STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

The Minerals Council South Africa, on behalf of its members, has developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to assist in preventing the transmission of COVID-19 in South African mines. This procedure provides guidelines for the management of the employees and healthcare workers returning to work following the COVID-19 South African lockdown. It addresses possible exposure to SARS-CoV-2 the virus responsible for COVID-19 and subsequent illness, isolation and quarantine, and outlines the additional special steps and procedures to be followed in addition to the formal procedure for medical surveillance of any workers returning to work following a significant period of time away from work, based on the Department of Minerals Resources and Energy's (DMRE) standards of fitness to work.

This SOP is aligned with the SOP for Addressing Cases of COVID-19 also prepared by the Minerals Council, and the Guiding Principles on Prevention and Management of COVID-19 in SAMI published by the Department of Minerals and Energy (DMRE) on 26 March 2020.

MINERALS COUNCIL
SOUTH AFRICA

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Before employees arrive at work,
mining companies should have a return to work procedure in place, ensuring that:
- Sufficient resources are in place for pre-screening and isolation.
- Sufficient security, medical, social worker, counselling, employee assistance and administration staff are available.
- Necessary medical and hygiene supplies (PPEs, soap, water, sanitisers) are available.
- High-risk employees are provided with flu vaccinations and prophylaxis.
- Cleaning and disinfecting consumables and services are available.

Companies are required to:
- Communicate new procedures for medical surveillance to employees before they leave their areas of residence during the lockdown.
- Screen healthcare workers before they screen employees and daily thereafter.

- Where possible, screen employees in labour-sending areas before they return, and isolate or quarantine at source.
- Apply dedensification/physical distancing during transport.
- Implement a staggered approach on the number of employees screened per day for return to work to minimise crowding at the screening areas and at the medical centre as well as transporting employees to the medical centre.
- Intensify employee awareness and education on signs and symptoms of COVID-19 on their return.
- Inform employees of the duty to report their COVID-19 status if they were tested before returning to work.
- Establish a procedure for screening all visitors to the site and ensuring that they comply with protective measures including PPE and social distancing while on site.

After employees arrive at work,
mining companies should apply **infection prevention and control measures** to all forms of transport of employees, screening areas and working areas:
- Educating employees on measures to prevent infection such as social distancing and hygiene.
- PPE is required for all staff, and PPE management programmes should be in place to ensure that PPE is worn correctly (including fit testing), replaced as necessary, stored correctly and disposed of safely.
- Employees not able to socially distance by 1 m should be provided with PPE as per the Minerals Council Guidance on PPE for COVID-19.
- Educating employees on how to use PPE and masks and receptacles to dispose of them.
- Reinforcing the need to take chronic medication.

Screening and referral
Companies should apply **screening at designated areas**, including pre-screening employees before they enter company accommodation and before entering the work premises and **referring** employees with symptoms that meet the NICD criteria to isolation areas for assessment.

Isolation area assessment
- Employees should be assessed for COVID-19 signs and symptoms in an isolation area. Employees who meet the NICD criteria of a person under investigation must be referred to the designated Isolation Centre for testing.
- The employer should ensure access to isolation facilities for all persons under investigation, while awaiting outcome of results.
- Employees whose test results are positive for COVID-19, are not very sick and have the capacity to self-isolate may do so at home for 14 days. Necessary PPE must be provided and contact tracing undertaken.
- The medical centre team must follow-up telephonically with the employee on a daily basis, record progress and refer to hospital if required.
- A register must be kept of employees presenting symptoms and who are referred for isolation (DOH guidelines).

Follow-up
Employees must call the medical centre to arrange for an assessment and the issuing of a clearance letter after the isolation/admission period. Only after the fitness to work assessment, may a return to work note be issued and the line manager advised.

Continuous measures to be applied at work
include training of staff and employees, continually re-enforcing universal hygiene precautions, enforcing physical distancing in the workplace, continue use of facemasks, and promotion of good hygiene practices.

Case reporting
should be done through the NICD surveillance programme. Reports should also be submitted to the Minerals Council and DMRE and relevant health and safety structures with due regard to confidentiality. COIDA reporting applies to healthcare workers who become infected from a known source in the workplace. The employer should allocate an appropriate person to monitor and document compliance with this SOP.

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The full SOP may be downloaded from:
https://www.mineralscouncil.org.za/minerals-council-position-on-covid-19