

Republic of the Philippines  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT  
Intramuros, Manila

223



Department Order No 47-03  
Series of 2003

**GUIDELINES ON SARS PREVENTION  
AND CONTROL AT THE WORKPLACE**

To prevent the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) at the workplace, the following guidelines are hereby issued to all concerned:

**COVERAGE**

This Guidelines shall apply to all employers and workers in the private sector.

**WORKPLACE HEALTH**

As a precautionary measure and to prevent a possible outbreak of SARS at the workplace, all employers are enjoined to:

1. clean the work area with household disinfectant and make sure that water, soap and disinfectants are available in all washrooms and toilets;
2. stress good hygiene practices among workers like washing their hands frequently, covering their nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing, spitting at proper places; and
3. monitor the health of workers particularly those with fever and those who have traveled to countries affected with the SARS virus.

**Workplace with Imminent Danger Situation**

In workplaces where workers are evidently at risk of infection as in health-care services and other frontline services, the employer shall take immediate protective measures to avoid, correct or remove such imminent danger (based on Rule 1010, OSHS). A screening program on SARS must be installed in

accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of Health. Screening or triage shall follow a procedure using a checklist that may include but not limited to questions related to:

1. recent travel to a country or place on WHO list for local SARS transmission;
2. recent contact with a SARS case; and
3. affliction by such symptoms as fever, cough, difficulty of breathing or shortness of breath and diarrhea. (See Annex 1)

Workers in said workplaces must take extra precautionary measures under the guidance of the Occupational Safety and Health Center in coordination with the Department of Health. This includes, in particular, strict hygiene and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). Employers shall see to it that these PPEs (e.g. appropriate respirators such as N95, gowns, gloves) are properly worn by the workers while at work and disposed of accordingly after use.

In the event that a worker is suspected as having SARS, the employer shall:

1. Provide the worker with a face mask to prevent the risk of spreading the infection;
2. Immediately isolate the worker in a separate well-ventilated room in the workplace, away from other workers;
3. Arrange for the worker to be transported to San Lazaro Hospital (SLH) or the Research Institute on Tropical Medicine (RITM) or the nearest SARS designated hospital for assessment (See Annex 2). Transport will be provided by the local government unit or by the referring company or SLH/ RITM. The family or next of kin shall be notified;
4. Provide the Department of Health-NEC, the names and details of the SARS case and contacts. Copy shall be furnished to the OSHC;
5. Workers who have been exposed to a SARS case should be checked for body temperature and other signs and symptoms not limited to fever, cough and difficulty of breathing. These contacts should be advised to go on home quarantine; and
6. Decontaminate work area with appropriate disinfectant (e.g. chlorine bleaching solution and 1:100 phenol based disinfectant).

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE / ENTITLEMENTS**

### **Leave of Absence**

For workers who are requested by their employers to stay at home or who are served quarantine order for reasons related to SARS, the following arrangements may be considered during the period of absence:

1. Worker's leave of absence may be charged to their annual sick/vacation leave credits under the company policy or practice or as stipulated in their collective bargaining agreement. If the worker's leave credits has been used up, employers could consider granting leave of absence without pay. However, employers are urged to exercise flexibility and compassion in granting additional leave with pay, if possible, considering that the worker may be facing financial hardship.
2. By mutual agreement, employers and workers/unions could also agree on other arrangements for the worker's leave of absence.

For workers who need to take a leave to take care of their children or parents or choose to stay away from work on their own accord, employers are encouraged to adopt a flexible and enlightened approach in granting time-off, implementing flexible work arrangements as well as allowing workers to take their annual leave. For workers who have used up their annual vacation/sick leave credits, employers could consider granting them leave of absence without pay.

### **Hospitalization Benefits**

The Research Institute of Tropical Medicine (RITM) and the San Lazaro Hospital (SLH) shall shoulder all hospitalization expenses of SARS cases confined in these hospitals.

In addition, the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (Phil-Health) shall provide P100,000.00 medical insurance package over and above the usual health insurance benefit for public and private health workers infected with SARS. Other PhilHealth members and their dependents infected with SARS will also be covered by hospital benefits amounting to P50,000.00

### **Social Security / Employee's Compensation Benefits**

A worker who contracts SARS in the performance of his/her duty is entitled to sickness benefits under the Social Security System and employees compensation benefits under PD 626.

## ASSISTANCE TO BE PROVIDED BY DOLE AGENCIES

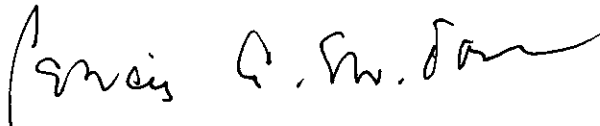
The Department of Labor and Employment, through the Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC), the Bureau of Working Conditions and the Regional Offices, shall provide the following, in collaboration with the Department of Health when necessary:

1. information on SARS and workplace concerns including issues related to OSH standards and General Labor Standards,
2. technical assistance in the form of risk assessment, use of protective equipment including a respirator program, workplace improvements to reduce the likelihood of droplet infection and contamination by materials possibly infected by the virus,
3. capability-building of SARS focal person.


The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the International Labor Affairs Service (ILAS) shall provide information on SARS prevention and control to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) through the pre-departure orientation seminars, and through the labor attaches, welfare officers and the Filipino Associations overseas. The OWWA shall provide Vitamin C and appropriate masks to outgoing OFWs.

### EFFECTIVITY

This Guidelines shall take effect immediately.



**PATRICIA A. STO. TOMAS**  
Secretary

 Dept. of Labor & Employment  
Office of the Secretary



17 June 2003

DISSEMINATED BY AS RECORDS SECTION ON

6/23 2003 }

## **ANNEX 1**

### **DOH ADVISORY**

#### **What the Health Workers should know about SARS**

##### **What is SARS?**

- SARS means Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.
- A newly identified respiratory illness characterizes by fever and pneumonia which rapidly becomes severe and some cases may lead to death.

##### **What are the signs and symptoms of SARS?**

If one has visited a country which is affected by SARS and/or had close contact with a SARS patient and within 14 days show the following signs and symptoms:

- High fever (38.0°C and above)
- Headache
- Overall feeling of discomfort
- Body aches
- Dry cough
- Difficulty of breathing after 2 to 7 days
- And atypical symptoms such as diarrhea

**ANNEX 2**

**LIST OF MEDICAL CENTERS AND  
REGIONAL HOSPITALS**

**Metro Manila**

San Lazaro Hospital  
San Lazaro Compound, Sta. Cruz, Manila  
732-3776 to 78; 732-3106  
711-6966; 711-6979 fax

Research Institute for Tropical Medicine  
Alabang, Muntinlupa City  
809-7599; 807-2636; 842-2828  
807-2634; 807-2628 to 32; 842-2245

**Region I**

Ilocos Regional Training Center  
San Fernando, La Union  
(072) 888-5864

Mariano Marcos Memorial Hosp. and Medical Center  
Batac, Ilocos Norte  
(077) 792-3133

**Region II**

Veterans Regional Hospital  
Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya  
(078) 321-2090  
Cagayan Valley Medical Center  
Tuguegarao, Cagayan  
(078) 844-1410

**Region III**

Jose B. Lingad Memorial General Hospital  
San Fernando, Pampanga  
(045) 961-3921  
Dr. Paulino Garcia Memorial Research and Medical Center  
Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija  
(044) 463-8286

**Region IV**

Batangas Regional Hospital  
Batangas City, Batangas

**Region V**

Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital  
Legaspi City, Albay  
Bicol Medical Center  
Naga City, Camarines Sur

Region VI

Western Visayas Regional Hospital  
Bacolod City, Negros Occidental  
(034) 433-1591  
Western Visayas Medical Center  
Mandurriao, Iloilo City, Iloilo

Region VII

Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital  
Tagbilaran City, Bohol  
(038) 411-4831  
Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center  
Cebu City, Cebu  
(032) 253-9891

Region VIII

Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center  
Tacloban City, Leyte del Norte

Region IX

Dr. Jose Rizal Memorial Hospital  
Dapitan City, Zamboanga del Norte  
Margosatubig Regional Hospital  
Margosatubig, Zamboanga del Sur  
Zamboanga City Medical Center  
Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Sur

Region X

Mayor Hilarion Ramiro Sr. Regional Training and Teaching Hospital  
Ozamis City, Misamis Occidental  
(088) 521-0022  
Northern Mindanao Medical Center  
Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental  
(088) 728829

Region XI

Davao Regional Hospital  
Tagum City, Davao del Norte  
Davao Medical Center  
Bajada, Davao City  
(082) 227-2731

Region XII

Cotabato Regional and Medical Center  
Cotabato City, North Cotabato

CAR

Luis Hora Memorial Regional Hospital  
Abatan, Bauko, Mt. Province

Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center  
Baguio City

ARMM

Amai Pakpak Medical Center  
Marawi City, Lanao del Sur

CARAGA

Caraga Regional Hospital  
Surigao City, Surigao del Norte  
(086) 826-2459

Adela Serra-Ty Memorial Medical Center  
Tandag, Surigao del Sur  
(086) 211-3700