

My No: - JSC/SEC/COR

JSC/SEC/Notice 2

To All High Court Judges/ Judicial Officers /Presidents of Labour Tribunals

Instructions to courts for the prevention and control of Covid-19

Judicial Service Commission directed me to bring the instructions annexed hereto on the subject referred to above, issued by Director General of Health Services to the attention of all High Court Judges/Judicial Officers/Presidents of Labour Tribunals for information and necessary action.

Under the command of the Judicial Service Commission

H.S.Somarathne
Secretary

Judicial Service Commission

H. Sanjeewa Somaratne
Secretary

**Judicial Service Commission
Colombo 12**

20th November 2020,

Office of the Judicial Service Commission Secretariat,

Colombo 12.



Instructions for selected public activities/work settings for the prevention and control of COVID - 19

Courts

Description

Courts are a high risk setting for COVID-19 transmission as mixing of persons from different areas / different risk levels occurs.

They also require support functions such as photocopy and printing services, translation services, eateries and parking spaces which can contribute to risk / be affected.

Specific message/ Instructions:

For the Administration

- Appoint a responsible person to each of the courts, who is expected to develop an institutional preparedness plan and to oversee that preventive measures are implemented throughout
- Responsible person to ensure health education of all staff is regularly conducted
- Responsible person to ensure constant reminders of the need to adhere to COVID-19 prevention behaviours – physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand washing/use of sanitizers and proper wearing of masks.
- Provide adequate number of foot operated/ sensor operated sinks with soap for hand washing at the entrance and within the court premises. These should be installed and maintained to function in strategic, multiple locations to improve accessibility
- Alcohol based hand sanitizers should be made available at key service points
- Maintain a staff roster and inform staff who are required to be present each day. Human resource restrictions should be based on recommendations issued by Ministry of Health.
- Set up temperature monitoring system at the court entrance. Only those with normal temperature should be allowed to enter the premises. Non-contact infra-red devices are preferred for temperature monitoring.
- Only those who are essential for the court cases should be allowed to enter the court premises
- Maintain a registry of all persons entering the court premises. This should include name, NIC number, address and telephone number and the location to be visited
- Masks must be worn properly to cover both nose and mouth by everyone within the court premises.
- Keep the doors, windows & fan lights open as much as possible to strengthen cross ventilation
- Operate the air conditioner/ ceiling fans at moderate speeds. Refer to the general guideline on maintenance of air conditioners
- Ensure regular cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, e.g. door handles, tabletops, elevator buttons between sessions, especially in areas with high crowd turnover
- Ensure physical distancing of a minimum of 1 meter between persons. Seats/ benches should be placed/ marked in a way which allows 1-meter distancing in all directions.
- Witness box should be physically distanced and frequently touched areas cleaned/disinfected regularly.



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- Consider appointment systems / sessions for cases and electronic / telephone methods for court proceedings and court administration as far as possible (E-Filing and Virtual Courts).
- Limit the number of persons present at a given time to 50% capacity or less based on risk category of the area. The maximum number of people to be permitted in each room should be determined, prominently displayed and strictly enforced.
- If there is a lift, mark the positions on the floor to limit the number of passengers at a time to maintain the safe distance between each other and facing away from each other.
- Ensure seating and service points in the canteen adhere to physically distancing and other preventive guidelines.
- Consider the requirement for an employee 'acknowledgement of COVID-19 precaution instruction' form to educate professional and other staff.
- Strictly enforce the no smoking policy of the government on the court premises.
- You are required to fill the provided Assurance form, indicating compliance with the instructions given. The Assurance form should be submitted to the local authority (Municipal council/ urban council/ pradeshiya sabha) and a copy should be sent to the local Medical Officer of Health. The Registrar of each Court is responsible to ensure that the above guidelines are strictly adhered to.

For the Judges / Legal officers /other staff

- Wash your hands with soap and water at least for 20 seconds before entering and leaving the premises and frequently at work.
- Practice respiratory etiquette: cover your mouth and nose with elbow when sneezing.
- Avoid touching mouth, nose and eyes.
- Wear your face mask properly at all times to cover both nose and mouth - these can be disposable / reusable. Adequate reusable face masks should be available for personal use. Sri Lanka Standards Institution has made available standards for reusable masks.
- Always maintain minimum 1-meter physical distance.
- Do not organize or participate in any gatherings.
- Avoid contact with frequently touched surfaces unnecessarily (such as door handles; lift buttons; stair railings and shared objects such as pens and staplers) and use non-touch techniques e.g. using elbow to open doors.
- Stay home even if you have fever or minor respiratory symptoms such as sore throat/cough.
- Take the minimum necessary personal belongings with you. These belongings (purse, phone, keys) should be disinfected as soon as you get home. Avoid wearing jewellery, watches, etc. to office if possible.
- Do not share personal items such as pens/ pencils/plates/cups/water bottles.
- Minimize the exchange of books, diaries and other similar documents.

For Judges / legal officers

- Do not share coats/ cloaks/ ties. These should be worn only when essential and cleaned regularly.



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- Consider advocating for a temporary period of not wearing cloaks based on the alert level of the country.
- Do not hang your coats/cloaks in common places where it will get mixed up with other's coats/cloaks.
- In chambers/offices minimize the number of clients as much as possible. All persons entering the office should be wearing masks. Keep the doors and windows open as much as possible to improve ventilation. Alcohol based hand sanitizers should be used frequently. Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. In shared office spaces do not exchange personal items.
- Maintain a record of all contacts encountered during the day as far as possible
- For legal officers - minimize handling of money. Alternate methods such as online bank transfers, bank deposits should be considered.

For litigants

- Avoid going to the courts unless it is essential, and spend the minimum time required to get the work done. Do not loiter on court premises/canteen.
- Strictly follow signposts, instructions on numbers permitted, seating arrangements.
- Wear your face mask properly to cover both nose and mouth at all times.
- Wash your hands with soap and water at least for 20 seconds before entering and leaving the court premises. Use hand sanitizer when required
- Practice respiratory etiquette - cover your mouth and nose with elbow when sneezing.
- Avoid touching mouth, nose and eyes.
- Always maintain minimum 1-meter physical distance from others.
- Avoid contact with frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, stair railings and common pens unnecessarily and use non-touch techniques e.g. using elbow to open doors.
- Minimize handling of money. Alternate methods such as online bank transfers, bank deposits should be considered.
- Notify the legal authority if having fever and respiratory symptoms such as sore throat and cough

Special considerations

- The free civilian movement due to road access and availability of other public services may pose additional risks where the courts occupy large areas almost amounting to village like situation, such as in Hultsdorp. Local arrangements to restrict movement due to public road access may have to be specially arranged after consulting with local authorities. It is to be noted that public inconvenience needs to be avoided. The services to the public such as eateries, communication shops, other vendors all need to strictly comply with the health guidelines and a method of strictly monitoring their co-existence should be adopted. The support of the local authorities and police to monitor and enforce preventive measures can be obtained.
- In isolated areas/areas declared to be of high risk - limit number of cases taken up to only urgent/essential cases



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Methods of instruction

- Health messages through posters/stickers/notices.
- Adopt innovative methods of sending frequent reminders.
- Reference to health guidelines general and specific for each supportive service mentioned in the document.



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