

While the national lockdown has mandated closure of businesses and activities in the country, employees and workers of exempt organisations qualifying as “essential services” continue to report for duty in factories and offices. Come April 20, partial operations will commence.

At an organizational and operational level, directors and managers have to deal with the following:

- » Ensuring safety and security of staff
- » Ensuring organization level reporting and incident management preparedness
- » Ensuring organizational level risk coverage
- » Supply Chain and Customer Supply management
- » Cash flow and banking affairs
- » Workforce management

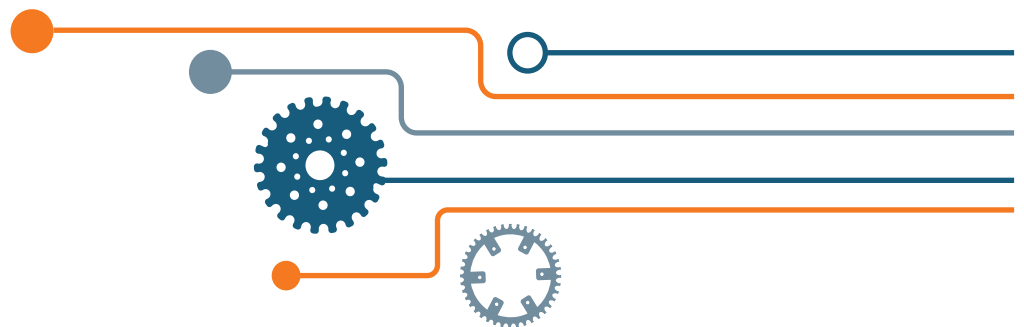


Safety and Security

This should be priority 1 for any organisation that is continuing operations or re-starting operations, and the following SOP should be considered:

No.	Precaution	Measures
1	Reduced scale / phased resumption of operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Operate at 50% of staff capacity on a rotational or shift basis. Operating at full capacity will make it difficult to maintain effective social distancing.
2	Conduct health checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Install thermal scanning facilities at entrances for temperature screening of all workers and other persons who enter the unit premises (more so, vehicle drivers, assistants, loaders, unloaders, vendors, suppliers etc. (“Non-Company Personnel”). » Instruct all workers (and specifically, the designated safety officer and those tasked with checking symptoms upon entry into the premises) to immediately flag any symptoms indicative of COVID-19. » Require all workers / visitors to mandatorily use hand sanitizers / wash before entering the premises.
3	Minimize physical touch-points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Maintain a distance of 1.5 meters between employees. » Avoid internal meetings and training programmes involving assembly of employees. » Discontinue the use of biometrics. » Ensure that employees avoid physical greeting. » Ensure contact of workers with Non-Company Personnel is kept to a minimum and is supervised. » Allow Non-Company Personnel access only to designated areas and sanitize those areas regularly. » Suspend all kinds of business travel by employees, both domestic and overseas.

No.	Precaution	Measures
4	Sanitize work spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Regularly fumigate and disinfect work spaces and vehicles. » Provide masks to employees and mandate their use in office premises. » Set up hand sanitization stations at short distances » Provide sufficient protective and safety equipment for all personnel and others while onsite so as to minimize risk of contagion, with no re-use beyond the 'use by' date. » Instruct the housekeeping team to thoroughly clean all access gates, hand rails, door handles/knobs and washrooms at frequent intervals. » Ensure canteen workers (if any) wear gloves and masks and maintain strict hygiene at all times.
5	Facilitate personal hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Require employees to carry their own water bottles and provide hot water facilities onsite for drinking water. » Require employees to wash their hands with soap and water each time they use the common facilities. » Ensure regular supply of hand sanitizers, soap and running water in the washrooms. » Observe and update hygiene practices as necessary.
6	Disseminate health and safety information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Organize awareness sessions for employees and Non-Company Personnel on precautionary measures to minimize exposure. » Display informational posters and banners in local language onsite. » Educate employees through the public address system at frequent intervals everyday.





Incident Reporting

While being pro-active in security measures, don't forget that if there is any incident (COVID or non-COVID), you will be required to react quickly and effectively notwithstanding the limited mobility and information flow. The threat of such incidents and under or over reaction to them has increased with remote working and chaotic working conditions.

No.	Precaution	Measures
1	Establish risk containment protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Designate a safety officer specifically to follow the above precautionary measures with submission of daily reports to the management. » Establish an emergency control room managed by a competent and empowered person with high quality communication skills during shift hours. Appoint a senior level (GM or C – Level) to guide this control room. » Maintain a stock of emergency medicines. » If cough, cold, fever or other symptoms are reported, instruct workers to quarantine in a designated area on site until transfer to a designated hospital can be arranged. » Identify (in advance) the medical establishment where suspect cases will be reported / referred to. » Identify (in advance) the ambulance service (as well as a back-up option) that will report for transfer of cases. » Quarantine all personnel who were in touch with the potentially infected worker and, in consultation with the district administration, trace all third parties who were in contact with the infected worker. » Immediately shut down the unit and declare it a no-go zone to contain further spread.
2	Incident QRT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Establish a QRT to manage all incidents (non – COVID such as harassment claims, financial fraud, cybersecurity, accidents etc.) and ensure that a senior level manager is heading this QRT. » Ensure that your employees have access to designated and manner phone lines and web links to enable effective reporting. » Sensitize your employees that they need to be extra vigilant in reporting potential threats to the organization. » If and when an incident is reported, activate the QRT, empower them to take quick decisions and take immediate mitigation measures within the first 24/48 hours of the incident (the golden hours). » Ensure the Board, regulators and customers (where required) are kept updated at the "right" time. Don't under or over report. » Instruct lawyers to establish privilege and bring in third party independent advice to protect the Board and the management in terms of management and reporting. » Plan for investigation (involving external and internal resources) with minimal disruption to the already disrupted operations.



Risk Coverage

- » Check your insurance and see what is covered under “business disruption” and liability coverage on defaults due to such business disruption.
- » Negotiate COVID specific risk coverage – some insurers are starting to offer these products.
- » Check medical insurance coverage for your employees – over and above ESI coverage.
- » Check your D&O liability to see if the operational risks specified above can be brought under cover.
- » Remember – insurance coverage requires you to act with due skill, care and exercise judgment and comply with applicable laws in order to be applicable.



Supply Chain and Customer Supply

- » Look at your supply and customer contracts and delivery schedules. It will have to be a case by case analysis to match supply chain availability and customer delivery schedules.
- » Enter into these negotiations well in advance and plan amendments as soon as you have visibility.
- » Your suppliers may have cash flow crunch and labour availability crunch. Be in touch with them continuously to get visibility into the ground level situation so as to not be caught by surprise.
- » Plan your purchases with redundancies and re-negotiate payment terms with suppliers if required to enable your suppliers to apply your payments to your supplies.
- » When you are a supplier, re-negotiate your contracts to enable you to manage your cash flow and delivery.



Cash Flow and Banking

- » Depending on your cash flow, look at your sources of revenue and re-classify debts if required to get a realistic view of your cash flow.
- » Enter into discussions with your banks to increase liquidity from working capital loans or term loans.
- » Look at deposits and other capital that may be lying idle and see if these can be deployed to increase liquidity.
- » Look at other assets of the company and see if those need to be liquidated to enable cash flow in the short to medium term.
- » Ensure that the Board is kept updated on all such activities and get appropriate approvals and also report such activities to regulators (where required) to ensure that these “emergency” decisions are not questioned when the dust settles.



Workforce Management

- » Other than the safety and security aspect of workforce, be extra cautious while managing workforce redundancies and new hiring.
- » Onboarding and hiring may have to be done remotely in the near future. Plan for remote onboarding.
- » Be very careful with due course employment termination (for cause as an example) during the COVID-19 hiatus on redundancies. Document termination process very carefully and follow the procedure of termination to the letter.
- » Mass redundancies or variations in working conditions (wages) should be avoided during the period that is covered under the lock-down.
- » Post lock-down workforce management (if required) should also be done very carefully and keeping in mind the then regulatory approach and compelling economic factors.
- » Consult your lawyers before any redundancies.