



News Flash COVID-19 Follow-up

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CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Direct impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the workplace

Herewith a summary of decisions announced at the special Nedlac executive committee meeting held on 16 March 2020:

- Health and safety risk assessments need to be conducted in all workplaces. Guidelines and checklists in this regard will be made available on www.labour.gov.za.
- Employers are expected to implement extremely strict hygiene provisions (facilities for handwashing are imperative).
- If an employee needs to self-isolate due to international travel or exposure to an infected individual, such self-isolation period will be compensated by the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) as special leave (unpaid).
- If a business needs to close due to potential exposure, the UIF will send officials to workplaces to assist with registering the UIF claims of employees.
- Assistance will be available to businesses that become distressed due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). This will be made available by the National Treasury – no details are available yet.
- Employees who contract the virus during their employment will have a claim in terms of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA).

As forms and other resources become available, it will be distributed to members immediately.

Employers' concerns to continue business operations sustainably during the declared disaster

- **Employers' obligation to create and maintain a safe and healthy working environment**
Employers must conduct a health and safety risk assessment in the workplace and develop and implement an infection control plan according to the risk assessment. Be proactive by applying strict hygiene rules.

- **Loss of income and obligation towards employees**

Take note that each workplace differs and employers' unique circumstances will determine which solution can be considered. **It is critical that employers follow the correct procedure.** Options include:

- Short time: Employers can implement short time when the normal work volume has decreased drastically, but certain activities still need to take place. Employees therefore work fewer hours and are compensated accordingly for hours worked.
- Temporary retrenchments: Employers can temporarily retrench employees due to operational requirements when business operations come to a standstill. Employees are entitled to claim UIF benefits for this period.
- Unpaid leave: The employer and employee can agree on unpaid leave for a specific period.

- **Absence from the workplace**

- Self-quarantine: If an employee needs to self-isolate due to international travel or exposure to an infected individual, such self-isolation period will be compensated by the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) as special leave (unpaid).
- Risk linked to public transport: The employee has the responsibility to report for work and absence will be dealt with on the principle of no work no pay.

Please contact the LWO for assistance at **086 110 1828** or if you have any queries in this regard. We are available 24/7.

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