

6th October, 2020

**Government of India
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Directorate General of Health Services
(Emergency Medical Relief)**

Standard Operating Procedures on preventive measures to contain spread of COVID-19 during festivities

1. Background

The months of October to December are time for festivities that witness gatherings of large number of people in specified locations for religious worship, fairs, rallies, exhibitions, cultural functions, processions etc. These events may last a day or a week or more. To prevent spread of COVID-19 infection, it is important that necessary preventive measures are followed for such events.

2. Scope

This document outlines various generic precautionary measures to be adopted in addition to specific measures to be taken at locations to prevent spread of COVID-19. No festivity events as enumerated in para 1 above will be allowed in Containment Zones.

Persons above 65 years of age, persons with comorbidities, pregnant women and children below the age of 10 years are advised to stay at home. This applies to the event managers and staff as well.

The competent authority may implement additional measures within their jurisdiction as per their local assessment and in line with activities permitted by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) as per MHA orders issued under Disaster Management Act, 2005 from time to time.

3. Administrative requirements

The festivals, fairs, rallies, exhibitions, cultural functions, processions and plays/ concerts associated with these festivities are mass events. Hence the following administrative requirement are advised:

- i. Identify spatial boundaries and prepare a detailed site plan which would facilitate compliance with thermal screening, physical distancing, sanitization etc.
- ii. In case of events that run for days or weeks, the crowd density doesn't remain the same throughout and usually peaks around certain hours of the day and some previously known auspicious days. Planning for the event should specifically factor this so that crowds are regulated and managed to ensure physical distance and frequent sanitization.
- iii. In case of rallies and immersion processions the number of people should not exceed the prescribed limit and proper physical distancing and wearing of masks must be ensured. In any case, the number of such rallies and the distance covered by them may be kept within manageable limits.
- iv. Events such as rallies, and processions spread over long distances may require support of ambulance services.

- v. Events planned to last for many days or weeks such as exhibitions, fairs, puja pandals, ramlila pandals or concerts and plays should have adequate measures to ensure a cap on physical numbers. Staggered timings and restricted entry may be considered.
- vi. Volunteers should be appropriately stationed to ensure thermal scanning, physical distancing and wearing of masks.
- vii. The guidelines issued for theatre and cinema artists will apply to stage performers.
- viii. Adequate supplies of sanitizers, thermal guns and physical distancing floor markings to be ensured.
- ix. Pre-identification of space/ site in each event venue for isolation of suspect cases.
- x. Close circuit cameras etc. may be considered to monitor compliance of physical distance norms, wearing of masks at each venue.
- xi. In case of rallies and processions, route planning, identification of immersion sites, ensuring cap on numbers, physical distancing etc. must be planned beforehand and measures for enforcement outlined.
- xii. All events must plan for medical care arrangements with linkages to nearest hospitals to attend to health emergencies.

4. Generic preventive measures

The generic preventive measures that include simple public health measures are to be followed to reduce the risk of COVID-19. These measures need to be observed by all; the event managers, the organizational staff and the public visiting the festivities and are as follows:

- i. Individuals must maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet in public places as far as feasible.
- ii. Use of face covers/masks to be mandatory.
- iii. Practice frequent hand washing with soap (for at least 40-60 seconds) even when hands are not visibly dirty. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (for at least 20 seconds) can be made wherever feasible.
- iv. Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed. This involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/sneezing with a tissue/handkerchief/flexed elbow and disposing off used tissues properly.
- v. Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting any illness at the earliest to State and District Helpline.
- vi. Spitting should be strictly prohibited.
- vii. Installation & use of Aarogya Setu App shall be advised to all.

5. All festivity events shall also ensure:

a) Planning of events

- i. A plan should be prepared well in advance about conduct of each activity (religious places, rallies, processions, cultural shows, fairs etc.), with all relevant stakeholders including event organizers, business owners, market associations, etc.
- ii. Festive events shall be permitted only outside the Containment Zones. Organizers/staff/visitors from Containment Zones shall not be permitted. People residing inside Containment Zones may be encouraged to observe all festivals inside their homes and not move out.

- iii. Keeping in view the physical distancing norms, event sites should have adequate floor area and proper markings at all locations which are likely to be visited by public.
- iv. Adequate manpower shall be deployed/ arranged by the organizers to ensure observance to physical distancing norms and other preventive measures at all times.
- v. Appropriate arrangements for personal protection gears like face covers/masks, and other logistic like hand sanitizers, soap, sodium hypochlorite solution for sanitizing frequently touched surfaces etc. shall be made available by event organizers/business owners for their staff as per requirements.
- vi. Adequate number of ticket counters shall be planned to facilitate compliance with physical distancing norms.
- vii. Event organizers/business owners may make suitable provisions for contact less payment.
- viii. A simple do's and don'ts advisory may be circulated / displayed prominently at each event venue.
- ix. Posters/standees/AV media on preventive measures from COVID-19 must be displayed prominently at the event sites.
- x. All event managers shall brief the stall owners/staff on the Standard Operating Procedures of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the context of COVID.
- xi. The event sites should have a designated isolation room/ space for isolating any person found symptomatic during events/shows/rallies, till such time that medical help is available.

b) Entry and exit to the event site

- i. Preferably multiple and separate entry and exits for visitors shall be ensured. The structure/space/venue for the event must also ensure adequate natural cross-ventilation.
- ii. Entrances to have mandatory hand hygiene and thermal screening provisions.
- iii. Only those staff and visitors who are free of symptoms shall be allowed inside the venue.
- iv. Anyone found symptomatic during thermal screening should be politely refused entry and advised to seek immediate medical care.
- v. All staff and visitors to be allowed entry only if using face cover/masks. The face cover/mask has to be worn by all at all times while in public places.
- vi. Physical distance of a minimum of 6 feet, when queuing up for entry and inside the venue as far as feasible. Specific marking for the purpose may be done.
- vii. Proper crowd management inside and outside premises like parking lots, waiting areas, stalls and eateries etc. — duly following physical distancing norms shall be ensured.
- viii. For entry into the religious places, shoes / footwear to be preferably taken off inside own vehicle. If needed they should be kept in separate slots for each individual / family by the persons themselves.

c) Movement within the event venue

- i. The number of visitors inside the event venue shall be restricted in accordance with the order issued by Ministry of Home Affairs from time to time.
- ii. Seating arrangement in the pandaals, food courts, shows etc. must ensure adequate physical distancing. Any shops, stalls, cafeteria etc., outside and within the premises too shall follow physical distancing norms at all times.
- iii. Arrangements for safe drinking water, if required, should be made (preferably with provision for disposable cups/glasses) in the event premises.
- iv. For air-conditioning/ventilation, the guidelines of CPWD shall be followed which emphasize that the (i) temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-

30°C, (ii) relative humidity should be in the range of 40- 70%, (iii) re-circulation of air to be avoided to the extent possible, (iv) intake of fresh air should be as much as possible and (v) cross ventilation should be adequate.

- v. In religious places, touching of statues/idols / holy books etc. shall not be allowed.
- vii. In view of potential threat of spread of infection, as far as feasible recorded devotional music/songs may be played and choir or singing groups should not be allowed.
- viii. Community kitchens/langars / “Ann-daan”, etc. at event venue should follow physical distancing norms while preparing and distributing food.
- ix. Community kitchen managers and business owners of food outlets to ensure adherence to highest level of personal and environmental hygiene all the time, especially at the time of preparing, serving /eating meals and after disposal.

d) Sanitation and Hygiene

- i. Effective and frequent sanitation within the premises shall be maintained with particular focus on commonly touched surfaces/areas including lavatories, drinking and hand washing stations/areas.
- ii. Cleaning and regular disinfection (using 1% sodium hypochlorite) of frequently touched surfaces (doorknobs, elevator buttons, handrails, que barricades, seats, benches, washroom fixtures, etc.) to be made mandatory in all public utility common areas.
- iii. Visitors and staff should be advised to dispose of used face covers / masks in covered bins available at the premises. The waste thus generated may be disposed of in accordance with the hazardous waste disposal guidelines.

e) SOP to be followed in case of a suspect case or person who develops symptoms during the conduct of the event

- iv. Place the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others.
- v. The person will remain isolated while wearing a mask/face cover till such time he/she is examined by a doctor.
- vi. If symptoms deteriorate, inform the nearest medical facility (hospital/clinic) or call the State or District Helpline.
- vii. A risk assessment shall be undertaken by the designated public health authority (district RRT/treating physician) and accordingly further action be initiated regarding management of case, his/her contacts and need for disinfection.
- viii. Disinfection of the premises to be taken up if the person is found positive.