



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CIRCUIT BREAKER TO MINIMISE FURTHER SPREAD OF COVID-19

The Multi-Ministry Taskforce will be implementing an elevated set of safe distancing measures, as a circuit breaker to pre-empt the trend of increasing local transmission of COVID-19. The aim is to reduce much more significantly movements and interactions in public and private places. To do this, we will move towards full home-based learning for our schools and close most physical workplace premises, save for those providing essential services and in selected economic sectors which are critical for our local and the global supply chains. Work and business activities that can be carried out via telecommuting from home should continue.

2. The Taskforce has reviewed the latest evidence and pattern of transmission of COVID-19 in Singapore. Most of the cases have arisen from persons coming into close contact with an infected individual in social, workplace and family settings. The Taskforce is very concerned by the increasing number of locally transmitted cases in the past week. It has concluded that we must make a decisive move at this point, to curb the spread of the infection. We require the cooperation of all Singaporeans to minimise movements and interactions in public and private places, and stay home unless necessary for essential purposes.

3. These heightened safe distancing measures will be in place for four weeks (i.e. two incubation cycles) from 7 April 2020 until 4 May 2020 (inclusive). Entities that are able to comply immediately are strongly encouraged to do so. Current safe distancing measures on capacity limits and physical separation remain in force and must be strictly complied with, especially over the weekend.

Services that Remain Open to Support Daily Needs

4. From 7 April 2020, all restaurants, hawker centres, coffeeshops, food courts and other food and beverage outlets will remain open only for takeaway or delivery. Food suppliers – including food and food ingredient production, food manufacturing, food processing, abattoirs/ slaughterhouses, food caterers, importers and traders, and food logistics, cold stores/ warehouses, food safety testing, supermarkets, convenience stores, grocery retailers, wholesale markets and wet markets – will remain open. The public can be assured of the continued availability of food items.

5. Retail outlets that provide items and services necessary to support the daily living needs of the population will remain open. Specific outlets in the malls will remain open for this purpose. These include supermarkets, pharmacies, restaurants, food and beverage outlets, and other outlets offering essential services. All other physical retail outlets shall be closed.

6. The Public Service will be fully operational and government services will be available, but with the majority of the public service workforce telecommuting. Physical counter services will be scaled down, with reduced staff manning for safe distancing, but digital services will continue to be available. Residents can continue to use e-services but are advised to defer any non-urgent visits.

7. Essential services like healthcare, social services, financial services, cleaning services, and water, energy, and environment related services will also continue to operate. Other selected services required for daily living (e.g. hairdressers/ barbers, lift maintenance, laundry), transport services, and telecommunications services will remain open.

8. Please refer to <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/essentialservices> for the latest and most updated list of essential activities that will be allowed to continue to operate.

Closure of Workplace Premises

9. Many workplaces, including all public service agencies, have already implemented telecommuting arrangements for a sizeable proportion of their employees. The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has also stepped up inspections and issued Stop Work Orders or Remedial Orders to firms that have failed to follow MOM advisories on telecommuting¹.

10. However, further actions are necessary to reduce even more the proportion of our workforce who commute for work. All business, social, or other activities that cannot be conducted through telecommuting from home will be suspended from 7 April 2020 to 4 May 2020 (inclusive). Essential Services and their related supply chains, as well as entities that form a part of the global supply chain, are exempted from the suspension.

11. Entities providing essential services will need to operate with the minimum staff needed on their premises² to ensure the continued running of those services, and implement strict safe distancing measures. Social interactions, including during meal times, must be avoided. These firms may be required to suspend their operations should any of their staff working on the premises become infected.

12. Employers that are able to continue to operate their businesses (in limited or full capacity) with their employees working from home should continue to do so.

13. Entities which carry out activities listed on the above-mentioned website (see paragraph 8 for hyperlink) are permitted to continue to operate from their premises. They are required to submit details of their plans to operate with enhanced safe distancing measures in place at <https://www.covid.gobusiness.gov.sg> by end of 13 April 2020. They may continue to perform their essential services while waiting for our response. Entities which are not performing services listed but believe they have strong grounds for exemption from the suspension should read the guidance and

¹ Please refer to the MOM website (www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19) for the latest advisories.

² Except for essential supplies and services that may need to step up to ensure that the needs of the population are met, such as retail supermarkets and logistics and delivery services.

FAQs provided by MTI. They may then apply to be exempted via the same website. Only entities performing, or providing critical support for, essential activities will be exempted.

14. Except for those allowed to commute for work, Singapore residents and foreign workers should remain largely within their place of residence. They can still go out to buy meals or other essentials, or procure essential services, but should otherwise minimise the time they spend outside.

15. Given the emergence of cluster of cases in foreign worker dormitories, we will put in place extra precautions. All foreign workers living in such dormitories will be required to stay within their dormitory premises. Dormitory operators will also have to adopt additional measures in these premises to minimise the risk of transmission, and to reduce inter-mixing of workers between blocks. Dormitory operators are also required to put up clear signages to inform the foreign workers not to congregate or gather at common areas. MOM is following up with dormitory operators on immediate implementation of all of these measures.

Full Home-Based Learning for Schools

16. From 8 April 2020 to 4 May 2020, schools and institutes of higher learning will shift to full home-based learning, while preschool and student care centres will suspend services. Private education institutions should also move to home-based learning, or suspend classes otherwise.

17. Parents working in essential services such as healthcare, who are unable to secure alternative care arrangements may approach their children's preschools and primary schools for assistance.

Closure of Recreation Venues, Attractions and Places of Worship

18. From 7 April 2020, all attractions, theme parks, museums and casinos will be closed. Sports and recreation facilities, such as public swimming pools, country clubs, gyms and fitness studios will also be closed. All recreational facilities in hotels will be closed.

19. As earlier announced, organised sporting programmes and religious services will remain suspended. Places of worship will be closed.

Support for Businesses and Households

20. These measures are necessary, but will have disruption to businesses and households. The Government will announce added support for households and businesses on 6 April 2020, on top of what was provided in the earlier Budgets to tide them over the next month.

Protection for the General Population

21. Our population is best protected not through a single measure on its own, but a collection. These include safe distancing, good personal hygiene such as regular

hand washing and not touching one's face unnecessarily. Of particular importance is to protect vulnerable groups, especially our seniors.

22. Members of the public are strongly advised to stay at home and avoid going out unnecessarily, except to purchase daily necessities, essential services, or for urgent medical needs. There should be no social gatherings. Social contact should be confined to immediate family members living in the same household during this period.

23. Members of the public who need to exercise should do so on their own, around their immediate neighbourhood in open, uncrowded places. Public parks and open-air stadiums will remain open, but gatherings in groups in these spaces must be avoided. Members of the public should practise safe distancing even in open spaces.

Use of Masks

24. The Government's recommendation on the use of masks thus far has been based on scientific advice and guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO), and that is for individuals to wear surgical masks only when sick, in order to protect others. This was also when we did not have community spread of the virus in Singapore.

25. The situation is now changing. There is increased local transmission in Singapore, and a possibility of some undetected cases in the community. There is also some evidence that infected people showing no symptoms may infect others. This is why the WHO is reviewing its guidelines on mask usage.

26. Given these changed circumstances, we have updated our guidance. The general public is advised to stay home and avoid interactions with anyone other than immediate family members living in the same household. For those who need to go out, and are unable to avoid close contact with others, then wearing a mask could provide some protection. Reusable masks can be considered for this purpose, to provide some basic protection. This is because there is currently a global shortage of surgical masks, and we need to conserve these masks for those who need them most, i.e. our healthcare workers.

27. We will distribute reusable masks to all residents with registered home addresses. The distribution will take place progressively from 5 to 12 April 2020, from collection points at designated Community Clubs/ Centres (CCs) and Residents' Committee (RC) Centres. Family/ household members will be able to collect on behalf of their other household members.

Social Responsibility is Key

28. Social responsibility is critical in slowing the spread of COVID-19. We need all Singaporeans to do the right thing, if we are to beat the virus.

29. Those who are unwell, even with mild flu-like symptoms, should see a doctor immediately. They should not go out into the public for any other purpose, and should not come into close contact with others. We should stop non-essential activities and avoid all gatherings beyond our immediate family or household members during this

period. All should adopt safe distancing and good hygiene practices even at home, and encourage your friends and family to do so as well.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
3 APRIL 2020
