issued by the management mission/clearance.



## Travel to & from work

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### Ensure peace of mind:

- Ensure that your car has all precautionary measures and personal protection equipment for any emergency on the road. This will help you feel safe and enable you to avoid anxiety on the way to work.
- Keep calm when driving and avoid stress.
- Listen to radio channels to reduce stress levels keeping you calm while driving.

\*This is also applicable with (Leaving work for home)

## Actions

# 1. Social distancing - (Space & Timing)



Travel to  
& from work



### Department

- Encourage the use of private transportation.
- Restrict seating in Department operated shuttles to ensure social distancing.
- Provide disinfecting kits and PPE to shuttle drivers and disinfect shuttle vehicle after each trip if possible.
- Check temperatures of employees prior to boarding the shuttle to work and ensure that it is less than 37.5 degrees.
- Implement a 'Flexible Commuting' policy for all employees to avoid rush hours.
- Provide separate points of entry and exit to minimize physical contact between employees.



### Employees

- Use of mask is mandatory always use it, Social distancing is critical, whether you're waiting for your commute or seated in the vehicle.
- While commuting in your own car or car-pooling with others make sure you follow the instructions issued by the competent authorities.
- It is recommended to let the windows be open at least every 15 min.

## Actions

### 2. Test & isolate



Travel to  
& from work



#### Department

- Conduct temperature checks of employees before entering the workplace and ensure it is less than 37.5 degrees.
- Provide an isolation room for those infected or suspected of having the virus.
- Communicate with the Health Authority in cases of any suspicion.

### 3. Increase Awareness

- Hang posters in the Department operated shuttles on instructions for preventing the spread of the virus.



#### Employees

- Self evaluation of symptoms and inform the direct supervisor or the representative from the Human Resources Department in their organization.
  
- Read posters and follow instructions mentioned above on methods of prevention and maintaining safety (use of masks, social distancing and keep hand sanitizer).

## Actions

### 4. Leaving home for work



Travel to  
& from work



#### Department

- Implement a 'Flexible Commuting' policy for all employees to avoid rush hours and stagger entry and exit and ensure non-crowding.

### 5. Leaving work for home



#### Employees

- Self-evaluation of symptoms and inform the direct supervisor or the representative from the Human Resources Department in their organization.
- Get your temperature checked before using the Department transport.
- Disinfect shuttle vehicle after each trip if possible and provide disinfecting kits and PPE.
- Maintain 2 meters distance between individuals lining up for leaving work to ensure social distancing.



## At Workplace

### **Ensure peace of mind:**

- Adhere to hygiene guidelines as maintaining hygiene has shown to enhance peace of mind and increase a person's confidence in dealing with the community in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Respecting feelings of others who have contracted the disease, they need sympathy and understanding; do not hold them accountable for their suffering.
- Not to panic or spread rumors negatively affecting the work environment.

## Actions

### 1. Increase controls at entry points



At Workplace



#### Department

- Separate points of entry and exit to minimize physical contact between employees if possible.
- Prevent visitors and contractors who do not have permits and non-employees from entering unless obtaining an entry permit, checking body temperature and making sure that do not have flu to protect those who come in contact with them.
- Reduce the capacity of elevators by using floor signs inside and outside the elevator to ensure social distancing.
- Determine a central point in the workplace with means of sterilization to receive parcels from delivery service companies and do not allow delivery company employees to enter the offices.
- Reduce reception of visitors from outside the entity as much as possible and preferably meet them through pre-determined appointments to ensure social distancing compliance.
- Organize reception of customers in service centers, while maintaining social distancing.



#### Employees

- All employees are mandated to wear masks at all the times in the building/office from entry, removal of mask is prohibited all the times.
- Failure to comply will prevent entry to the building / office.
- Maintain 2-meter distance between individuals lining up for entry and it is recommended to use floor marking ensuring social distancing.

## Actions

### 2. Office sanitization



At Workplace



#### Department

- Clean all the common areas of the building/office premises including entrances routinely and clean toilets after each use, at least once every hour.
- Allow use of cafeteria and pantries by individuals for food and beverage ensuring social distancing.
- Frequent cleaning of high-traffic areas / surfaces (e.g., lobbies, communal tables, cafeterias, bathrooms, elevators, stairways).
- Clearly mark the surfaces that are frequently contacted by employees to raise caution level.
- All coffee stations should follow 2m social distancing guidelines avoiding queues, no water dispensers allowed.
- Provide single use and disposables water bottles for employees.
- Provide cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, and sanitation supplies for all employees.
- Installation of hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the building, disinfecting wipes should be available in all meeting rooms and adjacent areas.
- implement a clean desk policy to support overall office health and safety with daily cleaning and disinfection after the work day.
- Common facilities such as prayer rooms will remain closed, until further notice.



#### Employees

- Do not use anyone's phone, desk area or work tools.
- Use hand sanitizers placed in the elevator after touching the buttons, and using common devices such as printers and the like.
- Make sure you discard used face masks in closed bins located for this purpose.

## Actions

### 3. Provision of masks and hand sanitizers



At Workplace



#### Department

- Provide spare mask for employees and office assistants .
- Masks should be provided to all the front line employees on daily basis.
- Ensure protective clothing and PPE (including masks/face coverings) are not shared among employees or visitors.



#### Employees

- All employees must wear face masks all times once they enter into workplace.

## Actions

### 4. Physical Distancing



At Workplace



#### Department

- Redo office seating to prohibit employees to sit directly in front of each other without 2 meter distance in case of cubic seating offices and open plan offices.
- No gatherings and events permitted.
- Continue holding videoconferencing and remote working meetings.
- Rearrange seats in waiting areas and customer service centers to ensure social distancing.
- Allow different lunch hours for each department/section to avoid over crowded cafeteria / pantries at the same time.
- Set up partitions on dining tables (If applicable).
- Maintain the rules of social distancing in the cafeteria and eating places.
- Swap self-service lunch options like buffets for pre-packaged and portioned meals.



#### Employees

- Maintain social distancing protocol at all time.
- All employees must wear face masks at all times at workplace.

## Actions

### 5. Physical distancing at work place



At Workplace



#### Department

- In the first stage to return to work, it is advisable that each entity distributes employees in two working shifts, first team to work at office for 1 week and second team for the week after, alternatively.
- It is advisable to use flexible working hours to improve physical distance at work place.

### 6. Valet parking services

- Ensure that the precautionary measures are in place for valet parking for employees, customers and visitors during this period.



#### Employees

- Comply with the instructions and conditions followed by the authorities or the entity.

## Actions

# 7. Communication



At Workplace



### Department

- Clearly identify Single Point of Contact (SPOC) that employees can approach if in distress or to report suspected cases. The number of the SPOC should be announced internally to all employees.
- Hang posters at entry points as part of broader information and awareness campaign.
- Ensure that the contact information of all employees are up-to-date.
- All safety guidelines must be communicated to employees and visitors and should be placed in visible areas.
- Publish an updated Q&A list; issued by the authorities and circulate it to employees.



### Employees

- Adhere to the contact point designated by the entity to report infected or suspicious cases.
- Read and adhere to all published instructions and posters.

## Actions

# 8. Dealing with infected and suspected cases



At Workplace



### Department

- All infected and suspected cases of employees should be granted a paid sick leave according to medical report.
- Isolation room to be provided for suspect cases.
- In case any employee develops any symptoms while at work, they can be moved to the isolation room till medical support arrives.
- Provide an additional isolation room other than that designated for employees, for infected or suspected cases of visitors or customers and transfer them to it until the medical support arrives.
- SPOC can contact the Dubai Health Authority hotline 800342 to report a COVID-19 suspected case.



### Employees

- Make a note about contact person specified by the entity to inform in case of being infected or suspecting a case in the surroundings.
- Report infected or suspected cases, whether from employees, customers or visitors.

## Actions

# 9. Implement strict travel policies



At Workplace



### Department

- Prohibit non-essential travel.
- Follow the approved procedures for those coming from abroad.
- Disclosure of contacts with whom the employee resides in the event of their return from abroad.



### Employees

- Employees must report all travel trips they are taking or wish to take.

## General procedures for government departments to support employee mental wellbeing during all stages:

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- Promote pride among employees for returning to work and their valuable contribution for their entity and Dubai Government
- Listen and understand to the needs of employees returning to work.
- Provide a counselling helpline for emotional assistance in case of stress symptoms affecting daily activities or provide assistance to those who have been isolated.
- Increase daily communication between officials and employees through new technologies that are appropriate to current circumstances or through social media, thereby enhancing the sense of security.
- Disseminate positive news that encourage employees to continue working normally.

## Authorities Concerned With Occupational Health & Safety Directives

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**National Emergency  
Crisis And Disasters  
Management Authority**



**Dubai Health Authority**



**Ministry of Health and  
Prevention**

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