



**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL
REFORMS
MAURITIUS**

04 May 2020

Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

Circular Letter No. 31 of 2020

E/152/11/07

From : Secretary for Public Service

To : Supervising Officers in charge of Ministries/Departments

**Response to COVID 19 Pandemic outbreak – preparation for the resumption of work in
the Public Sector**

As you are aware, the Curfew Order is being extended up to 1 June 2020 and therefore there will still be a restriction in the movement of people. The Government has approved a Strategy and Action Plan for a phased resumption of economic and other activities in both the Public and the Private Sector.

2. The Strategy and Action Plan hinges around one central concern of Government, that is, the continued protection of public health, which remains its topmost priority. The Government intends, by all means, to avoid the risk of a possible resurgence with a second wave of COVID-19 infection. Any such resurgence would not only jeopardise the gains achieved so far in terms of containment of the disease but will also put a heavy strain on our health services and the economy in general. Hence, the decision of Government for a phased approach for the re-opening of economic and other activities.

3. The resumption of activities in the public service has been divided into different phases based on the specificities and the nature of work of public officers while at the same time introducing an incremental increase in the number of officers who should be physically present at the workplace. The resumption takes into consideration the fact that a minimum number of public officers are already ensuring business continuity in Ministries/Departments. Further, staff deployment will consequently be as follows-

(i) **As from Monday 11 May 2020**

- All officers of the **Administrative Cadre** will have to resume duty to plan and implement the resumption of services in their respective Ministries/Departments and also attend to Parliamentary matters.
- All **Heads of Department/Divisions/Technical unit** also have to resume work.
- **Office Auxiliary Cadre, Handy worker and similar grades** will have to resume at 100% capacity of staff to allow for thorough cleaning and sanitizing of office premises.
- **Receptionists/Telephone Operators** are required for directing and streamlining visitors while enforcing a new protocol being put in place for visitors in Ministries/Departments as well as for facilitating communication. Moreover, **Drivers** are also required to ensure conveyance, where appropriate. Therefore, all staff in these grades should resume duty.

(ii) **As from Friday 15 May 2020**

- **Up to 30% capacity of remaining staff (first batch)** will resume work as from 15 May up to Thursday 21 May 2020.

(iii) **As from Friday 22 May 2020**

- **The second batch of 30% staff** of Ministries/Departments will resume work on Friday 22 May 2020 to replace the **first batch**.

(iv) **As from Tuesday 02 June 2020**

- **All staff** of Ministries/Departments will attend duty.

4. Supervising Officers and Head of Departments should ensure that Public Officers are provided with a Work Access Permit to facilitate commuting to work and Flexi-time should be introduced to mitigate the pressure on public transport and allow public officers to adopt social distancing precautions. Supervising officers and Head of Departments need to review the arrival and departure time of their officers in such a manner that there will be no disruption in the provision of services using the following time slots-

(i) Officers other than Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary

- 08 15 hr to 15 30 hr
- 08 45 hr to 16 00 hr
- 09 15 hr to 16 30 hr
- 09 45 hr to 17 00 hr

(ii) Office Auxiliary/Senior Office Auxiliary

- 07 30 hr to 16 00 hr
- 08 00 hr to 16 30 hr
- 08 30 hr to 17 00hr

5. The Electronic Attendance System should not be used until further notice. All Heads of Unit/Division will be required to register the attendance of their officers daily and certify same before submission to the HR section for inputting in the computerised system.

6. The office hours may also be extended to operate on a six-day week basis instead of a five-day week where such arrangements are deemed necessary by the respective Supervising Officers. It is recommended that Ministries/Departments which have accumulated backlogs that need to be cleared without delay, should resort to working on a six-day week basis.

7. Consideration is also being given to the introduction of the “Work from Home” Concept in the Public Sector. A separate circular on this matter will be issued shortly.

8. The gradual resumption of work should be accompanied by an enhanced office sanitary cleanliness framework. Supervising officers must, therefore, initiate all necessary actions to prepare the resumption of duties of officers as per the above directives before 15 May 2020. In view thereof, my Ministry has worked out a short guideline (copy at **Annex**) comprising non-exhaustive practical actions that should be put in place at the level of all Ministries/Departments as early as possible. Supervising Officers are also requested to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Circular issued by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service on 19 March 2020 and to the one issued by this Ministry (Circular Letter N0 28 of 2020) on the same date.

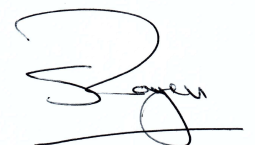
9. Supervising Officers and key staff should, therefore, make arrangements for the abovementioned staggered resumption of duty of their respective staff. Ministries/Departments should set up a COVID-19 Dedicated Response Team (DRT) who will be responsible for, inter-alia –

- (i) organising the workplace (reconfiguration and cleaning of offices, surfaces, equipment, etc.);
- (ii) ensuring that appropriate measures are taken for staff safety such as social distancing, provision of hand sanitisers, facilities to put in place for interaction with the public, etc.;
- (iii) ensuring that public officers wear a mask at all times while on duty;
- (iv) working a strategy for the delivery of services in their respective organisations for example to consider members of the public attending the premises by alphabetical order, replying to queries only through phone, emails, online services, SMS, etc., where applicable;
- (v) a work plan to address backlogs;
- (vi) making arrangements for communication to employees by using, among others the SMS based platform for public officers, which is managed by this Ministry; and
- (vii) Ministries/Departments should organise for deep cleaning of the office premises, including toilets, kitchenettes, etc. and ensure the availability of masks for all employees and gloves for the relevant grades.

10. A dedicated Communication and Coordination Cell will be set up at the level of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms to attend to all issues cropping up following resumption of duty. A similar cell is being set up at the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management to address issues cropping in the Local Authorities. Each Ministry/Department should devise a Communication Plan to inform all its stakeholders and the general public on the arrangements made for the delivery of its services.

11. Heads of Parastatal Bodies and other Public Sector Organisations are advised to stand guided by the provisions of this circular and, where appropriate may consider bringing relevant changes to provisions thereof to suit their specificities, subject to strictly adhering to health and safety considerations.

12. I rely on your collaboration and support to ensure a smooth and successful resumption of activities in the best possible conditions in the Public Sector. I am available for any clarification or information.



S.Ragen

Secretary for Public Service

Copy to: Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service

Health and Safety- Practical actions to be taken on the resumption of work

1. Cleanliness of Premises

- Before accessing any building, arrangements for cleaning of common areas, the interior of the building, toilets, discarding of waste, etc, should be completed.
- Regular disinfecting of common surfaces, tables, telephones, keyboards, etc.
- Reinforce the cleaning of toilets & ensure that hand wash is refilled frequently.

2. Prevention and Protection

- Office Auxiliaries to be provided with appropriate gloves, face masks during cleaning activities and encouraged to practise regular hand washing,
- Availability of dispensers of alcohol-based hand-rub at the Reception counter.
- Receptionists to use gloves and face masks when dealing with any person at the counter (in-house and visitors).
- It should be ensured that every person entering the building sanitizes his hands and is wearing a face mask.

3. Administrative Arrangements

- Name, Address, and contact details of any visitor acceding to the premises should be logged and used in the event of any Contact Tracing exercise.
- Names and contact details of all participants of a meeting should be retained for at least one month. This will help Public Health Authorities trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more participants become ill shortly after the event.
- The main Conference Room should be provided with several hand sanitizers and every person requested to use them before any meeting and if need be during the meeting.
- Electronic Attendance system should not be used.
- The use of air conditioners should be discouraged, as far as possible; instead, keep windows and doors open for cross ventilation.
- Establish a mechanism for Health check and monitoring at office building entrances to check temperature to ensure that anyone entering the building does not have a fever.
- Develop a response plan in the event an in-house officer or someone attending a meeting suddenly falls ill.

4. Social Distancing

- Restrict the number of employees in any office set-up. (Based on HR recommendations)
- Limit access to members of the public entering the building to minimize contact amongst employees and customers.
- Establish alternate days or extra shifts that reduce the total number of employees/customers in a facility at a given time.
- Promote Social Distancing, by keeping a minimum distance of more than one metre away in any place, including offices.
- Scale down meetings so that fewer participants attend as far as possible.
- Mass gatherings such as sport events, conferences, etc. should not be held.

- Employees should be advised to take lifts in smaller numbers and not to exceed 50% of an elevator's maximum occupancy number per elevator ride, and practice social distancing while queuing up. Encourage the use of the staircase while moving up and down one to three levels, as far as possible.
- Employees should refrain from using crowded transport.
- The number of passengers using Government vehicles should be limited to maintain social distancing and vehicles should be disinfected regularly.

5. Provision of Sufficient facilities

- Provision of one room to isolate officers displaying symptoms of COVID-19.
- A pedal waste bin with a lid to be made available in the Conference Room for disposal of used items like tissue paper, gloves, etc.
- Ensuring that adequate facilities for the toilet, used by committee members, are available and replenished whenever required.
- Provision of a sufficient number of dispensers of hand sanitizers on each level and in Conference rooms.

6. Basic personal hygiene

- Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace. Appropriate posters to be affixed conspicuously to create awareness on Personal Hygiene, hand washing, no handshaking, and measures in place, including necessary precautions to be taken.