

Press Release
Department of Labor and Employment
Bureau of Working Conditions
28 August 2020

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

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) issued Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 20-04 entitled *Supplemental Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19* on 14 August 2020 to further efforts in minimizing the transmission of the virus in the workplace.

While the country has achieved progress in addressing the ill effects of COVID-19, to the community and the economy, the two Departments deemed it is still necessary to supplement the current guidelines to help address the perceived gaps in the interim guidelines that was issued earlier. The JMC has fine-tuned the first guidelines that was issued following several consultations with health experts, local government units, and business groups.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III described the measure as, “(So far) the most comprehensive set of guidelines for the safety and protection of workers in workplaces. The strict observance of these health protocols will make a big difference in our long-drawn battle to defeat COVID- 19 and ensure the productivity of the Filipino workforce.”

Among the salient provisions of the JMC are the mandatory wearing of face shields, together with face masks at all times except when the demands of the work or occupational safety and health of employees so require. Large and medium establishment are also required to designate an isolation area of one room for every 200 employees. Establishments unable to establish an isolation area may make arrangements with a private facility nearby which can double as an isolation facility or with the Barangay Local Government Unit. Strict compliance on the use of the canteen such as staggered breaks for workers, compliance to one-meter physical distancing and the provisions of physical barrier are for strict compliance were also contained in the supplemental guidelines. Designated smoking areas shall also be provided with individual booths.

Additionally, large and medium-sized establishments are enjoined to provide shuttle services to their employees and for strict health protocols to be observed while inside the vehicle. The Supplemental Guidelines also requires employers to provide their employees access to telemedicine services. Adequate ventilation is to be strictly enforced also inside the workplace, which also include the installation of exhaust fans and air filtration devices.

Leaving no stone left unturned, the Secretaries of the two Departments simultaneously issued two related guidelines; the JMC 20-04-A and Advisory No. 20-01 “Clarification on the Expanded Risk-Based Testing for COVID-19 of At-Risk Individuals” which outlined the eligibility of workers for PhilHealth Benefits and/or Health Maintenance Organization. These additional policies further cleared some items in the supplemental guidelines.

In a related news, as of 21 August 2020, a total of 43,119 establishments were monitored by the DOLE labor inspectors, covering 1,522,740 workers nationwide. 75.88% of these establishments were found to be compliant, while 10,399 were noted with deficiencies. They were already provided technical assistance by the DOLE and are now in the process of completing their compliance with the noted deficiencies.

Currently, the MIS Unit of the DOLE-Bureau of Working Conditions collates the reports from DOLE Regional Offices. A new checklist which includes new provisions in the supplemental guideline has been developed to monitor compliance with the new issuance.

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