MGB MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR
NO. 2020-007

SUBJECT: SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 CASES IN THE MINES AND GEOSCIENCES BUREAU

Pursuant to the Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines as amended dated June 3 2020 issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease; Revised Interim Guidelines for Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA) and Support Mechanisms for Workers in the Government During the Period of State of National Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic Pursuant to Civil Service Commission (CSC) Resolution No. 2000540 promulgated on May 7, 2020; Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Memorandum Circular No. 2020-05 in re: Adoption of Measures to Ensure Safety of Personnel and the Continued Delivery of Essential Services under COVID-19 Threat Situation; Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Memorandum Order No. 2020-005 in re: Supplemental Guidelines/Protocols for the Operation of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau Offices under General Community Quarantine and Modified General Community Quarantine, including related laws, rules and regulations, these supplemental guidelines/protocols for the MGB to further control COVID-19 cases in the workplace are hereby issued for the compliance of all concerned.

SECTION 1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Pursuant to DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0013 dated April 9, 2020 and as used in this Memorandum, the following terms shall mean:

A. Suspect Case\(^1\) – an employee who is presenting any of the conditions below:
   i. All Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) cases with no other etiology that fully explains the clinical presentation;
   ii. Influenza Like Illness (ILI) cases with any one of the following:
      a. With no other etiology that fully explains the clinical presentation AND a history of travel to or residence in an area that reported local transmission of COVID-19 disease during the 14 days prior to symptom onset OR

\(^1\) DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-2013

"MINING SHALL BE PRO-PEOPLE AND PRO ENVIRONMENT IN SUSTAINING WEALTH CREATION AND IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE."
b. With contact to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 in the two days prior to onset of illness of the probable/confirmed COVID-19 case until the time the probable/confirmed COVID-19 case became negative on repeat testing.

iii. Individuals with fever or cough or shortness of breath or other respiratory signs or symptoms fulfilling any one of the following conditions:
   a. Aged 60 years and above;
   b. With a co-morbidity;
   c. Assessed as having a high-risk pregnancy;
   d. Health worker.

B. Probable Case\(^2\) – a suspect case who fulfills anyone of the following listed below:
   i. Suspect case whom testing for COVID-19 is inconclusive;
   ii. Suspect who tested positive for COVID-19 but whose test was not conducted in a national or subnational reference laboratory or officially accredited laboratory for COVID-19 confirmatory testing.

C. Confirmed Case\(^3\) — any individual, irrespective of presence or absence of clinical signs and symptoms, who was laboratory confirmed for COVID-19 in a test conducted at the national reference laboratory, a subnational reference laboratory, and/or DOH-certified laboratory testing facility.

D. Close Contact\(^4\) – Individual whose exposure should have happened two (2) days before or within fourteen (14) days from onset of a confirmed or probable case:
   1. Face-to-face contact with a probable or confirmed case within 1 meter and for more than 15 minutes, with or without a mask;
   2. Direct physical contact with a probable or confirmed case;
   3. Direct care for a patient with probable or confirmed COVID-19 disease without using proper personal protective equipment; or
   4. Other situations as indicated by local risk assessments.

E. Comorbidity – refers to presence of pre-existing chronic disease condition.\(^5\)

**SECTION 2. MGB DESIGNATED SAFETY AND HEALTH COMMITTEE**

A. A Safety and Health Committee shall be created which shall be in-charge of all COVID-related concerns of the Bureau, COVID prevention in the workplace and implementation of Department of Health (DOH) COVID-related guidelines and issuances. Specifically, the Committee shall:
   i. Spearhead the information dissemination of the Office in COVID prevention and control including DOH updates and related issuances;

\(^2\) DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-2013

\(^3\) DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-2013

\(^4\) DOH Workplace Handbook on COVID-19 Management and Prevention as of September 30, 2020

ii. Monitor the employees and ensure that COVID safety protocols are strictly followed; and
iii. Regularly submit report and updates regarding the status of probable and confirmed cases and health status of all employees in the Divisions.

B. The committee shall be composed of the following:
   i. MGB Safety and Health Officer – designated by the Administrative Division or Finance and Administrative Division (FAD) for Regional Offices (ROs) to spearhead the committee.
   ii. Division Safety and Health Officer – one representative per division who shall be in charge with contacting each personnel, information dissemination and reporting of the daily health status and COVID related concerns of each personnel in the division.

C. The Administrative Division or FAD for ROs, shall be responsible on the following:
   i. Coordinate with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Local Government Units (LGU) and other government agencies in facilitating requests for disinfection of MGB premises, COVID testing of MGB suspect cases and request for assistance in the event that an employee tests positive for COVID 19 or becomes probable or confirmed case;
   ii. Render assistance to confirmed COVID cases, such as provision for isolation facilities, coordination with LGUs and assistance in looking for hospitals in the event that a COVID 19 positive employee needs hospital confinement; and
   iii. The Administrative Division FAD for ROs shall seek all possible means of assistance to confirmed COVID-19 case, such as assistance from MGBEA, MICECO, DENR, etc., including assistance in processing and securing the necessary requirements for PhilHealth benefit.

SECTION 3. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 PREVENTION

The MGB thru the Safety and Health Committee shall regularly conduct information dissemination and monitor strict compliance of all employees, visitors and employees of the Artisanal Gold Council (AGC) Project holding office within the MGB premises, on the precautionary safety protocols for the control and prevention of the coronavirus disease including but not limited to the following:

A. Face masks shall be worn at all times while inside the MGB premises. Face shield may be used alongside face mask at the option of the employee. No mask, no entry policy shall be strictly implemented;

B. All employees, visitors, clients on foot shall pass through foot baths located at the entrance of the buildings. The Administrative Division or FAD for ROs shall regularly check and ensure the right moisture content and mixture of the disinfectant in the foot baths;
C. Temperature shall be scanned before entry to MGB premises. Those with 37.8 Degrees Celsius and above, or who exhibit symptoms, shall not be allowed entry;

D. Physical distancing of at least one meter anywhere inside the office premises shall be strictly observed and documents to be routed shall be placed in designated areas to lessen interaction;

E. Face-to-face meetings shall be limited to 1 square meter (1m²) allotment per person, depending on the size of the venue. Use of online applications for meetings shall be used instead;

F. Frequent hand washing shall be practiced;

G. Eating in communal areas is discouraged. It is best to eat in individual workstations;

H. Proper cough etiquette shall likewise be observed:
   i. Cover mouth and nose using tissue or sleeves /bend of the elbow when coughing or sneezing;
   ii. Move away from people when coughing;
   iii. Do not spit;
   iv. Throw away used tissues properly;
   v. Always wash your hands after sneezing or coughing;
   vi. Use alcohol/sanitizer;

I. Weekly disinfection of offices, workstations, common areas and non-office infrastructures within the compound, shall be done, to include misting and defogging, by the MGB janitorial staff, with the supervision of Administrative Division General Services Section who shall monitor and document the disinfection process, pursuant to item IV.E. of DOH Department Memorandum No. 2020-0157, dated April 10, 2020;

J. Daily disinfection of MGB service vehicles shall be done before and after use pursuant to pursuant to item IV.F. of DOH Department Memorandum No. 2020-0157, dated April 10, 2020;

K. Plastic shields/barriers/dividers between the drivers and passengers in all MGB service vehicles shall be installed;

L. Mandatory thermal scanning of drivers before leaving the MGB premises to transport employees, and mandatory thermal scanning and logging in of passengers before allowing entry to MGB Vehicles for inclusion on the employee’s contact tracing form shall be strictly followed;

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M. Windows of MGB service vehicles shall remain open during transport to promote ventilation in an enclosed space and reduce the risk of possible virus transmission;

N. Windows of MGB offices shall be opened and air conditioning units turned off before 9 o'clock in the morning and after 4 o'clock in the afternoon as part of the continuous austerity measures observed by the office and to promote air circulation; and

O. Windows shall be opened while disinfecting the office premises.

SECTION 4. COVID-19 SURVEILLANCE

A. All MGB employees, janitorial staff, drivers and security personnel who are reporting to the Office shall accomplish a Contact Tracing Form listing all names and information of the person/s contacted during the day aside from colleagues within the same division.

B. Employees who are working from home shall accomplish a daily online health status survey, including weekends, suspension of work and holidays, to ensure that all are in healthy condition and no one is exhibiting any of the symptoms of COVID-19 pursuant to MGB Memorandum Order No. 2020-005. The daily online health status survey shall be accomplished until COVID-19 in the country is fully suppressed. Employees who had reported to the office as part of the skeletal workforce during the week shall also accomplish the daily online health status survey during weekends, suspension of work and holidays.

C. MGB will use a QR code-based contact tracing system wherein QR Code stickers will be posted on the tables or cubicle and on the ARTA ID of all employees and will be scanned thru mobile phones every time contact is established with another employee, thru the following modes:

   a. Stayed in the same sleeping quarters / room / workstation within 2 meters and for more than 15 minutes (specify duration of exposure).
   b. Direct physical contact with other MGB personnel (e.g. shaking hands).
   c. Interaction in common areas (e.g. comfort rooms, dining, etc.) within 1 meter and more than 15 minutes (specify duration of interaction).
   d. Face-to-face chat or exposure with another personnel in the MGB Compound within 2 meters and for more than 15 minutes in a closed environment (e.g. office, meeting room, control room, etc.)

D. As MGB applies the Work-From-Home, Skeletal Workforce arrangement and compressed work-week schedule, only those who are scheduled to report for work shall be allowed entry in the office.
E. An employee who is not scheduled to report for work and needs to report to the office to attend to urgent matters, shall seek clearance from the Division Chief concerned and from the Administrative Division before he/she shall be allowed entry to the office premises. Permission and clearance shall be presented to the Security Guard on duty who shall strictly log all entering and exiting personnel, both with and without vehicles.

F. All MGB employees who are experiencing the onset or early manifestation of COVID-19 symptoms such as but not limited to fever, tiredness and dry cough, after reporting to the Office and those who are working from home shall notify his/her supervisor and the Division Safety and Health Officer immediately for close monitoring and implementation of MGB’s COVID-19 Management Protocols.

G. In the event that an employee is suspected to have COVID-19, the Division concerned thru its Division Safety and Health Officer shall notify the MGB Safety and Health Committee regarding the status of the suspect COVID-19 employee based on pertinent DOH bulletins.

SECTION 5. MANAGEMENT OF SUSPECTED COVID-19 CASE

A. A suspect COVID case shall be on mandatory self-quarantine for 14 days and shall be encouraged to undergo the Rapid Antibody-based Test or RT-PCR Swab Test within the quarantine period.

B. During the mandatory self-quarantine period of 14 days, a suspect COVID case shall be on a Work-From-Home arrangement.

C. The MGB Safety and Health Committee shall conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Contact Monitoring Form submitted by the suspect COVID-19 employee so that those declared co-employee who were exposed will be properly informed.

D. The Division Safety and Health Officer concerned shall religiously monitor the daily status of the exposed employee and shall make a daily report on the status of the Suspect Covid-19 positive employee to the MGB Safety and Health Committee with the corresponding findings and recommendations.

E. Upon recommendation of the MGB Safety and Health Committee and in coordination with the MGB Management, the suspected COVID positive employee shall be encouraged to submit himself/herself for swab testing.

F. The MGB management through the Administrative Division shall coordinate with Local Government Unit’s Health Office for assistance in the rapid or swab testing, with the consent of the suspected COVID case pursuant to Section 10 of this Memorandum.
G. Should the rapid or swab test yield a negative result, the suspect COVID employee shall complete the 14-day quarantine while the close contacts may continue to report for work on a skeletal schedule.

SECTION 6. MANAGEMENT OF PROBABLE COVID-19 CASE

A. An employee is considered a probable Covid-19 case under the following circumstances pursuant to DOH Guidance on Use of COVID-19 Rapid Antibody-based Test Kits:
   i. Individuals who tested positive for IgM shall be required to remain isolated and be swabbed for RT-PCR. Only after a positive RT-PCR test shall the individual count as a positive case.\(^7\)
   ii. Individuals who tested negative for IgM, especially those symptomatic, shall be required to remain isolated and be swabbed for RT-PCR test because they may be infectious.\(^8\)
   iii. Individuals who tested positive for IgG-only shall be labeled as presumptive past COVID-19 patient and not be officially counted as confirmed UNLESS a further validation is conducted (e.g. validated with a PRNT by a third party).\(^9\)

B. The MGB Safety and Health Committee shall conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Contact Monitoring Form submitted by the probable COVID case/employee so that those declared exposed will be properly informed.

C. The Division Safety and Health Officer shall religiously monitor the daily status of the exposed employee and shall make a daily report on the status of the probable Covid-19 case to the MGB Safety and Health Committee with the corresponding findings and recommendations.

D. The MGB Management thru the Administrative Division shall coordinate with Local Government Unit’s Health Office for assistance in the conduct of Swab Testing (if available at the LGU) or at any hospital, as a confirmatory test within the duration of the 14-day quarantine period.

E. Should the swab test yield a negative result, the probable COVID case/employee shall complete the 14-day quarantine while the close contacts may continue to report for work on a skeletal schedule.

SECTION 7. MANAGEMENT OF CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASE

A. A confirmed COVID case is someone who was laboratory confirmed for COVID-19 in a swab test conducted at the national reference laboratory, a subnational reference laboratory, and/or DOH-certified laboratory testing facility, and shall immediately seek medical help or hospital confinement depending on the severity of the symptoms experienced.

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\(^7\) DOH Department Circular No. 2020-0160. March 31, 2020
\(^8\) DOH Department Circular No. 2020-0160. March 31, 2020
\(^9\) DOH Department Circular No. 2020-0160. March 31, 2020
B. In the event that an MGB employee is confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 disease, the Administrative Division shall coordinate with the Health Office of Local Government Unit where the employee resides for possible confinement in the isolation or quarantine facilities of the LGU.

C. The result shall be communicated to all close contacts.

D. The Bureau through the Administrative Division shall provide assistance in coordinating with the LGU and hospitals where the employee may be admitted.

E. The Bureau through the Administrative Division shall regularly monitor through online platforms, the daily condition of the employee confined for COVID illness.

F. Recovered employees shall seek clearance from the attending physician and shall secure a Certificate of Quarantine Completion and a Medical Certificate certifying that he/she has recovered from COVID and is fit to return to work.

SECTION 8. COMMUNICATION PLAN

A. The Administrative Division shall discreetly notify all employees who were exposed to the suspect, probable or confirmed COVID-19 case/employee within the two-day period immediately preceding the health conditions above-stated.

B. Intensify coordination with the health authorities and Local Government Units to ensure the provision of necessary services.

SECTION 9. WORK ARRANGEMENTS

A. Pursuant to MGB Memorandum Order No. 2020-005, MGB shall adopt the Work from Home (WFH) and Skeleton Workforce Arrangement. Employees shall discuss with their respective Division Chiefs regarding office documents and desktop computers that has to be brought home for the accomplishment of WFH tasks. In the event the employee needs to bring the PC home for WFH, gate pass application procedures shall apply. The Administrative Division shall duly notify the Civil Service Commission regarding the MGB Work Arrangement.

B. Each division’s ICT focal person shall make necessary back up of all the records of the division for easy retrieval of documents during lockdown.

C. Employees with co-morbidities and senior citizens are automatically on WFH, except when their services are indispensable under the circumstances or when office work is permitted.
D. In the event of confirmed COVID-19 case, the MGB Management shall announce in proper platforms, including official social media accounts, the schedule of lockdown of the MGB Office for thorough disinfection procedure.

E. During lockdown of MGB Office, all employees shall adopt the work from home arrangement pursuant to Memorandum Order 2020-05 and Civil Service Commission (CSC) Resolution No. 2000540 promulgated on May 7, 2020, until further notice.

F. Resumption of the skeleton workforce reporting in the Office shall commence once disinfection procedures were thoroughly implemented.

G. Pursuant to CSC Resolution No. 2000540, MGB shall adopt a combination of skeleton workforce and work-from-home (WFH) arrangement on Mondays to Thursdays and WFH arrangement on Fridays except those whose tasks require physical presence in the office premises. Weekly disinfection of the whole MGB Office and premises shall be done on Fridays.

H. Each division shall make their own work rotation arrangement based on the tasks and staff profile.

I. The MEIPD shall be responsible in posting the necessary advisories regarding work arrangement of the MGB.

SECTION 10. FIELD WORK

A. Employees who will render field work shall meet the following criteria:
   1. Must not be less than 21 years old and more than 60 years old.
   2. Must not be immunocompromised and have no symptoms of COVID-19.
   3. Has not come in close contact with a person "confirmed/probable/suspected" with COVID-19 as per Department of Health (DOH) classification within the last 14 days prior to the field deployment.
   4. Must have undergone RT-PCR Swab Test if required by the recipient LGU. Expenses for the test shall be shouldered by the office.

B. Fieldwork Team composition must be limited to a number depending upon the requirements and restrictions set by every LGU.

C. Prior to processing and issuance of Travel Orders, coordination letters endorsed by the Acting Director or Regional Director will be provided to the LGU's and other agencies concerned. Acceptance Letters and Clearance from LGUs must be secured.
D. Employees who will undergo fieldwork must have a Medical Certificate from the City Health Office and Certificate of Employment together with the Travel Order.

E. The Office shall provide face masks, face shields, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), alcohol and a temperature scanner per team.

F. Throughout the field activity, the team members shall strictly observe the minimum health safety requirements of the IATF (wearing of masks and face shields, social distancing, regular hand hygiene, etc.) The Close Contact Monitoring Form and Logbook shall be accomplished daily during the field duration. The team leader or assigned personnel will monitor submission of the forms.

G. The team members shall immediately be on 14 days quarantine / Work from Home (WFH) upon arrival from field work. In case they will experience symptoms within the 14-day period, they should subject themselves to swab testing.

H. Technical Divisions with fieldwork must coordinate with the Finance Management Division (FMD) for proper documentation of COVID-Related Expenses incurred during fieldwork.

I. For field work requested by mining companies, expenses shall be shouldered by the requesting company including RT-PCR Swab Testing, transportation, food, and accommodation.

J. In lieu of the actual fieldwork for tenement monitoring, audit, shipment and stockpile validation, research and development, virtual or offsite monitoring audit may be conducted for an unimpeded delivery of services during community quarantine and in instances where the area for field validation can no longer be changed. Coordination with the mining companies and regional offices shall be done before the conduct of the virtual or offsite fieldwork.

SECTION 11. RAPID ANTIBODY-BASED TEST AND REAL-TIME REVERSE TRANSCRIPTION POLYMERASE REACTION (RT-PCR) TEST OR SWAB TESTING

A. MGB shall encourage the conduct of RT-PCR testing of employees with manifestation of COVID-19 symptoms. Swab testing of close contacts of the suspect COVID positive employee especially those experiencing symptoms is likewise encouraged.
B. RT-PCR results can serve as a basis for clearing patients who are asymptomatic and have completed their 14-day quarantine after they have been discharged from the health facility. In these cases, the presence of antibodies means viral clearance. Hence:

i. If the individual tests positive for IgG, they may be cleared.

ii. If the individual tests negative for IgG, repeat swab and RT-PCR needs to be done.\(^{10}\)

b. In view of the DOH Updated Interim Guidelines on Expanded Testing for COVID-19, rapid antibody-based test kits shall not be used as a standalone test to definitively diagnose or rule out COVID-19. These must be in conjunction with Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR)\(^{11}\). An employee who tests positive for COVID-19 with the use of rapid antibody-based test shall immediately undergo confirmatory RT-PCR (swab) testing. This may be undertaken in coordination with the respective Local Government Unit (LGU) and its designated Barangay Health Emergency Response Team,\(^{12}\) for which he/she may avail of the PhilHealth benefit package for COVID-19 testing.\(^{13}\)

SECTION 11. PRIVACY GUIDELINES ON THE PROCESSING AND DISCLOSURE OF COVID-19 RELATED DATA FOR DISEASE SURVEILLANCE AND RESPONSE

A. The right to privacy of health information shall be protected at all times. MGB shall adhere with Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, regarding the confidentiality and protection of the identity of the employee with manifestation of COVID-19 symptoms, so that discrimination and panic could be avoided.

B. Patients/close contacts shall have a right to adequate information on matters relating to the processing of their health information, including the nature, purpose and intended use of processing.

C. Processing, Access and Disclosure of Health Information:

i. The processing of personal health information shall be done by the Administrative Division and the MGB Safety and Health Committee only for the purposes of case/s investigation and management, contact tracing and monitoring, quarantine and isolation, mandatory reporting to public health authorities, or treatment and coordination purposes.

ii. The processing of personal health information by Department of Health (DOH) partner agencies and their authorized health personnel shall be

\[^{10}\] DOH Department Circular No. 2020-0160, March 31, 2020

\[^{11}\] Updated Interim Guidelines on Expanded Testing for COVID-19, Department Memorandum Order No. 2020-0258, 29 May 2020

\[^{12}\] Guidelines on Local Isolation and General Treatment Areas for Covid-19 cases (LIGTAS COVID) and the Community-based Management of Mild COVID-19 Cases. DOG-DILG Joint Administrative Order No. 2020-0001, 15 April 2020

allowed, pursuant to a Data Sharing Agreement as provided under NPC Circular 16-02.

iii. All personnel who will be authorized by MGB and DOH partner agencies to collect and process personal health information shall sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

iv. Personal information are pseudonymized or anonymized.

v. Disclosure to the public, the media, or any other public-facing platforms without the written consent of the patient or his/her authorized representative or next of kin, shall be prohibited.

vi. The following information may be disclosed for a legitimate purpose:

vi.1. Aggregate health information, or pseudonymized or anonymized detailed health information for public communication; and

vi.2. Mandatory reporting requirements, including personal health information to national and local public health authorities, and DOH partner agencies.

SECTION 12. EFFECTIVITY

This Circular shall take effect immediately.

ATTY. WILFREDO G. MONCANO
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