



MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2020 - 006

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS OF MICE ORGANIZERS AND VENUES OR FACILITIES UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

WHEREAS, pursuant to Republic Act 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* 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 MICE Organizers and MICE Venues under a New Normal Scenario;

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing, these Health and Safety Guidelines for MICE Organizers and Venues/Facilities 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 MICE Organizers and MICE Venues/Facilities.*"

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

- (a) "Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT)" 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).
- (b) "Breakout Rooms" shall refer to smaller rooms used as part of a larger conference or event when a large group breaks into sub-groups for specific sessions.
- (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) "Emergency Preparedness Plan" refers to the detailed strategy or procedure to be observed to address an emergency.
- (e) "Food and Beverage Services provider" shall refer to any person or entity who delivers food and beverages to customers at a particular location or at the customer's intended premises.
- (f) "Health Declaration Form" shall refer 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.
- (g) "Maximum Venue Limit" shall refer to the maximum number of persons that may be accommodated inside a venue such that at any period, there shall be only one person for every 1.5 square meters of circulation space.

- (h) "MICE" shall refer to Meeting, Incentive, Convention, Exhibition and business events industry.
- (i) "MICE Events" shall refer to MICE-related activities including business meetings, congresses, conventions, incentive trips, product presentations, business courses, conferences, and seminars.
- (j) "MICE Exhibitor" shall refer to a person or organization who rents an area from the MICE Organizer, usually setting up a booth in the MICE Venue, to meet with attendees for purposes of networking, marketing, generating sales, or acquiring potential clients.
- (k) "MICE Organizer" refers to an entity engaged in the business of managing or organizing congresses, conventions, meetings, conferences, exhibitions, or similar events in a professional manner for a fee or any form of remuneration.
- (l) "MICE Suppliers" shall refer to persons or organizations that supply goods and services for the holding of MICE events, including freight forwarders, contractors, and caterers.
- (m) "MICE Venue/Facility" shall mean a physical space designed and provided for events, exhibitions, meetings, conferences, and conventions for a fee or any form of remuneration.
- (n) "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 implementing 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*)
- (o) "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*)
- (p) "Personal Protective Equipment" or PPE refers to clothing and accessories worn to minimize exposure to health and safety risks, such as protective clothing, masks, and goggles.
- (q) "Physical distancing" or "Social Distancing" refers to the strict maintenance of a distance of at least one (1) meter radius between persons
- (r) "Safety and Sanitation Plan" shall refer to the detailed strategy or procedure to be observed, including equipment to be used, in the cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection of all areas of the venue.
- (s) "Thermal Scanner" shall refer to devices meant to detect high body temperatures as a clue for infectious diseases.
- (t) "Venue Operators" shall refer to those who own and manage venues, and take bookings from MICE Organizers.

Section 3. Scope and Application. – This Order shall apply to all MICE Organizers and Venues/Facilities in the Philippines in areas where a Community Quarantine is no longer in place.

II. OPERATIONS OF MICE ORGANIZERS UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

Section 4. Employee Management. The MICE Organizer shall:

- A. Require all its employees to fill out a Health Declaration Form (HDF) prior to commencement of business operations.
- B. Ensure the monitoring of body temperature of all its employees every time they report to work. Unwell employees or those with mild-flu like symptoms shall be directed to see a doctor or to stay at home.
- C. Provide its employees Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as facemasks and 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer while on duty.
- D. Ensure that its employees are regularly updated and briefed on personal hygiene, proper handwashing or hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, proper use of PPEs, strict observance of physical distancing, use of contactless greeting, and other health and safety protocols while interacting with clients by installing a safety bulletin board and display of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials in the working premises.

Section 5. Office Premises. The MICE Organizer shall ensure that office premises are regularly cleaned and disinfected.

Section 6. Venue Handling. The MICE Organizer shall:

- A. Check and adhere to guidelines and policies of national government agencies and the Local Government Unit where the meeting or event will be held.
- B. Ensure that the Maximum Venue Limit is observed.
- C. Formulate an Emergency Preparedness Plan for the prevention of the spread of infection at the MICE Event, which should include the following details:
 1. Communication response protocol with advance information and communication channels with identified health authorities and partners;
 2. Protocol for monitoring COVID-19 pandemic status and system for providing advice to participants not to attend, if they have any symptoms or feel unwell;
 3. Comprehensive and detailed documentation of contact details of all MICE Organizers, Suppliers, Exhibitors, and all other participants at the MICE event to be shared with local public health authorities if any participant becomes ill with a suspected infectious disease. The contact details shall bear the following information:
 - a. Full Name
 - b. Mobile Number / Email Address
 - c. Current Residential Address

In requiring MICE participants to provide information, MICE Organizers shall comply with the provisions of Republic Act No. 10173 or the *Data Privacy Act of 2012*, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

4. Procedure for dissemination of IEC materials with reminders on Do's and Don'ts, proper hand-washing and hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, proper use of PPEs, strict observance of physical distancing, use of contactless greeting, and cashless method of payment.

- D. Require the Venue Operator to submit a Safety and Sanitation Plan covering pre-event, event proper and post-event safety and sanitary measures for implementation in all areas of the venue.
- E. Require the Venue Operator to:
 1. Ensure that seats are arranged at least one (1) meter between participants during the event proper, including during meals and other interactions.
 2. Designate an isolation room or area where persons who feel unwell while at the MICE Event may be brought to before referral 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.
 3. Ensure the availability of an emergency response team on standby during the MICE Event.
- F. Conduct mandatory briefing on the prevailing disease and possible emergencies as well as the measures enforced by the organizers to make the event safe for participants. Messaging shall include but not be limited to the following:
 1. Advice on preventive measures, especially respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene measures, physical distancing, and contactless greetings.
 2. Contact details or a health hotline number that participants can call for advice or medical help or to give information, if necessary.
- G. Conduct paperless meetings as far as practicable. The use of online shared documents and online notes are encouraged.
- H. Maximize the use of technology for speeches and presentations, and require that presentations from speakers shall be sent ahead of the MICE Event to minimize gadget handling and physical transfer of materials.
- I. Set up panel discussions on stage in observance of Physical Distancing guidelines.
- J. Limit the use of, and sanitize, shared objects (e.g. scripts, props, pens, radio, etc.) including those that will be handled and passed from one person to another.
- K. Sanitize microphones and lapel microphones for the host and presenters every break and prior to transfer from one person to another.
- L. Retain the names and contact details of all participants, service providers/ suppliers/crew members for at least one month for contact tracing, subject to the provisions of Republic Act No. 10173 or the *Data Privacy Act of 2012*

Section 7. Guest Handling

- A. Body temperature checks using a thermal scanner at the venue/building entrance shall be undertaken for all guests by qualified health or medical staff or other trained personnel. Only guests cleared during screening shall be allowed to enter. Those with body temperature exceeding 37.5 degrees Celsius or those exhibiting flu-like symptoms shall be refused admission.

- B. All MICE Exhibitors, Suppliers, attendees, and other participants and visitors, shall be required to fill-out a Health Declaration Form.
- C. “No Face Mask, No Entry” policy shall be implemented for all guests/participants. Face masks shall be worn properly at all times while at the MICE Event except when eating and drinking.
- D. Cashless method of payment and such other options that promote less physical contact are highly encouraged for any miscellaneous transactions during the MICE Event.
- E. Pre-registration and allocated time slots are highly encouraged for controlled entry into the venue lobby and exhibit areas to avoid bottlenecks.
- F. Use of technology such as scanners, QR Codes, etc. is highly encouraged to facilitate seamless access of guests at entry and exit points.
- G. Wherever possible, the use of plastic badges shall be discouraged to eliminate waste. For smaller events, attendees may be requested to pre-print their badges, or show their digitally-issued IDs via smartphone.
- H. Walk-in delegates and visitors may be accepted as long as the Maximum Venue Limit is observed.
- I. Properly marked and controlled registration, queueing, and waiting areas shall be in place to ensure physical distancing.
- J. At least one express lane for senior citizens, PWDs, and pregnant women shall be provided.

III. OPERATION OF MICE VENUES AND FACILITIES UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

Section 8. Employee Management. The Venue Operator shall:

- A. Require all its employees to fill out a Health Declaration Form (HDF) prior to recommencement of business operations.
- B. Ensure the monitoring of body temperature of all its employees every time they report to work. Unwell employees or those with mild-flu like symptoms shall be directed to see a doctor or to stay at home.
- C. Provide its employees PPE such as facemasks and 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer while on duty.
- D. Ensure that its employees are regularly updated and briefed on personal hygiene, proper handwashing or hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, proper use of PPEs (face mask, etc.), strict observance of physical distancing, use of contactless greeting and other related information while interacting with clients by installing a safety bulletin board and display of IEC materials in the working premises.

Section 9. Physical Distancing Measures

- A. Control measures shall be in place for the flow of people through the event floor by demarcating aisles, hallways, and other common areas. Prominently shown directional signages, floor markings, and ushering shall also be provided to create a logical traffic flow and avoid bottlenecks.

- B. Barriers, stanchions, or similar implements may be introduced to ensure proper physical distancing among attendees.
- C. Room capacity shall be adjusted to provide for physical distancing.
- D. Room seating arrangement shall be as follows:
 1. For conference and breakout rooms, there shall be a distance of one (1) to two (2) meters between seats.
 2. For theatre-style set-up, a checkerboard set-up shall be used, removing every other chair and arranging it so that no one is seated behind someone else.
 3. For U-shaped conference set up, there shall be maximum of 2 people at each 6-ft. table, instead of the usual standard for 3 people per 6-ft. table.
 4. For Hollow square conference set up, there shall be a maximum of 2 people at each 6-ft table, instead of the usual standard of 3 people per 6-ft. table.
- E. Meal tables shall be set at a distance of two (2) meters apart. The number of guests at each table shall be limited to ensure a distance of one (1) meter apart from each other.
- F. Aisles shall be set at a minimum of two (2) meters.
- G. In waiting areas and lounges, a distance of at least one (1) meter between tables, seats, and seat rows shall be maintained. If seats are fixed, alternate seats shall be marked out.

Section 10. Sanitation, Disinfection, and Ventilation Measures

- A. Sanitizing mats and drying pads shall be installed at guest, employee, and supplier entrances.
- B. The provision of at least one sanitizing booth or tent for attendees' vehicles and large event equipment is encouraged.
- C. Designated loading and unloading bays in the venue, as well as queueing or waiting areas in case of heavy traffic of deliveries shall be provided. Staggered delivery schedules shall also be plotted to minimize heavy traffic of deliveries.
- D. Elevators shall be operated by the personnel of the MICE Venue/Facility or MICE organizer to minimize shared hand contact on buttons. Guests using elevators shall strictly observe physical distancing. Only 50% of the maximum capacity is recommended to avoid physical contact. Placing of floor markers to delineate physical distancing is likewise encouraged.
- E. Adequate supply of 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizers and tissue paper or paper towel shall be made available around the venue and in the common areas.
- F. Acrylic glass, plexiglass, and other forms of barriers shall be set up at the help desk, food and beverage outlets, security checkpoints, and other counters.
- G. Toilet fixtures must be fully functional during the MICE Event. Amenities such as liquid soaps and tissue paper or paper towels shall be provided and replenished regularly. Hand dryers shall also be available.
- H. Foot pedal or sensor-operated trash bins with lid shall be provided in key locations of the venue. A separate trash bin for used PPEs shall be provided.

- I. "Health Safety Reminders" shall be installed in conspicuous areas of the venue. Telephone numbers of the venue reception or concierge shall also be posted for immediate assistance and emergencies.
- J. Deep cleaning and disinfection of the venue especially its function and public areas, shall be conducted using DOH- or World Health Organization (WHO) - prescribed solutions before venue turn-over to the-MICE Organizer and / or before the commencement of event proper. The same cleaning procedures shall be undertaken after each event as soon as practicable.
- K. Frequent sanitation and disinfection of high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, elevator buttons, handrails, counters, and toilet fixtures, shall be undertaken throughout the duration of the event.
- L. The use of enhanced technologies, such as electrostatic sprayers with hospital-grade disinfectants, high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, or germicidal ultra-violet (UV) lighting system to disinfect the venue and its public areas is highly encouraged.
- M. Building ventilation and filtration systems must be regularly cleaned and maintained to ensure optimal indoor air quality. As far as practicable, natural ventilation, or the use of natural air movement in and out of the building, shall be utilized.

IV. OPERATIONS OF MICE SUPPLIERS UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

Section 11. General Hygiene and Safety Protocols for Suppliers

- A. All staff and crew of MICE Suppliers are required to fill-out a Health Declaration prior to entrance to the venue.
- B. All staff and crew of MICE Suppliers shall be screened for body temperature using a thermal scanner or thermometer gun by qualified health or medical staff or trained personnel prior to entrance to the venue. Personnel found to have a body temperature exceeding 37.5 degrees Celsius shall be refused admission to the venue.
- C. All staff and crew of MICE Suppliers shall wear facemasks with filter. Other PPEs shall also be worn as necessary depending on the scope of work (e.g. disposable gloves for food beverage service providers or catering staff and freight forwarders; eye protection for pyrotechnic personnel, safety harness for stage arrangers, etc.)
- D. All staff and crew of MICE Suppliers shall wash hands thoroughly with soap and water or 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizers before and after handling food, supply materials or equipment. 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizers shall be made available to staff and crew member at all times in the respective working areas.
- E. All staff and crew of MICE Suppliers shall always observe preventive measures, especially respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene measures, physical distancing and contactless greetings while working inside the venue.
- F. All disposable cleaning materials used by the MICE Suppliers shall be disposed after each use in a properly sealed container or bag.

Section 12. Food and Beverage Service Providers or Caterers

- A. Catering equipment, utensils, and all other materials shall undergo thorough disinfection and sanitation prior to being brought to the event venue.

- B. All food, beverages, and tableware shall be stored and covered properly.
- C. Safe food temperature shall be observed and food shall be covered properly during delivery.
- D. Clean tongs, scoops, forks, spoons, spatulas, or other suitable utensils shall be used to handle and serve food.
- E. Buffet setup is prohibited. Pre-packed individual meals and drinks shall be the standard means of food packaging throughout the duration of the event.
- F. Self-service is prohibited. All other Food and Beverage items and services are upon request through the service staff to avoid contact with objects.
- G. When necessary, food and drinks may be pre-ordered during the registration process through SMS, email, website, event apps or other similar means.

Section 13. Supply Handling

- A. MICE Suppliers shall sanitize all their equipment and materials (e.g. booths, booth shells, lifting and setup equipment, and all other miscellaneous supplies prior to unloading at the loading bay or delivery to the venue in accordance with the guidelines set by the MICE Organizer.
- B. Customized booths shall be 70% complete prior to ingress to minimize working time inside the venue.
- C. In case of heavy traffic of deliveries at loading bays, MICE Suppliers shall use designated staging, queueing, or waiting areas, which shall be configured in such a way that physical distancing can be practiced (e.g. one (1) meter apart floor markings, 1 seat apart seating arrangement, etc.).
- D. Suppliers shall immediately pull out their empty supply crates and containers right after unpacking from the venue and return them to the delivery vehicle or warehouse.

Section 14. Exhibition Booth Set-up

- A. Exhibit lay-out shall have wider aisles than usual, preferably 3 meters and more for two-way traffic and no less than 2 meters for one-way traffic.
- B. No two adjacent booths shall be directly facing each other.
- C. Exhibit booth size shall be no less than 3m x 3m to consider physical distancing of visitors and MICE Exhibitors.
- D. MICE Exhibitors shall be limited to a maximum of 2 persons to accommodate one (1) guest per 9 sqm booth at a time.
- E. Product displays within the booth are recommended to have a minimum distance of 1.82 meter apart to adhere to physical distancing of at least 1.82 meters in between guests and exhibitors viewing product displays.

V. OTHER PROVISIONS

Section 15. Compliance with other relevant issuances. MICE Organizers and MICE Venues/Facilities shall comply with relevant issuances of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and other sector-relevant agencies, relating to Minimum Public Health Standards.

Section 16. Penalties. Any violation of these Guidelines may subject the MICE entity to the appropriate fines and penalties including revocation of its DOT accreditation, in accordance with relevant laws, rules and regulations.

Section 17. 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 18. Effectivity. This Circular shall take effect immediately and shall remain effective until otherwise superseded, amended, or repealed accordingly.

For guidance and strict compliance.

14 July 2020.


BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT
Secretary

