

Sunday, 2 Feb 2020

This advisory supersedes earlier MOM advisories released.

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES TRAVELLING TO AND FROM MAINLAND CHINA IN RESPONSE TO INCREASE IN CASES OF 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-NCOV)

1. In view of the evolving 2019 novel coronavirus (“2019-nCoV”) situation, the Ministry of Health (MOH) had advised travellers to defer all travel to Hubei province and to defer non-essential travel to mainland China.

General Precautions

2. Employers and employees should continue to be vigilant and adopt the following precautions where relevant:

- a. Employers should regularly check the MOH website (www.moh.gov.sg) for the latest update on the 2019-nCoV situation so that a considered decision can be made on whether to proceed with business travel plans.
- b. Employers should obtain a health and travel declaration from their employees, on whether they have travelled to mainland China recently, or if they have any upcoming travel plans to mainland China.

Summary of Measures Introduced Thus Far

3. The following measures have been put in place to limit the potential risk that workers arriving from mainland China pose to Singapore:

- a) From 31 Jan 2020, MOM will reject all new work pass applications for foreign workers from mainland China until further notice. Renewal applications for existing work pass holders will not be affected.
- b) All returning employees with Hubei travel history within 14 days prior to arrival in Singapore will be quarantined at home or other suitable facilities. Those who were already in Singapore before 28 Jan 2020 will be assessed by MOH and those at higher risk will be quarantined.
- c) All employees arriving from mainland China (excluding Hubei province) **on or after 31 Jan 2020 6pm** will be required to go on leave of absence (LOA) for 14 days from the day of arrival in Singapore¹.

¹ The leave of absence does not apply retrospectively to people who returned to Singapore from mainland China before 31 Jan 2020 6pm. The earlier advisories issued on 27 January 2020 for preschools and education, healthcare and eldercare sectors would continue.

What does Quarantine mean?

4. Employees under quarantine must not leave their designated location for any reason. Employees who are served a Home Quarantine Order will be deemed to be on paid hospitalisation leave.
5. Employers and employees may wish to refer to MOH website for more information on how employees could manage their essential needs during quarantine as well as the Quarantine Order Allowance Scheme.

What does LOA Mean?

6. An LOA is a precautionary measure. As advised by MOH, employees on LOA should remain in their residences as much as possible, minimise visitors and maintain good records of persons with whom they come into close contact. Employees on LOA may leave their residences for daily necessities or to attend important personal matters, but they must minimise time spent in public spaces and contact with others. Employees should also monitor their health (i.e. for fever $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ and respiratory symptoms such as cough or breathlessness) closely during the LOA period, seek prompt medical attention when necessary and observe good personal hygiene.
7. MOH has advised that it is not necessary to segregate persons placed under LOA from others sharing the same room/apartment, though contact should be minimised, e.g. not sharing a bed, limiting time spent together at common areas within the apartment, having separate meal times, and avoiding the sharing of food, crockery, utensils and other personal hygiene items. Dorm operators, landlords and other relevant management of facilities should not evict occupants under LOA from their residence or impose unduly restrictive measures on these occupants. They may consider implementing measures to ensure that the affected occupants do not use common facilities (e.g. gyms) while under LOA. Employers and employees may wish to refer to the MOH website for more detailed advice on sharing residential spaces with people under LOA.
8. During the LOA period, employers must ensure that employees stay away from the workplace but employers may adopt flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting and teleconferencing, to allow the employees to work from home.
9. If remote working is not possible, employers are encouraged to provide paid LOA over and above employees' annual leave entitlements. If that is not feasible, employers can consider the following options, or a combination of the options, for the employees on LOA:
 - a. Treat employees' LOA as paid hospitalisation leave or paid outpatient sick leave;
 - b. Allow employees to apply for annual leave;
 - c. Allow employees to use advanced paid leave or apply for no pay leave, for employees who have used up their leave entitlements; or
 - d. Other mutually agreed arrangements between the employers and employees / unions.
10. Employers and employees have a joint duty to ensure that employees behave responsibly during the LOA period. MOM reserves the right to take action against the employer or employee, if they fail to discharge their duty.

Wearing of Masks

11. In general, employees who are not having any symptoms at all and are well are not required to wear a mask.
12. Employees who are not well or have respiratory symptoms should wear a mask so that they do not spread any infection to others and consult a doctor as soon as possible.
13. In the case of the 2019-nCoV, MOH has advised that infection is spread through droplets. Wearing a mask will protect other people when someone with respiratory symptoms coughs or sneezes, as the mask would trap those droplets and prevent those droplets from spreading and disseminating. As such, a surgical mask is sufficient for this case and fulfils the important function of preventing a spread if worn properly. The mask should be changed if it gets soiled or stained.

Medical benefits and others

14. If an affected employee has used up his medical benefits provided for under the employment contract and/or collective agreement, employers should consider providing medical coverage as the employees concerned may face financial hardship during this time.
15. Employers should similarly consider remote working or the options in paragraph 9 above if their employees need to stay at home for other reasons relating to the 2019-nCoV situation, e.g. to take care of family members who have travelled to known affected areas or take care of children who are required to stay away from school or childcare.
16. Overall, MOM urges employers to be flexible and supportive of their employees' needs during this period. Employees are urged to cooperate with their employers. Both employers and employees are strongly encouraged to take precautionary steps according to advisories issued by MOH.
17. For further queries, please contact:

a. Ministry of Manpower

MOM Contact Centre, Tel: (65) 6438 5122
Online Enquiry via this link: www.mom.gov.sg/feedback
Website: www.mom.gov.sg

b. Ministry of Health

MOH General Hotline, Tel: (65) 6325 9220
Online Enquiry via this link: www.crms.moh.gov.sg/modfeedback.aspx
Website: www.moh.gov.sg