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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2020 - 002

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS OF ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

WHEREAS, under Republic Act (RA) No. 11469 or the *Bayanihan To Heal as One Act*, the President is authorized to direct the operation of establishments to carry out the declared national policy of mitigating the transmission of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, under the Memorandum of the Executive Secretary dated 28 March 2020, the Department of Tourism (DOT) is directed to issue guidelines for the exercise of the President's mandate under the *Bayanihan To Heal as One Act*;

WHEREAS, pursuant to RA 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009, the DOT is mandated to promulgate rules and regulations governing the operation and activities of all tourism enterprises;

WHEREAS, the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases *Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines* defines the "New Normal" as emerging behaviors, situations, and minimum public health standards that will be institutionalized in common or routine practices and remain even after the pandemic while the disease is not totally eradicated through means such as widespread immunization;

WHEREAS, there is a need to provide guidelines to institutionalize updated health and safety protocols in the operations of accommodation establishment under a New Normal Scenario;

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing, these Health and Safety Guidelines for Accommodation Establishments Under the New Normal are hereby issued:

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Circular shall be known as the "*New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Accommodation Establishments*."

SECTION 2. Definition of Terms. – For purposes of these Guidelines, the term:

- (a) "Accommodation Establishments" shall refer to establishments operating primarily for accommodation purposes including, but not limited to, hotels, resorts, apartment hotels, tourist inns, motels, pension houses, private homes used for homestay, ecolodges, serviced apartments, condotels, and bed and breakfast facilities.
- (b) "Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT)" refers to refers to a team established by DILG MC No. 2020 - 023 to help implement local prevention and mitigation, preparedness, and response measures for COVID-19 (*DOH MC No. 2020-0020*)
- (c) "Community Quarantine" refers to the restriction of movement within, into, or out of the area of quarantine of individuals, large groups of people, or communities designed to reduce the likelihood of transmission of COVID-19 among persons in and to persons outside the affected area (*IATF Omnibus Guidelines*).

- (d) "Health Declaration Form" refers to refers to a form that a person must fill-up to declare his or her current health condition and travel history for the past fourteen (14) days.
- (e) "Minimum Public Health Standards" refers to guidelines set by the Department of Health (DOH), as well as sector-relevant guidelines to aid all sectors in all settings to implement non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI), which refer to public health measures that do not involve vaccines, medications, or other pharmaceutical interventions, which individuals and communities can carry out in order to reduce transmission rates, contact rates, and the duration of infectiousness of individuals in the population to mitigate COVID-19 (*IATF Omnibus Guidelines*)
- (f) "New Normal" shall refer to the emerging behaviors, situations, and minimum public health standards that will be institutionalized in common or routine practices and remain even after the pandemic while the disease is not totally eradicated through means such as widespread immunization (*IATF Omnibus Guidelines*).
- (g) "Personal Protective Equipment" or PPE refers to clothing and accessories worn to minimize exposure to health and safety risks, such as protective clothing, masks, goggles,
- (h) "Physical Distancing" or "Social Distancing" refers to the strict maintenance of a distance of at least one (1) meter radius between persons (*Memorandum from the Executive Secretary dated 13 March 2020*).
- (i) "Single Occupancy" shall mean that only one person shall be accommodated in each room no matter the size of the room.

SECTION 3. Scope and Application. – This Order shall apply to all Accommodation Establishments in the Philippines in areas where a Community Quarantine is no longer in place.

II. OPERATIONS UNDER A COMMUNITY QUARANTINE

SECTION 4. Suppletory Application to Administrative Order No. 2020-002. – For Accommodation Establishments in areas declared to be under a Community Quarantine, Administrative Order No. 2020-002 or the *Community Quarantine Guidelines for Hotel Operations* shall primarily govern, and these Guidelines shall apply in a suppletory character.

III. OPERATIONS UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

SECTION 5. Guest Handling Policy

- A. Guests must complete a Health Declaration Form upon check in.
- B. Online payment is encouraged upon booking.
- C. Body temperature checking using a thermal scanner at the hotel entrances shall be undertaken for all guests by qualified health or medical staff or trained hotel personnel. Only guests cleared during screening shall be allowed to enter the hotel perimeter to check-in. Those with fever and flu-like symptoms will not be allowed to enter the establishment and will be referred to the doctor on duty, to the nearest hospital, or to the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) in accordance with the DOH prescribed protocol.
- D. Guests shall be advised to disinfect their shoes using sanitizing mats provided at the entrances.

- E. Physical Distancing measures, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette must be observed when handling guests at the check-in counter.
- F. Guests must be provided with appropriate information on the prevailing disease, as well as the policies enforced by the establishment to reduce the risk and spread of the disease. Information materials on hand washing and respiratory etiquette, proper use of face mask, emergency contact numbers, among others, must be provided to guests.
- G. Guests must be informed of the management policies on room occupancy, dining, and use of public areas imposed to ensure safety and reduce risk of infection. Physical distancing, wearing of face mask, proper handwashing / hand sanitizing practice must be emphasized.
- H. No showing of guests around the room after check in. Guest escorting to the room may be allowed following strict observance of physical distancing and in compliance with the health and safety protocols set by the DOH.
- I. Guests must be provided with reminder cards, which may include the following:
 - 1. No sharing of food or any personal or non-personal belongings;
 - 2. Proper disposal of used PPE;
 - 3. Mingling with occupants of other rooms are not encouraged;
 - 4. Practice of proper handwashing etiquette/hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and proper use of face mask; and
 - 5. Strict observance of Physical Distancing.

SECTION 6. Reception and Concierge

A. Reception Counter and Concierge

- 1. Official up-to-date information must be available at the reception desk about travel to and from countries and/or other areas, including local destinations, that are identified by the Department of Health (DOH) as high-risk in spreading the virus or disease.
- 2. Emergency contact numbers of public health authorities, nearest hospital or medical center, and the DOH Assistance Center must be readily available in the reception desk.
- 3. The following medical kit and PPE shall be readily available at the reception counter or desk:
 - a. Germicidal disinfectant or wipes for surface cleaning;
 - b. Face mask or face shield;
 - c. Biohazard disposable waste bag;
 - d. 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
 - e. Tissue paper, napkin, or paper towel; and
 - f. Disposable gloves
- 4. Other PPE that may be considered in the reception counter for emergency purposes are as follows:
 - a. Disposable protective apron
 - b. Disposable protective shoe covers
 - c. Full-length long-sleeved gown / protective clothing / coveralls
- 5. 70% solution alcohol, alcohol-based hand sanitizers and tissue paper / paper towel must also be available at the concierge.

6. A floor marker that allows one (1) meter distance between guests on queuing must be in place to ensure physical distancing.
7. Acrylic glass barrier may be set up at the front desk for additional protection.
8. Contactless payment is highly encouraged.

B. Reception or Front Desk Officer

1. Regular briefing and information on current and updated health crisis and simulation of pertinent security and safety measures for reception desk staff or front desk officers must be conducted.
2. Precautionary measures, including Physical Distancing, hand cleaning, and respiratory etiquette must be strictly observed.
3. Front desk personnel must be familiar with room occupancy policy for accompanying persons in the event of a suspected case.
4. Front desk personnel attending to guests must wear face masks. Disposable gloves must be used when handling cash or documents, and/or materials that are passed from person to person. Contactless process at the front desk is highly encouraged.
5. All staff extending guest assistance that requires physical contact (e.g. wheelchair, bell service) must wear proper PPE, such as face mask and gloves, whenever necessary.
6. Hand-shaking is not advised, the practice of Filipino Brand of Service (FBS) or the "*Mabuhay* Gesture" in greeting and receiving guests, as well as other forms of contactless greeting, is highly encouraged.

SECTION 7. Rooms and Housekeeping

A. Room Occupancy Policy

1. Only single up to double room occupancy is allowed. Couples or family members who share the same household may be allowed in double or twin occupancy rooms. A distance of 1 to 2 meters between the beds is highly encouraged.
2. Room transfers may be allowed when necessary.
3. Sanitation kit shall be provided for each guest which may include 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based sanitizers, disinfectant sprays, face masks, disposable gloves, and rags.
4. Bathroom amenities must be regularly provided for each guest.
5. Trash bins must be provided inside the guest room. A separate trash bag or bin intended for used PPE such as face mask, gloves and other sanitation waste materials must be provided.
6. Rooms must be set up to allow convenient in-room dining for guests.
7. Room turndown service is highly discouraged.

B. Housekeeping Staff

1. Housekeeping staff should be trained in the proper use of disinfectants or sanitizing solutions and provided with appropriate PPE such as face masks, gloves, disposable gown/ coverall and closed shoes.
2. Housekeeping staff must use PPE such as disposable gloves, eye protection gear (goggles) and face masks, when cleaning guest rooms and other common areas.
3. When cleaning rooms used by a suspected infected person, housekeeping staff must use additional protective equipment, such as disposable or washable coverall and protective shoe covers in accordance with DOH guidelines for disinfection processes.
4. Used PPE must be removed and disposed or washed using standard disinfection control measures in accordance with the guidelines issued by DOH.
5. After routine disinfection and decontamination of a guestroom, housekeeping staff must wash hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers as recommended by DOH.
6. If doing cleaning that generates splashes while washing surfaces, cleaning staff must use facial protection or face shield and waterproof aprons.
7. Housekeeping staff must change work clothes before going home. Proper handling of work clothes in the establishment must be in place.
8. Frequent sanitation of high touched surfaces in guestrooms and public areas using the prescribed sanitizing solutions by the DOH or WHO must be conducted.

C. Room Decontamination

1. Room occupancy per floor may be established taking into consideration proper spacing and Physical Distancing.
2. The establishment must ensure prompt action to clean rooms after each use of guest/s. It must be a standard procedure to sanitize rooms right after check-out.
3. Before accepting a new guest or occupant, rooms must remain empty for a certain period, depending on the disinfecting technology or materials being used.
4. Disinfection of rooms and surfaces must be conducted every after guests check out. This includes disinfection of furniture, appliances, flooring, and panes using bleach solution or any approved disinfecting agent.
5. Thorough disinfection of rooms and common areas using enhanced technologies, such as electrostatic sprayers with hospital-grade disinfectants, high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, or germicidal ultra-violet (UV) lighting system, at least once every two (2) weeks is highly encouraged.
6. Minibars and other complimentary in-room food and beverage, except bottled water, are highly discouraged.

D. Linen Decontamination Procedure in accordance with DOH Guidelines

1. Used linen and other washable items must be handled as little as possible with minimal agitation to prevent possible contamination of the handler or the environment.
2. For in-house laundry, linen and other washable items must be soaked using appropriate disinfecting solution for at least fifteen (15) minutes.
3. If the room was used by a suspected infected person, all washable items such as bedsheets, blankets, pillowcases, and towels must be placed in a separate disposal bag and washed separately using hot water (70-80°C).
4. Non-washable items including mattresses and pillows must be wiped with diluted bleach solution or any approved disinfecting agent.
5. Disposable gloves and mask must be used when handling and segregating soiled linen to appropriately designed bins. Used bins must be sanitized after every use.
6. All items for disposal must be disposed in sealed bags immediately.

SECTION 8. Food and Beverage (F&B) Service

- A. Restaurants, dining areas, and other F&B personnel must strictly observe proper hygiene at all times.
- B. Guests must be reminded to disinfect their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or 70% solution alcohol located at the reception counter upon entering and leaving the vicinity.
- C. Self-service station set up for guests at the dining area is highly discouraged. All food and beverages must be served by restaurant crew or personnel.
- D. Buffet services and room service is highly discouraged.
- E. Serving of individually-packed meals using biodegradable packaging is encouraged.
- F. In lieu of room service, grab-and-go station (where guests can pick-up their breakfast or ordered food) must be made available. Grab-and-go stations must be sanitized regularly every after use.
- G. Banquet tables that can accommodate ten (10) guests must accommodate only five (5) guests. Tables shall be arranged such that the distance from the back of one chair to the back of another chair shall be more than 1 meter apart and the guests face each other from a distance of at least 1 meter.
- H. Function venues must be disinfected during break time or after every meeting or event.
- I. Function venues must have limited capacities to ensure physical distancing.
- J. Restaurants and other dining facilities must be mindful of the direction of the airflow in arranging tables to avoid droplet transmission prompted by air-conditioned ventilation.

SECTION 9. Kitchen Sanitation and Disinfection

- A. A separate handwashing area for kitchen staff must be provided or installed. Kitchen staff should wash hands (including fingernails) up to the forearms thoroughly with warm water and soap as often as necessary.
- B. Kitchen staff must wear face shields when handling food. Hands and exposed portions of arms must be washed before any food preparation or packaging. Food handlers must use proper PPE to avoid contamination.
- C. Use of bare hands must be minimized by using utensils, gloves, or tongs especially when preparing or packing ready-to-eat foods.
- D. Kitchen staff must ensure that clean and sanitized cloths, towels, linens, aprons, and mop heads are used at appropriate intervals during the work period.
- E. Kitchen staff must be provided with PPE such as face masks, disposable gloves, hairnets, clean overalls, and slip reduction work shoes.
- F. All dishes, silverwares, and glassware must be washed and disinfected, including items that have not been used, as they might have been in contact with the hands of the guest or staff.
- G. Kitchen surfaces must be properly cleaned and sanitized after every use.
- H. All food contact surfaces, equipment and utensils must be washed, sanitized and rinsed before each use to avoid contamination.
- I. All food and equipment storage areas must be kept free of rodents and insects to prevent contamination.
- J. Food must be protected from dirt, pests, unnecessary handling, droplet contamination, overhead leakage, or other environmental sources of contamination.

SECTION 10. Public Areas

A. General Common Areas

- 1. Sanitizing mats must be available at all entry points.
- 2. Cleaning and disinfection measures in common areas (e.g. lobby, restrooms, halls, corridors, elevators, etc.) must be applied as a general preventive measure. Special attention must be given to objects that are frequently touched such as elevator button, handles, handrails, switches, doorknobs, kitchen surfaces, etc.
- 3. Physical Distancing must be strictly observed when using elevators. Only 50% of the maximum capacity is recommended to avoid physical contact. Placing of floor markers to delineate physical distancing is likewise encouraged.
- 4. All general facilities and all furnishings must be cleaned, disinfected, and wiped at least once daily.
- 5. Sanitation stations must be set up within the workplace and areas frequented by customers and guests.

6. Trash bins must be available and accessible in all areas of the establishment. These must be sanitized every after disposal or trash collection.
7. Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials on proper handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and proper use of face mask must be posted in conspicuous areas, particularly at the restrooms and other wash areas.
8. Placement of signs reminding guests and general public to minimize touching of surfaces in public areas is highly recommended.

B. Toilets and Restrooms

1. Adequate supply of soaps, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, toilet paper and paper towels in the restrooms must be ensured.
2. Hand-washing and toilet flushing facilities must be functional at all times, including adequate supply of clean water.
3. Toilets and restrooms must be cleaned and sanitized regularly every two (2) hours.

C. Recreational Areas

Recreational areas or facilities such as gym and wellness centers, children's areas, sports facilities, swimming pool, etc. may be allowed to operate but with strict observance of DOH prescribed Minimum Public Health Standards. In any case, special cleaning and disinfection protocols should be applied to these facilities.

SECTION 11. Hotel Transport Service

- A. Standard passenger capacity of each type of vehicle will be decreased or reduced by 50% or one (1) seat apart.
- B. Hotel transport vehicles must comply with the Social Distancing and Passenger Limit Guidelines set by the Department of Transportation (DOTr) to avoid possible contact:
 1. Car / Sedan – No passenger seated beside the driver. Two passengers at the back row with one seat apart. No more than three (3) passengers, including the driver.
 2. Vans – Only two (2) passengers per row are allowed. A waterproof transparent barrier between the driver and the passengers must be installed.
 3. Buses and coasters – A waterproof transparent barrier between the driver and the passengers must be installed. Passengers are not allowed to stand while vehicle is moving. The driver are required to use proper PPE for protection
- C. Hotel service vehicle amenities must include basic first-aid and sanitation kits, which includes face mask, gloves, 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissue paper, and disposable wet wipes instead of wet and warm towels.
- D. Hotel transport vehicles must be sanitized and disinfected after every use.
- E. The service vehicle must have a separate trash bag for all used gloves, face masks, PPE, wet wipes and other sanitation items for disposal used by the passengers.
- F. The driver of the service vehicle must practice proper handwashing and wearing of face mask, gloves and other applicable protective equipment to prevent contamination.

- G. The driver of the service vehicle must remove and dispose the worn gloves and other items that might have been contaminated before entering the vehicle.
- H. The trash bag should be disposed immediately upon arrival at the destination until return to point of origin. Proper disposal procedures of the trash bag should be strictly implemented.

SECTION 12. Engineering and Maintenance Services

- A. The concentration of disinfectant in water for consumption, swimming pools, and spas, recommended based on international standards, must be regularly maintained.
- B. All dishwashing and laundry equipment must be maintained in good working condition at all times.
- C. The condition of the filters must be regularly monitored and the proper replacement rate of indoor air must be maintained. If possible, external windows are kept open to allow natural ventilation, or the Mechanical Ventilation and Air Conditioning System (MVAC) be adjusted to improve indoor ventilation.
- D. The proper functioning of ventilation, air exchange, and dehumidification equipment of covered pools must be checked at least three (3) times a week.
- E. Liquid soap and disinfectant solution dispensers, hand dryers, disposable tissue dispensers, and other similar devices must be properly maintained.
- F. Engineering and Maintenance Department must ensure that all kitchen equipment (freezers, chillers, dishwashing machines, etc.), and air-conditioning units are in good working condition.

SECTION 13. Business Practices and Management

- A. Management Team.** The management team shall adopt the following protective measures in response to the threat of any infectious diseases that can cause negative impact to the tourism industry:
 - 1. Development of an **Integrated Emergency Preparedness Action Plan (IEPAP)** in accordance with the recommendations of local and national public health authorities with the aim to prevent, effectively manage cases, and mitigate impact among clients and staff. IEPAP shall include the following:
 - (a) Occupational Safety and Health Program;
 - (b) Disaster Risk and Management Plan;
 - (c) Food Safety Program; and
 - (d) Business Continuity Plan
 - 2. Ensuring that there is sufficient human and economic capital to implement the action plan. Provision of equipment and procedures, developed in collaboration with local authorities for the management of suspected cases and their possible contacts must also be included.
 - 3. Supervision and monitoring of the progress of the implementation of the action plan in order to assess its impact, verify compliance, identify potential gaps and apply corrective measures to ensure its effectiveness.

4. Conduct of regular updates and meetings to discuss the progress of IEPAP.
5. Ensuring that all relevant policies are properly cascaded across all concerned managers, employees and staff, as well as guests and clients to ensure alignment and consistency of communication. Further, up-to-date information on safety protocols must be properly disseminated to avoid the spread of the virus or disease.
6. Designation of a Hygiene and Safety Manager to take charge of the sanitation and hygiene maintenance in the establishment may be considered.
7. Employment of trained health or medical staff, complete with emergency kit and equipment, to provide immediate assistance whenever necessary.
8. Investment in health plans for all managers, employers and staff. Health plans can be in the form of any of the following:
 - (a) Health Insurance Policy;
 - (b) Health Card Subscription;
 - (c) Trust Fund or Emergency Fund; or
 - (d) Health and Wellness Programs.

B. Human Resource Management. To prepare and support staff during the New Normal, management must:

1. Review establishment's policies on:
 - (a) Flexible sick leave policies (e.g. sick leave filed due to imposed quarantine measures shall not be deducted to allotted number of sick leaves annually);
 - (b) Continuing training and orientation of staff (cross-training of staff and personnel).
2. Maintain an updated list of contact details of each member of the hotel crew or staff.
3. Review attendance records and reports of staff's illness/es at the start of each day, and determine if there is a pattern of absences.
4. Encourage staff and personnel to stay home when he or she is sick.
5. Provide medical consultation benefits, mental and psychological support such as but not limited to in-house or online counselling session, and support group to its employees.
6. Promote of work-life balance through proper scheduling of activities and rotation of workforce.
7. Provide temporary accommodations and shuttle service for employees and staff, if necessary.
8. Provide designated changing rooms for employees and staff.
9. Train staff on personal hygiene, infection control and surface disinfection.
10. Consider redesigning of uniforms of hotel staff, especially those attending to guests to ensure full protection.
11. Conduct periodic meetings on health, safety, and protection protocols.

SECTION 14. Suppliers of Goods and Services

1. Contractors and suppliers of goods and services must follow safe systems of work and also have systems in place for the prevention of the spread of any virus and diseases such as wearing of gloves and face masks.
2. All items coming in the establishment must be sanitized.
3. New and enhanced procedure on cleaning and sanitizing grocery items including perishable produce such as fruits and vegetables must be applied.
4. All delivery vehicles, including those used by event suppliers, must undergo thorough disinfection procedure.
5. All deliveries must be checked before entering the establishment. Items that show signs of pest infestation or contamination must not be accepted.
6. Drivers or delivery personnel must adhere to proper sanitation procedure.
7. Contactless delivery is encouraged as a preventive measure to contain the spread of disease or virus.

SECTION 15. Management of Symptomatic Guests. Following DOH guidelines, the following measures must be complied with in the management of symptomatic guests:

1. Create a holding area for symptomatic guests with travel history from identified countries with high cases prior to transport to hospital. Holding area must conform to DOH standards.
2. Immediately refer guests with fever (≥ 38 C) and/or cough, and have a history of travel to identified high risk countries or localities within the Philippines, to the nearest hospital.
3. Assure guests of assistance in case they begin to manifest symptoms such as fever and/or cough.
4. Keep the symptomatic guest confined in the room originally used until trained transport providers are available to transport him or her to designated referral hospital.
5. Coordinate with the referral hospital for necessary transportation of symptomatic guest/s.
6. Screen existing guests, well or sick, for fever and/or cough, and travel history using the health checklist provided by DOH.
7. Immediately inform the doctor on duty or the emergency response team for assistance for coordination to the referral hospital or the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) for assessment if any staff is concerned about the condition of a guest, or if a guest request access to medical services.
8. Staff and personnel shall avoid employing any discriminatory action against any sick person with high fever and cough for fear of contracting or spreading the disease.

SECTION 16. Notification and Referral. Following DOH Guidelines, Accommodation Establishments must:

- A. Record and analyze guest lists for persons coming from countries that have reported confirmed cases of the current disease.

- B. Ensure confidentiality in reporting of individuals both hotel staff and guests within the hotel or lodging establishment with flu-like symptoms and/or fever and travel history to affected areas.

All staff and guests who show symptoms consistent with the disease and had travel history to high-risk areas or had close contact with a caregiver of suspected or with a confirmed case, must immediately notify their respective BHERT.

SECTION 17. Reportorial Requirements. Accommodation Establishments shall report to the DOT Regional Office with jurisdiction over their area the following information every two weeks:

- A. Number of guests who have developed the symptoms of the illness, if any; and
- B. Number of guests who were transferred to the appropriate facility, if any.

SECTION 18. Separability Clause. If any portion or provision of this Circular is declared null and void or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in force and effect.

SECTION 19. Effectivity. – This Circular shall take effect immediately and shall remain effective until otherwise superseded, amended, or repealed accordingly.

For guidance and strict compliance.

22 May 2020.


BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT
Secretary

