



**MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2020 - 008**

**HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS OF TRAVEL AND TOUR AGENCIES AND TOUR GUIDES UNDER THE NEW NORMAL**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Republic Act No. 9593 or the *Tourism Act of 2009*, the Department of Tourism (DOT) is mandated to promulgate rules and regulations governing the operation and activities of all tourism enterprises, which includes Travel and Tour Agencies, and Tour Guides;

**WHEREAS**, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) *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 the present health and safety protocols in the operations of Travel and Tour Agencies and the conduct of tours by Tour Guides in the New Normal scenario;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, based on the foregoing, the Health and Safety Guidelines Governing the Operations of Travel and Tour Agencies and Tour Guides under the New Normal are hereby issued:

**I. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**Section 1. Short Title.** – This Circular shall be known as “*New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Travel and Tour Agencies and Tour Guides*”.

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

- a. “Accreditation” shall refer to a Certification issued by the DOT to a Tourism Enterprise that officially recognizes it as having complied with the minimum standards for the operation of tourism facilities and services.
- b. “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*)
- 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-EID Omnibus Guidelines*)
- d. “Confirmed COVID-19 Case” refers to any individual who tested positive for COVID-19 through laboratory confirmation at the national reference laboratory, subnational reference laboratory, or a DOH-certified laboratory testing facility. (*DOH DM No. 2020-0189*)

- e. "Contact Tracing" refers to the identification, listing, and follow-up of persons who may have come into close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case. (*DOH DM No. 2020-0189*)
- f. "Contact Tracing Form" refers to the form a person must fill out to provide contact information whether through physical means or a mobile application, substantially following the template in Annex A-2 of the DTI-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04-A.
- g. "Contactless Payment" shall refer to cashless or checkless payments of goods and services conducted through various electronic channels, such as online banking, mobile wallets, digital Point of Sale, etc.
- h. "Force Majeure" shall refer to fortuitous events, such as natural calamities, armed conflict, government action, or other analogous circumstance beyond the control of the contracting parties, that may make performance under a contract impracticable, impossible, or inadvisable, or may otherwise render a contracting party unable to perform their contractual obligation.
- i. "Health Declaration Form" shall refer to a form that a person must fill-out to declare his or her current health condition and travel history for the past fourteen (14) days, substantially following the template in Annex A-1 of the DTI-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04-A.
- j. "Management" shall refer to the owner, proprietor, manager, supervisor, administrator or other officer with control and supervision of operations of the Travel and Tour Agency.
- k. "Minimum Public Health Standards" shall refer to the 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-EID Omnibus Guidelines*).
- l. "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-EID Omnibus Guidelines*).
- m. "Personal Protective Equipment" or PPE refers to clothing and accessories worn to minimize exposure to health and safety risks, such as protective clothing, masks, face shields, and goggles.
- n. "Physical Distancing" or "Social Distancing" shall refer 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*).
- o. "Probable COVID-19 case" refers to a suspect case who fulfills anyone of the following:
  - 1. Suspect case whose testing for COVID-19 is inconclusive; or
  - 2. Suspect who tested positive for COVID-19 but whose test was not conducted in a national or subnational reference laboratory, or a DOH-certified laboratory testing facility;

3. Suspect case who died without undergoing confirmatory testing (*DOH DM No. 2020-0189*).
- p. "Refund Policy" shall refer to the stipulated terms and conditions between Travel Agencies or Tour Operators and consumers on payment returns on tourism services upon the occurrence of Force Majeure.
  - q. "Tour" shall refer to the movement of tourists within a tourism attraction for leisure, education, business, and other purposes, which activity may or may not be conducted by a Tour Guide.
  - r. "Tour Guide" shall refer to an individual who guides tourists, both foreign and domestic, for a fee, commission, or any other form of lawful remuneration.
  - s. "Tourist Attraction" shall refer to a place of interest where tourists visit, typically for its inherent and/or exhibited natural or cultural value, historical significance, natural or man-made features, offering leisure or education.
  - t. "Tour Operator" shall refer to any person or entity engaged in the business of inbound and/or local tour operation such as organizing and/or conducting tours as well as making online reservations, arranging and booking for transportation and accommodation for a fee, commission, or any form of remuneration.
  - u. "Travel Agency" shall refer to any person or entity engaged in the business of providing travel-related services, such as transportation or accommodation reservations/bookings, documentation of travel papers, sale and/or issuance of tickets, and selling of outbound tours for a fee, commission, or any form of remuneration.
  - v. "Travel and Tour Agency" shall refer to a primary tourism enterprise regularly engaged in both Tour Operator and Travel Agency services.
  - w. "Travel Booking" shall refer to the conduct of availing tourism services (e.g. hotel rooms, restaurant tables, flight seats, etc.) prior to actual consumption to guarantee availability for consumers.

**Section 3. Scope and Application.** – This Circular shall apply to all Travel and Tour Agencies, and Tour Guides in the Philippines in areas where a Community Quarantine is no longer in place.

## II. TRAVEL AND TOUR AGENCIES

**Section 4. Health Declaration for All Employees.** Travel and Tour Agencies shall require all employees to fill out a Health Declaration Form (HDF) upon entering the workplace. If based on the HDF, the employee meets any of the following conditions, he/she shall be denied entry and shall be directed to consult a doctor or stay at home:

1. Employee is experiencing fever, cough and/or colds, body pains, or sore throat;
2. Employee had a face-to-face contact with a Probable or Confirmed COVID-19 case within one (1) meter and for more than fifteen (15) minutes for the past fourteen (14) days;
3. Employee provided direct care for a patient with Probable or Confirmed COVID-19 case without using PPE for the past fourteen (14) days; or

4. Employee travelled outside the Philippines in the last fourteen (14) days (*DTI-DOLE JMC 20-04-A*).

**Section 5. Monitoring of Body Temperature of All Employees.** Travel and Tour Agencies shall monitor the body temperature of all employees every time they report to work. Those with body temperature exceeding 37.5 degrees Celsius or those exhibiting flu-like symptoms shall be directed to consult a doctor and to stay at home.

**Section 6. Personal Protective Equipment.** Travel and Tour Agencies must provide all its employees, including Tour Guides, whether employed or commissioned only for a particular tour, their respective PPE and 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer while on duty.

**Section 7. Briefings on Safety and Health-Related Information.** Travel and Tour Agencies shall ensure that all its employees and Tour Guides are regularly updated on the safety and health-related information such as but not limited to the following: personal hygiene, proper handwashing and 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 tourists. The Management is hereby encouraged to cause the installation of safety bulletin boards or to display Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials in a conspicuous place within the working premises.

**Section 8. Employee Testing.** The Management shall ensure that its employees undergo an RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction) test, as may be required under applicable issuances of the DOH, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), or the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). (*DTI-DOLE JMC No. 20-04-A*)

**Section 9. Annual Medical Examination and Health Plan.** Travel and Tour Agencies shall ensure that all its employees undergo annual medical examination. Apart from the mandatory coverage in Philhealth, the Management is also encouraged to invest in health plans for its employees which 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.

**Section 10. Physical Distancing.** Strict observance of Physical Distancing by maintaining at least one (1) meter distance in the office premises is mandatory.

**Section 11. Cleanliness in Office Premises.** Regular cleaning and disinfection of office premises must be observed at all times.

**Section 12. Disinfection in case of a Confirmed COVID-19 Case.** If one confirmed case of COVID-19 is detected in the office, the facility shall be disinfected with an appropriate disinfectant solution (0.5% bleach solution). The conduct of a comprehensive disinfection by trained personnel is recommended. The building must be locked down for twenty-four (24) hours prior to disinfection to lessen transmission to sanitation personnel. During the disinfection process, all doors and windows should be opened to maximize ventilation. The venue/facility may only be opened twenty-four (24) hours after the disinfection process. (*DTI-DOLE JMC No. 20-04-A*)

### III. TOUR GUIDES

**Section 13. Safety Equipment for Tour Guides.** Every Tour Guide shall be equipped with the following:

- a. Thermometer gun;
- b. Sanitary Kit comprising of disposable tissue paper, face masks, vomit bags, and 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer; and
- c. Lapel microphone, whenever necessary, to minimize close contact with the tourists.

**Section 14. Health Insurance.** Tour Guides are highly encouraged to obtain membership with Philhealth or to avail of a health insurance plan, especially if not employed by the Travel and Tour Agency.

**Section 15. Emergency Response Trainings.** Every Tour Guide must undergo orientation and trainings on first aid given by concerned government agencies and recognized institutions in handling communicable diseases or medical concerns and emergencies.

**Section 16. Hygiene and Grooming.** Every Tour Guide must practice personal hygiene, good grooming, and other proper conduct especially while on duty, which shall include:

- a. Wearing of clean clothes or uniform and appropriate footwear;
- b. Wearing of appropriate PPE at all times while on duty;
- c. Avoiding physical contact with the tourists and observing physical distancing at all times;
- d. Frequent washing of hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used as alternative;
- e. Practicing good respiratory etiquette such as covering one's nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing; and
- f. Using a lapel microphone when necessary to minimize close contact with the guests.

### IV. CONDUCT OF TOURS

**Section 17. Government Advisories.** Prior to confirmation or implementation of a Travel Booking, Travel and Tour Agencies or Tour Guides must keep abreast of the latest government health and travel advisories, including ordinances issued by the local government, as well as airport and seaport announcements.

**Section 18. Reservation and Booking.** Travel and Tour Agencies, and Tour Guides shall require their clients to reserve or pre-book services online or through other digital means to avoid mass gathering and to control the number of clients to be accommodated.

**Section 19. Contactless Payment and Other Transactions.** Cashless methods of payment, online transactions and other options for contactless transactions (e.g. e-itineraries, e-tickets, etc.) that promote minimal physical contact is mandatory. If online or mobile payment is not possible, Travel and Tour Agencies, or Tour Guides shall create a method for no-contact payment schemes, such as receiving cash on a small tray or leather bill folder to avoid mutual hand contact with clients.

**Section 20. Undertaking.** The Travel and Tour Agency or Tour Guide shall secure an undertaking from the client, stating that the client undertakes to comply with the terms and conditions of their booking, and they understand that they will not be allowed to join the tour if they are not cleared under the Mandatory Screening or start to feel unwell before or during the tour.

**Section 21. Mandatory Screening.** All participants of the tour conducted by the Travel and Tour Agency and/or the Tour Guide must be screened through:

- a. Body temperature check using a Thermal Scanner or Thermometer Gun;
- b. Completion of Health Declaration and Contact Tracing Form using a mobile application or other contactless means.

Only those who are cleared during screening shall be allowed to participate in the tour. Those with body temperature exceeding 37.5 degrees Celsius or those exhibiting flu-like symptoms shall be refused entry. Accomplished Health Declaration and Contact Tracing Forms shall be handled and processed with confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Privacy Act, and shall be disposed of after thirty (30) days from the date of accomplishment, unless a longer period is required by the authorities.

**Section 22. Tourists Briefing.** Prior to a tour, Tour Guides shall conduct mandatory briefings for tourists on health and safety protocols, such as the proper wearing of face masks, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, physical distancing, and proper disposal of wastes.

**Section 23. Face Masks and Physical Distancing.** Wearing of face masks or face shields throughout the duration of the tour shall be strictly followed. Children with ages between two (2) to eight (8) years old must use facemasks under adult supervision to ensure that they can breathe safely and avoid suffocation. The Tour Guide shall likewise ensure that physical distancing by maintaining at least one (1) meter distance among tourists is observed.

**Section 24. Human-Animal Interaction.** Tours in zoos, pet parlors, pet exhibits, or recreational activities that involve human-animal interaction are highly discouraged.

**Section 25. Isolation Area.** In case a tourist starts to feel unwell during a tour, an area in the vehicle conveying the tourists shall be designated as an isolation area. The patient shall be brought before the nearest hospital or to the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT), in accordance with DOH-prescribed protocols.

**Section 26. Emergency Hotlines.** Every Travel and Tour Agency and Tour Guide shall keep at all times, an emergency directory containing the emergency hotlines of the following:

- a. Clinics and hospitals located in the city or municipality within the tourist destination;
- b. Police and fire stations located in the city/municipality within the tourist destination; and
- c. Other emergency responders whether public or private located in the city or municipality within the tourist destination

**Section 27. Strict Compliance with Protocols on Contact Tracing.** The Management of the Travel and Tour Agency shall strictly comply with the protocols established by the DOH and the respective LGUs for Contact Tracing of individuals in close contact with a Confirmed COVID-19 case. The Management of the Travel and Tour Agency and/or the Tour Guide shall exert every effort to assist and cooperate with the government authorities concerned. *(DTI-DOLE JMC No. 20-04-A)*

**Section 28. Post-trip Travel Advisories.** The Travel and Tour Agency or Tour Guide, through its website, reminder card, or any other online platform, shall provide health and travel advisories or warnings that may be relevant for tourists after the trip.

**Section 29. Refund Policy.** The refund policy shall be governed primarily by the terms and conditions of the contract or agreement between the Travel and Tour Agency or the Tour Guide on

one hand, and the tourist or client on the other. The Travel and Tour Agency or Tour Guide shall adopt appropriate and reasonable refund terms that may include a provision on the collection of non-refundable service fees for services undelivered due to cancellation or Force Majeure.

In every transaction, before accepting a booking or reservation, the Travel and Tour Agency or Tour Guide shall explain to the client every condition attached thereto and shall ensure that the latter has understood and accepted it in its entirety. For online transactions, the Travel and Tour Agencies and Tour Guides shall provide a full copy of the terms and conditions and ensure that the Client has accepted the same.

## V. OTHER PROVISIONS

**Section 30. Supplementary Application of Administrative Order No. 2020-007** – For Travel and Tour Agencies and Tour Guides in areas declared to be under Community Quarantine, Administrative Order No. 2020-007 or the *Guidelines on Travel and Tour Sector, and Tour Guides under a Community Quarantine*, or any of its subsequent amendments, shall primarily govern, and this Memorandum Circular shall apply in a supplementary character.

**Section 31. Compliance with Other Relevant Issuances.** Travel and Tour Agencies shall comply with DOT Memorandum Circular No. 2020-003 or the *Health and Safety Guidelines for Tourist Transport Services* if applicable, and other relevant DOT, DTI, or DOH issuances on health and safety standards for the New Normal, as well as rules and regulations imposed by the local government unit (LGU) having jurisdiction over the Travel and Tour Agency, or Tour Guide or in the case of Boracay Island, the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF).

**Section 32. Penalties.** Any violation of the provisions of this Circular may subject the Management of the Travel and Tour Agency and/or the Tour Guide to the appropriate fines and penalties, including the revocation of its DOT accreditation, in accordance with relevant laws, rules, and regulations.

**Section 33. 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 34. Effectivity.** This Circular shall take effect immediately and shall remain effective until otherwise superseded, amended, or repealed accordingly.

For guidance and strict compliance.

28 September 2020.

**BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT**  
Secretary

