Guidelines on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 Situation Within HBKU Premises

Introduction

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. To reduce the impact of COVID-19 outbreak conditions on businesses, workers, customers, and the public, it is important for all entities to plan for potential outbreak for COVID-19 and establish safe workplace practices.

Accordingly, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) takes precautionary measures to support the health, well-being, and safety of its community members (Staff, students, and contractors) and their families. HBKU management are also working to minimize the risk of spreading the virus.

In addition, The HBKU safety team continue supporting staff and contractors and providing daily site observations and advice on best practices for a safe workplace, overseeing and ensuring good housekeeping and decontamination practices, as well as recommending proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitizers as required.

How COVID-19 Spreads

Although the first human cases of COVID-19 likely resulted from exposure to infected animals, infected people can spread SARS-CoV-2 to other people. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to-person, including:

■ Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
■ Through respiratory droplets or aerosols produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, laughs or talks. These airborne droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby, or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
■ By touching a contaminated surface or object that has SARS-CoV-2 on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes

Classifying Worker Exposure to SARS-CoV-2

To help HBKU Leadership determine appropriate precautions, we refer to OSHA classifications of job tasks into four risk exposure levels: very high, high, medium, and lower risk. Most HBKU workers are likely fall in the lower exposure risk (caution) or medium exposure risk levels.

The level of risk depends in part on the industry type, need for contact within 6 feet of people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2, or requirement for repeated or extended contact with persons known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2

A- **Very High Exposure Risk Very high exposure risk jobs** are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, postmortem, or laboratory procedures.
B- **High exposure risk jobs** are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19. Workers in this category include: Healthcare delivery and support staff (e.g., doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff who must enter patients' rooms), Medical transport workers (e.g., ambulance vehicle operators) , and Mortuary workers.

C- **Medium exposure risk jobs** include those that require frequent and/or close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) people who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, but who are not known or suspected COVID-19 patients.

D- **Lower exposure risk (caution) jobs** are those that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2 nor frequent close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) the general public. Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers.

Safe Workplace Practice for Medium & Lower Exposure Risk Jobs; What to Do to Protect Workers

A- Engineering Controls

■ Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, where feasible.

■ Additional engineering controls in the Medium & lower exposure risk group is limited Thermal Cameras, IR Thermometer, and wall mounted Hand Sanitizers. HBKU should ensure that engineering controls, if any, used to protect workers from other job hazards continue to function as intended

B- Administrative Controls

■ Require the use of face masks and gloves to all employees, student, contractors and customers to contain respiratory secretions until they leave the workplace In the event of a shortage of masks, a reusable face shield that can be decontaminated may be an acceptable method of protecting against droplet transmission.

■ Conduct a thermal screening of anyone entering the workplace and do not admit individuals identified to have a fever or showing signs of respiratory illness.

■ Where appropriate, limit staff/ clients' access to the worksite, or restrict access to only critical and essential workplace areas.

■ Management of public health communications about COVID-19 recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information. Frequently check the MOPH COVID-19 website

■ Ensure that psychological and behavioral support is available to address employee stress.

■ Post exposure or suspected exposure signs requesting patients and family members to immediately report symptoms of respiratory illness on arrival at the healthcare facility and use disposable face masks.

■ Collaborate with HBKU entities Directorships to designate effective means of communicating important COVID-19 information**.**

C- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE is recommended for you if you are among workers in the Medium & lower exposure risk group. Workers should continue to use the face masks covering the nose and mouth,, and gloves at all times. For laboratory workers, the regular required lab PPE must be worn in addition to the face masks and gloves.

D- Safe workplace practice to limit the spread and prevent infection:

- Keep at least a 1m distance from your colleagues.
- Limit the number of people working /meeting in the same room to 5; if more people needed split shifts is recommended to be 5 at a time.

- Limit or cease contact with persons who are infected or who are supposed to have been in contact with other infected people.
- Stay home if you have respiratory symptoms or fever as per the QF process flow chart for "COVID-19 Symptoms Process for Staff and Students".
- If you are sick, wear a facemask when you are around other people and stay at home.
- Provide emergency responders and other essential personnel who may be exposed while working away from fixed facilities with alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol for decontamination in the field.

E- Safe Workplace Practice for Preventing the Spread of Infection at Work (In office or Laboratory):

- Before starting your work, use a product effective against coronavirus to disinfect your desk, keyboard, computer mouse, work phone, doorknobs and any other objects or surfaces that you or your co-workers touch frequently.
- Routinely wipe down your workstation/benchtop, keyboard and telephone with a suitable effective disinfectant or disinfectant wipe.
- Routinely wipe electronic appliances such as your mobile phone or tablet with a disinfectant wipe.
- Only use your own pen, pencil, and paper.
- Wipe down the keyboard of the photo copier before use and wipe your ID card after activation of the copier.
- In elevators press the button with your pen or other suitable object.
- If possible, avoid touching handrails with your hands or use a paper tissue for support and discard tissue immediately in a closed bin.
- If you must touch surfaces, immediately wash your hands.

F- Disinfection Selection

- For office workplace; use 60% or stronger alcohol based disinfectant spray or wipes. Medical based wipes such as Anios or commercial wipes such as Dettol or Cholorox.
- For BSL-1 laboratory workplace/ benches; use 70% Ethanol to clean your bench, or commercial sprays such as Anios, DNAse/ RNase sprays.
- For BSL-2 laboratory workplace; use non-corrosive disinfectant alkaline solution 1% such as Chlorine or Virkon, or iodine based disinfectant such as WESCODYN followed by 70% ethanol.
- For liquid biological waste; add 1% hypochlorite solution for 3 hours, or 1% alkaline solution before disposing.
- For contaminated lab coats; spray 70% ethanol, leave it for 30 minutes, then place for laundry services. If contaminated with blood/ human product; wash the spot thoroughly with water, spray 1% chlorine, leave for 3 hours, and place for laundry services.
- For BSL-2B/BSL-3 waste; decontaminate by autoclave, then arrange disposal by hazardous waste contractor.

  Always seek advice from Health and Safety specialists on selection of appropriate disinfectants selection, and Environmental Safety specialists for waste management and disposal.