COVID-19 WORKPLACE INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL POLICY
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is cognizant of its responsibility to ensure the safety and health of all our employees during the COVID-19 pandemic and strives to be safe while maintaining its operations during this time. As such, this **COVID-19 Workplace Infection Prevention and Control Policy** document was developed to support all employees in implementing and adhering to risk control measures that will reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, as far as is reasonably practicable.

This Policy is based on information and advice from the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT), Ministry of Health, as well as other reputable organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA). This Policy is subject to change and will be amended accordingly based on the recommendations and advice from the relevant organizations. Employees are also encouraged to keep up to date with the latest measures introduced by the Ministry of Health and any advice issued as a result.

**Objective**

To provide guidance and direction on the implementation of procedures, practices and preventative measures geared towards controlling the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

**Scope**

This Policy is applicable to all Divisions/Units, employees and workplaces under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. Given the uniqueness of some Divisions/Units in their operations, staffing, infrastructure etc., this Policy should be implemented to an extent which is feasible and appropriate to the respective workplace.

**Responsibilities**

**Directors/Managers** are required to assess the risks associated with COVID-19 in their workplaces and implement safe work practices to limit the exposure and spread of the virus. Assistance in assessing risks can obtained from the MALF Health and Safety Unit.

Directors/Managers must be familiar with this Policy, act in a responsible manner in its implementation and set a good example. This involves practicing good hygiene, physical distancing and other safety practices to prevent the spread of the virus. Directors/Managers must encourage this same behaviour from all employees.
Strong communication and collaboration between management and employees is key in protecting against the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. As such, Directors/Managers must establish/re-establish their Health and Safety Committees which would have oversight to plan, implement, and monitor infection prevention and control measures as well as take action to ensure that these measures are maintained or improved. The Committee must comprise of both management and worker representatives and would be required to meet on a regular basis. Status Reports or Minutes of the meetings must be submitted to the Permanent Secretary through the Head of the Division/Unit.

**Employees** are responsible for adhering to the various COVID-19 measures implemented by the Ministry/Division and are required to cooperate with management in achieving the objective of this Policy. Employees must take reasonable care of their own health and safety, become aware and understand the required safe work practices. Additionally, employees are encouraged to provide feedback, report on any shortfalls and make suggestions for improvements to any member of the Health and Safety Committee.

**Service providers, visitors and members of the public** will be required to adhere to the measures implemented by the Ministry/Division in addition to complying with the established guidelines and regulations issued by the Ministry of Health.

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the biggest challenges faced globally and overcoming this challenge will only be possible if we all act in a responsible and cooperative manner to stop the spread of this disease.

Approved By: ..........................................................  Date: ..........................................................

Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
2. BACKGROUND

2.1 What is the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections. Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. The Official name for the Virus is called: *Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)*

The infectious disease that it causes is called: *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)*

2.2 What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported, ranging from mild symptoms to severe symptoms. The main symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Other symptoms recently added to the list by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include chills, muscle pain, sore throat and new loss of taste and smell.

*Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*
Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. In more severe cases it can cause:

- Pneumonia
- Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
- Kidney Failure
- Death

Groups at higher risk of illness include persons who have or are:

- An age of 60 years and over
- Asthma and chronic respiratory diseases
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Weakened immune systems
- Cancer
- Chronic liver disease
- Pregnant

2.3 How does the virus spread?

When COVID-19 positive persons cough or exhale they release droplets of infected fluid which fall unto nearby surfaces. People could catch COVID-19 by two means:

1) Touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
2) If they are standing within one meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them.

The virus enters the body through the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth and it spreads in a similar way to the flu.
3. INFECTION AND PREVENTION CONTROL MEASURES

The Hierarchy of Risk Control Measures

Infection prevention and control measures will be implemented using the hierarchy of risk controls which consists of five (5) ways to eliminate or mitigate a hazard (coronavirus SARS-CoV-2), with those control measures at the top being more effective and preferred than those at the bottom. A combination of all the controls must be considered to ensure that the risk of exposure is mitigated at its lowest possible level.

![Hierarchy of Controls](source)

*Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*

3.1 Elimination and Substitution

Elimination is the best form of risk control, however there is no vaccine to eradicate the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) at this point in time. Substitution involves replacing the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) with something less harmful which is not possible.

3.2 Engineering Controls

Engineering controls involve isolating employees from work-related hazards. In workplaces where they are appropriate, these types of controls reduce exposure to hazards without relying on worker behaviour. Engineering controls for coronavirus include:

- Installing high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters.
- Increasing ventilation rates in the work environment. If possible, increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning units.
- Installing physical barriers, such as clear sneeze guards for front desk staff/receptionist that interact with the public. Barriers should also be erected in office spaces where workers sit very close to each other.
• Installing door stops so that doors can remain open to prevent persons from touching door handles. Security doors should not remain open.

3.3 Administrative Controls

Administrative controls provide the best options for most workplaces and require action by the worker or the employer. Typically, administrative controls are changes in work policy or procedures to reduce or minimize exposure to the virus, many of which includes measures for safe working practices and physical distancing.

3.3.1 Routine Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines cleaning as the removal of germs, dirt and impurities using soap and water. Cleaning does kill germs but reduces the numbers that live on a surface. Disinfection involves using chemicals to kill the germs on surfaces. Common chemicals available in Trinidad and Tobago used to disinfect hard surfaces for the Coronavirus are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disinfectant</th>
<th>Mixture</th>
<th>Contact Time before wiping</th>
<th>Precautions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpired Household Bleach (Sodium Hypochlorite)</td>
<td>5 tablespoons to 1 gallon water or 4 teaspoons per quart (250ml) water. A fresh mixture must be prepared every 24hrs.</td>
<td>5 minute</td>
<td>Never mix bleach with ammonia or other cleanser. Use in a ventilated area. Follow manufacturer’s instructions on label.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol solutions with 70% alcohol are most effective. These include isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol) and ethanol.</td>
<td>Use directly on surface.</td>
<td>30 seconds</td>
<td>Alcohol solutions of 99% are not effective as it evaporates too quickly from the surface. Follow manufacturer’s instructions on label.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not all household disinfectants are effective against the Coronavirus therefore only choose United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved disinfectant labels with claims against emerging viral pathogens (LIST N). Please refer to the EPA’s website link below.

https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

Look at the EPA registration number on the product label and match with the EPA's List N to ensure that the product is effective. The common active ingredients found in these products are:
- Ethanol alcohol (60%-90%)
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Isopropyl alcohol (60%-90%)
- Quaternary Ammonium
- Sodium hypochlorite

The above is not an inclusive list but provides a guide on what products to select. Popular brands available in Trinidad and Tobago include Clorox, Lysol and Simple Green.

Follow product label instructions which contain information for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions that should be taken when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

**Chemicals that are transferred out of its original container into a secondary container must be correctly labelled. As a minimum, the secondary container should display the product name and a hazard statement.**

The Chemical Safety Data sheets for the chemicals used should be obtained and the safe handling, use and storage guidelines outlined in the sheets must be followed.

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**Sanitation of Building/Office Surfaces**

Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment. Current evidence suggests that novel coronavirus may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials.

A surface that is visibly dirty should be cleaned with a mixture of detergent and water in order to remove dirt and particles prior to the application of a disinfectant. Not all areas will need the same level of cleaning and priority should be given to those frequently touched surfaces/objects such as tables, counter tops, door knobs, light switches, handles, desks, shared printers/photocopiers, telephones, remotes, shared keys, handrails, toilets, faucets and sinks. **Frequently touched surfaces should be sanitized every two (2) hours.**

Ensure that contracted janitorial service providers are competent and are aware of the required cleaning and sanitation arrangements for COVID-19.

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**Sanitation of Vehicles**

The Ministry's vehicles are most often used as a shared resource and it is impossible to be sure that there is no risk of exposure to COVID-19 after each use. Clean and sanitise on a regular basis, frequently touched surfaces such as keys, steering wheel, gear shifters, radio, armrest, control buttons, door handles, mirrors, wiper and turn signal stalks, seatbelts, seat adjusters and grab handles.

Be mindful of the disinfecting agents used on vehicles to avoid inadvertently damaging the interior or exterior. Many of the same household cleaners (such as **non-bleach, unscented**,
non-chlorinated disinfectant cleaners and wipes) that kill coronaviruses on hard surfaces can also clean most vehicle interiors without causing damage. The cleaning agent should be tested in an inconspicuous location to ensure that it is not causing any damage.

Vehicles which have left the custody of the Ministry for servicing/maintenance, repairs or any other reason should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised upon its return.

All drivers should also take additional precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19 such as washing hands before and after each journey, use of gloves when re-fueling and sanitising high touch areas at the end of each journey.

All passengers in the vehicle must wear cloth masks and physical distancing should be implemented by limiting the number of passengers in the vehicle. **No more than four persons should be present in a vehicle (Car, SUV, Pick-Up) and they must sit spaced apart. The seating arrangement in the Ministry’s buses must also allow for physical distancing.**

**Tools, Equipment and Devices**

Employees must wash hands prior to handling tools, equipment and other devices. As much as possible; tools, equipment and devices should not be shared, however if they are shared then it must be properly sanitized before and after use. For powered equipment/tools ensure that the power is turned off before cleaning. Soap and water can be used to remove visible dirt; stains etc. before disinfecting with an appropriate cleaning product and always wash hands after completion.

**3.3.2 Hand Hygiene Practices**

**Provision of the necessary resources**

Resources must be provided for the promotion of frequent and thorough hand washing for employees and visitors to the offices. These include:

- Hand washing stations
- Good quality soap and running water
- Sufficient supply of disposable paper towels
- No-touch garbage bins

If soap and running water are not immediately available, alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 65% alcohol should be provided in prominent places around the workplace. **Washing hands with soap and water is recommended over the use of hand sanitisers.**

**Hand Washing and Hand Sanitising**

All persons entering the workplace are required to utilise hand washing stations before proceeding further into the establishment.
Handwashing signs are to be posted in restrooms and near handwashing stations to communicate the appropriate method to wash hands.

Employees operating on the field crop stations should have access to water and soap or hand sanitisers.

Ministry vehicles and Travelling Officers must carry water and liquid soap and/or hand sanitizer in their vehicle.

In the absence of handwashing stations, hand sanitisers should be applied similarly to the application of soap for hand washing to ensure that all areas are covered.
The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends hand washing over the use of hand sanitisers.

Repetitive use of hand sanitisers and hand washing can strip the top skin layer leading to a compromise of the skin barrier and, therefore, increases the risk of infection. Additionally, soaps can give rise to irritant hand dermatitis, which presents as dry, flaky, itchy red skin, particularly in the finger web spaces and on the knuckles.

Apply moisturizers to prevent and treat hand dermatitis which help repair damaged outer skin and lock moisture inside. People should apply them repeatedly throughout the day, and whenever the skin feels dry.

3.3.3 Respiratory Etiquette

- Promote respiratory hygiene which includes covering coughs and sneezes.
- Post respiratory hygiene signs throughout the workplace.
- Maintain at least six (6) feet (two arm’s length) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

Source: Australian Government, Department of Health
**Avoid Touching Your Face**

- Your hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose and mouth. From there, the virus can enter the body and cause infection.

**Smartphones**

- Use a slightly damp, soapy microfiber cloth or Clorox Disinfecting Wipes (70% Alcohol) to gently wipe the exterior surfaces of the phone. Avoid getting moisture into any openings and do not submerge your smartphone in any cleaning agent.
- Do not share smartphones with co-workers or other persons.

**Physical Contact**

- The novel coronavirus is transmitted primarily between people, so avoid unnecessary physical contact. Refusing a handshake is not ill-mannered anymore, it is recommended. A friendly wave, peace sign or thumbs-up could be used instead. **Elbow touches should also be avoided as persons may sneeze or cough in the crook of the elbow which can become contaminated with germs.**

**3.3.4 Stay home if you are sick**

Employees who experience a fever (37.3°C or greater) and/or respiratory symptoms while at home should not report to work until they are free of a fever, signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). An employee may also return to work if a doctor determines that the cause of the employee’s symptoms is unrelated to COVID-19 and the doctor indicates such in writing.

Employees who are sick must not handle or come into close contact with any livestock (within the Ministry or external) as there is the possibility of animals becoming infected.

Sick employees will utilize their sick leave, extended sick leave or vacation leave if suffering from COVID-19 symptoms.

**3.3.5 Screening for Symptoms**

Employees/visitors entering the workplace may be screened for COVID-19 symptoms by using no-touch thermometers to measure temperature and a respiratory symptom questionnaire. Employees with a fever, or experiencing coughing or shortness of breath will be sent home.

**3.3.6 Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing means limiting the interaction with each other by staying away six (6) feet from each other whenever possible.
**Visitors**

All non-essential visitors and all children will not be allowed into the facility. Every person that is not a member of staff must be stopped and questioned to determine if access can be permitted.

Visitors must provide their name and contact number which will be recorded in the event that contact tracing has to be undertaken.

The seating arrangements for members of the public/visitors should be spaced six feet apart. Additionally, markings should be installed on the floor six feet apart for visitors waiting to be served. To avoid overcrowding, alternate waiting areas should be set up such as an outdoor tent or an adjacent room. If this is unachievable then visitors should be given a specific time/date to return.

Additional measures to limit members of the public to the facility may include providing drop-off and collection boxes at the entrances of the workplace or making documents available online.

Visitor access through the facility will be limited and where feasible the employee should go directly to the visitor in the reception area and provide the necessary service.

**Meetings**

Face-to-face meetings should be reduced as much as possible and video/telephone conferencing should be increased. Employees must be trained on how to effectively utilize the e-platforms for communication. When not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces. Maintain six feet spacing around meeting tables by removing chairs or marking the locations where persons should sit. Meeting rooms should also be provided with hand sanitisers, and the sharing of pens and documents should be avoided.

**Reduce Employee Numbers**

Establish alternating days or a shift system to reduce the total number of employees in a facility at a given time, allowing them to maintain distance from each another.

Employees who have a higher risk of illness (diabetes, cancer, asthma etc.) are encouraged to inform their supervisor so that an appropriate arrangement can be implemented such as work from home or reduced working hours/days per week.

Where applicable, employees starting and departing times of work, along with lunch and break periods should be staggered to minimize overcrowding.

Large outdoor crew sizes should be broken up into smaller groups and shifts staggered or the number of shifts increased. Additional seating and shade structures may need to be provided to allow outdoor workers to take breaks while maintaining the physical distancing. Person to person interaction should be reduced by using fixed teams or partnering so that each person works with only a few others.
Seating Arrangement

Workspaces should be occupied to maintain six (6) feet in distance between each worker and there should be no face to face seating arrangement. Use a back to back or side to side arrangement instead. If physical distancing and face to face seating cannot be avoided then staggered working hours/days should be applied or screens be erected for separation.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

1. Avoid in-person meetings. Use online conferencing, email or the phone when possible, even when people are in the same building.

2. Unavoidable in-person meetings should be short, in a large meeting room where people can sit at least three feet from each other; avoid shaking hands.

3. Eliminate unnecessary travel and cancel or postpone nonessential meetings, gatherings, workshops and training sessions.

4. Do not congregate in work rooms, pantries, copier rooms or other areas where people socialize. Keep six feet apart when possible.

5. Bring lunch and eat at your desk or away from others (avoid lunchrooms and crowded restaurants).

6. Avoid public transportation (walk, cycle, drive a car) or go early or late to avoid rush-hour crowding on public transportation.

7. Limit recreational or other leisure classes, meetings, activities, etc., where close contact with others is likely.

Source: Society of Human Resource Management. Virginia, United States of America
3.3.7 Close Contact
In some instances physical distancing guidelines cannot be followed in relation to the type of activity being undertaken. In this regard, further mitigation action will be required such as:

- Increase the frequency of hand washing.
- Increase the frequency of surface cleaning.
- Utilize masks, face shield or gloves during the activity.
- Keep the activity time short as possible.
- Avoid working face to face.

3.3.8 Overseas Travel
All non-essential work-related travel to locations with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks will be discontinued and employees who may be at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. older employees and those with medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease) where COVID-19 is spreading will not be allowed to travel.

Employees who have returned from an area where COVID-19 is spreading should stay at home and monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days. If they develop even a mild cough or a low grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 °C or more) they should telephone the Health Authority and provide details of their recent travel and symptoms. A medical report must be submitted to confirm that an employee is not suffering from COVID-19 symptoms before returning to the workplace.

3.3.9 Communication
A communication plan should be developed whereby employees can have their concerns answered or acquire information and guidance on COVID-19.

3.3.10 Training and Awareness
Train employees who need to use protective clothing and equipment on how to put it on, use/wear it, and take it off correctly, including in the context of their current and potential duties. Implement measures to communicate important COVID-19 information to employees such as posters, announcements and videos.

3.3.11 Identification and Isolation of Sick Employees
The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a critical step in protecting workers, visitors and others at the workplace.

All employees are encouraged to learn the symptoms of COVID-19 and self-monitor for signs and symptoms if they suspect possible exposure. Employees must report to their Supervisor when they are sick or experiencing symptoms for COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath) and should not come to work.

An isolation room must be identified with closable doors (e.g. sick bay, conference room, vacant office) which will be utilised by sick employees who develop symptoms for COVID-19 while at work.
An employee that comes to work with symptoms of the COVID-19 or develops symptoms during the day, the following measures should be undertaken.

1) Move the potentially infectious person to the isolation room or to a location away from all other workers and visitors. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation.

2) Take steps to limit the spread of the respiratory secretions of the suspected person by providing a surgical mask. The mask acts to contain potentially infectious respiratory secretions at the source (i.e., the person's nose and mouth). If mask is unavailable, the sick person should cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or use the crook of their elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).

3) Restrict the number of personnel entering the isolation room and maintain a six (6) feet distance away from the person. If the person needs to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical advice from the Health Authority, they should use a separate bathroom if available. This bathroom should be sanitised after use.

If close contact with the person is absolutely necessary, the person assisting must take all the necessary precautions (such as ensuring proper hand and respiratory hygiene) and using the necessary PPE (gloves, N95 masks, face shield, disposable gowns).

4) Call the COVID Hotline at 877-WELL (9355) for further advice.

5) All waste that has been in contact with a suspected individual, including used tissues, and mask, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bag and tied. It should be put in a safe place and marked for disposal.

6) Clean and disinfect the isolation room/area as well as the other areas that the sick person may have come into contact with. Ensure that the appropriate chemicals and PPE are used.

An employee that tests positive for COVID-19, the following measures should be undertaken.

1) The work operation should cease immediately and the building closed for as long as possible before beginning to clean and disinfect to minimize exposure to respiratory droplets. If possible, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation. Wait up to 24 hours to allow droplets to settle before beginning cleaning and disinfection.

2) All persons who were in the building at the relevant time should be encouraged to self-quarantine and contact the Health Authority's for advice. (877-9355)

3) A competent cleaning and sanitation contractor should be sourced to clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
Guidelines that must be followed when cleaning and disinfecting.

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection (Note: “cleaning” will remove some germs, but “disinfection” is also necessary).

- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Cleaning staff/contractor should wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.

- Gloves and gowns should be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.

- Additional PPE might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions regarding other protective measures recommended on the product labelling.

- Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. Be sure to clean hands after removing gloves.

- Cleaning personnel/contractor should be trained on the proper use and disposal of PPE and on the hazards associated with cleaning chemicals.

Employees who are not required to self-quarantine are allowed to re-enter the building when cleaning and sanitation is completed.

A recovered COVID-19 positive employee MUST submit a medical report indicating same to the Head of Division/Unit before returning to work.

An employee that self-reported that they came into contact with a positive case of COVID-19, the following measures should be undertaken.

1) Treat the situation as if the suspected case is a confirmed case for the purposes of immediately sending home potentially infected employees. Communicate with your affected workers to let them know that the suspected employees is asymptomatic (not displaying COVID-19 symptoms) but action is being taken out of an abundance of caution.

2) All persons who were in the building at the relevant time should be encouraged to self-quarantine and contact the Health Authority for advice. (877-9355).

3) If the employee tests positive for COVID-19, follow the same sanitation protocols as mentioned previously.

4) If the employee tests negative for COVID-19, sanitation protocols are not required and employees will be allowed to return to the workplace.
No person is allowed to re-enter the workplace while awaiting the test results of the suspected case which usually takes between 24 to 48 hours.

3.3.12 Self-Quarantine
Self-quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 for a fourteen (14) day period to see if they become sick.

Persons who should Self Quarantine include:

- Persons who have recently travelled to Trinidad and Tobago from any country
- Persons who have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- Persons who have come into contact with someone who is suspected of having COVID-19 (as determined by a health care professional)
- Persons with any of the signs and symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath, extreme tiredness
- Persons who have come into contact with someone who has recently travelled to Trinidad and Tobago from any country

How to Self-Quarantine?

- Avoid contact with others. Stay in your home or accommodation.
- Do not go to work and other public areas.
- Wear a mask if you are around others. If you have been told to do so do not have visitors in your home or accommodation.
- Wash your hands before and after contact with your pets have food, medication and other supplies delivered to you.
- Use separate facilities. If sharing, these should be cleaned before use by others.

During this time, you need to self-monitor which will include checking your temperature for signs of a fever as well as other symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath while limiting your interaction with others.

If you have not had symptoms of COVID-19 for the 14 days of self-quarantine, on the 15th day you may come out of self-quarantine and follow the general public health precautions.

If you develop symptoms during or after the quarantine period, call the COVID Hotline at 877-WELL (9355), the nearest public health facility or your Physician for further guidance. Symptoms usually appear 5-7 days from the time of exposure.
3.4 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

While engineering and administrative controls are considered more effective in minimizing exposure to coronavirus, PPE may also be needed to prevent certain exposures. While correctly using PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other prevention strategies as it is the weakest control measure as it relies on persons using it correctly which introduces many possibilities for error.

Examples of PPE for COVID-19 include gloves, goggles, disposal gowns, face shields, face masks, and respiratory protection. There is an obligation under the Occupational Safety and Health Act Chapter 88:08 to provide workers with PPE to keep them safe while performing their jobs. The types of PPE required for COVID-19 outbreak will be based on the exposure and risk of being infected with the coronavirus while working on the job tasks. A job safety analysis (JSA) will need to be conducted to identify appropriate PPE for workers as well as to develop safe operating procedures.

All types of PPE must be:

- Selected based upon the hazard to the worker.
- Properly fitted and periodically refitted, as applicable (e.g., respirators)
- Consistently and properly worn when required.
- Regularly inspected, maintained, and replaced, as necessary.
- Properly removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed, as applicable, to avoid contamination of self, others, or the environment.

3.4.1 Masks

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that you should only wear N95 or surgical masks if:

- You are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (especially coughing).
- You are looking after someone who may have COVID-19.

There is a world-wide shortage of masks, therefore the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Health (MoH) urges people to use N95 and surgical masks wisely to ensure availability for healthcare workers. Disposable masks can only be used once and masks are effective only when used in combination of frequent hand cleaning with alcohol based hand rubs or soap and water. Without washing hands, masks can do more harm than good.

Respirators offer the best protection for workers who must work closely (either in contact with or within six (6) feet) with people who have COVID-19 symptoms and must be certified and approved by a recognized body. N95 mask is a type of respirator which removes particles from the air by filtering at least 95% of very small particles, bacteria and viruses of 0.3 microns. When N95 filtering face piece respirators are not available other respirators that provide greater protection can be used. Other types of acceptable respirators include R/P95, N/R/P99, or N/R/P100 filtering respirators.

If you wear a N95 mask, then you must know how to use it and dispose of it properly.
Before putting on a mask, clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
Cover mouth and nose with mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp and do not re-use single-use masks.
To remove the mask, remove it from behind (do not touch the front of mask). Discard immediately in a closed bin and clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

**Surgical masks** are used as a physical barrier to protect the user from hazards, such as splashes of large droplets of blood or body fluids. Surgical masks also protect other people against infection from the person wearing the surgical mask. Such masks trap large particles of body fluids that may contain bacteria or viruses expelled by the wearer. They do not provide a

### Six Steps to wearing the N95 MASK

**Step 1**: Wash your hands before putting on the mask.

**Step 2**: Select an N95 mask that fits you well. It is available in different adult sizes and models.

**Step 3**: Hold the mask in your hand and place it firmly over your nose, mouth and chin.

**Step 4**: First, stretch and position bottom band under your ears. Then, stretch and position top band high at the back of your head.

**Step 5**: Press the thin metal wire along the upper edge gently against the bridge of your nose so that the mask fits nicely on your face.

**Step 6**: Perform a fit check by breathing in and out. While breathing out, check for air leakage around your face.

*Source: Ministry of Health, Singapore*
tight seal around the users face and much of the potentially contaminated air can pass through the gaps between the face and the mask.

Surgical masks are used for several different purposes, including the following:

- Placed on sick people to limit the spread of infectious respiratory secretions to others.
- Worn by healthcare providers to prevent accidental contamination of patients’ wounds by the organisms normally present in mucus and saliva.
- Worn by workers to protect themselves from splashes or sprays of blood or bodily fluids.

Cloth masks are more accessible and reusable when compared to surgical and N95 masks. A cloth mask will not protect someone from getting sick, but it can help slow the spread of COVID-19 by helping to block large droplets from coughs and sneezes generated by the mask wearer. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of a cloth mask...
which **MUST** be combined with physical distancing and hand hygiene in order to be of some protection in the workplace.

A cloth mask should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

### HOW TO USE A CLOTH FACE MASK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Putting on a Cloth Mask</th>
<th>While Wearing A Mask</th>
<th>Removing a Mask</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ensure you are using a clean mask.</td>
<td>- Mask should be either completely on or off, do not wear or rest the mask under the chin.</td>
<td>- Grab ear loops only and lift the mask off ears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching mask.</td>
<td>- Never wear mask inside-out.</td>
<td>- Pull bottom of mask off and away from mouth and chin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Avoid touching mask itself.</td>
<td>- Remove mask if soiled or damp; do not reuse a single-use mask.</td>
<td>- If you plan to reuse your mask right away, place it in a clean bag so it will not contaminate other surfaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pick up mask by touching ear loops (or ties) only.</td>
<td>- Do not touch mask, face, or adjust mask while it is on</td>
<td>- If it is a single-use mask, discard it directly into the garbage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Hold both ear loops and place a loop around each ear.</td>
<td>- Always follow physical distancing (6 feet apart) and good hygiene practices.</td>
<td>- Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer after removal.</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Health University of Utah, Salt Lake City, United States of America*
How to Wear a Cloth Mask

- Tighten the loops or ties so it’s snug around your face, without gaps.
- Mask should cover from just under the bridge of your nose to under your chin.

How Not to Wear a Cloth Mask

- DON’T: Wear the mask below your nose.
- DON’T: Leave your chin exposed.
- DON’T: Wear your mask loosely with gaps on the sides.
- DON’T: Wear your mask so it covers just the tip of your nose.
- DON’T: Push your mask under your chin to rest on your neck.

Source: King County, Seattle, Washington, United States of America

All employees will be required to wear a cloth mask or any other type of mask when entering/leaving the workplace and interacting with other employees especially when six (6) feet physical distance cannot be maintained. Mask must also be worn in common areas such as corridors, elevators, restrooms, kitchens and meeting rooms.
3.4.2 Gloves
Medical gloves, while necessary for certain occupations (healthcare workers, cleaners etc.) is not advised to be worn by general workers as it potentially generates a false sense of security. Gloves provide another surface for the virus to live on and potentially encourages its transmission. Persons wearing gloves might touch other objects as well as parts of their face including eyes, nose and mouth.

Importantly, those wearing gloves also have to change them frequently in order to maintain proper precautions. Instead, it is advised that persons focus on diligent hand hygiene such as frequently washing with soap and water for 20 seconds, avoid touching the face, coughing/sneezing into crook of the elbow and avoiding handshakes.

However, some employees (Cashiers, Receptionists, Messengers, Handyman, Labourers etc.) may choose to wear gloves as part of their duties because there may be an increased risk of infection from handling items that are possibly contaminated. As such, they must know how to remove contaminated gloves safely.

Steps in removing gloves

- Pinch and hold the outside of the glove near the wrist area.
- Peel downwards, away from the wrist, turning the glove inside out.
- Pull the glove away until it is removed from the hand and hold the inside-out glove with the gloved hand.
- With your un-gloved hand, slide your finger/s under the wrist of the remaining glove, taking care not to touch the outside of the glove.
- Again, peel downwards, away from the wrist, turning the glove inside out.
- Continue to pull the glove down and over the inside-out glove being held in your gloved hand.
- This will ensure that both gloves are inside out, one glove enveloped inside the other, with no contaminant on the bare hands.
- Wash hands after removal as an additional precautionary measure.
Source: Globus Group-World Leaders in Hand Protection, United Kingdom
4. COVID-19 STRESS AND ANXIETY

The outbreak of COVID-19 can be stressful for some employees as fear and anxiety about the disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. Every person reacts differently to stressful situations but there are certain groups that react strongly to the stress of the crisis. They include:

- Older employees
- Employees with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19
- Employees with responsibilities for COVID-19 measures in the workplace.
- Employees who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use.
- Employees in isolation or self-quarantine.

Signs of stress during the COVID-19 outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Ways to deal with stress include:

- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories about the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes limiting the time spent on social media.
- It is important to be informed about the COVID-19 therefore stick to trusted, verified news sources as reading sensationalized stories can affect your mental health.
- Take care of your body by eating healthy well balanced meals, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep and avoiding alcohol and other intoxicants.
- Connect with others and talk to persons you can trust about your concerns and your feelings.
- See extra help or support if stress gets in the way of your daily activities. Some signs that you may need extra help and support include:
  - You can’t think about anything other than COVID-19.
  - You isolate yourself from others when it is not necessary.
  - You feel hopeless or angry about the situation.
  - You have a difficult time sleeping and eating properly and experience physical symptoms like frequent headaches and an upset stomach.

The Ministry’s Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) can be accessed for employees who may experience stress, anxiety and other issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please contact the Human Resources Management Division for guidance.

The following institutions can also be contacted for advice and guidance:

- **Ministry of Health, Mental Health Unit**  
  Telephone: (868)-285-9126 ext. 2573,  
  Email: mentalhealth@health.gov.tt

- **Trinidad and Tobago Association of Psychologists**  
  732-2702, 785-0975, 757-9348, 727-6723
5. REFERENCES

1) Center for Disease Control and Prevention, United States of America

2) Canadian Center for Occupational Safety and Health, Canada
   - https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/coronavirus.html

3) Globus Group-World Leaders in Hand Protection, United Kingdom
   - https://www.globus.co.uk/about-us

4) Health and Human Services Victoria State Government, Australia

5) Health University of Utah, Salt Lake City, United States of America

6) Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, United Kingdom

7) King County, Seattle, Washington, United States of America

8) Ministry of Health, Singapore
   - https://www.moh.gov.sg/resources-statistics/educational-resources/haze/faqs-on-haze-health-advisory

9) Occupational Safety and Health Administration, United States of America

10) Occupational Safety and Health Agency and Authority, Trinidad and Tobago
11) Society for Human Resources Management, Virginia, United States of America

12) World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland