



The Ghana  
Chamber  
of Mines

GUIDELINES ON  
RESPONDING TO  
THE OUTBREAK  
OF COVID-19 IN  
GHANA

ADVISORY NOTE FOR MEMBER COMPANIES OF THE CHAMBER

## **Introduction**

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new strain that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans<sup>1</sup>. Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Common signs of the COVID-19 infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infections can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

## **Global Infection Rate**

The WHO declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. According to Johns Hopkins University, the reported cases of the disease across the world stood at 204,251 with a mortality of 8,246 as at 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2020<sup>2</sup>. As well, 82,091 infected persons were reported to have recovered from the ailment as at 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. Apart from Antarctica, every other continent of the world has recorded a case and infections are generally transmitted locally, imported or a combination of both. In Africa, the WHO reports that South Africa, Algeria, Senegal and Cameroon have reported cases involving local transmission. Ghana has so far reported seven (7) cases as at 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, which were all imported.<sup>3</sup>

## **Vulnerable Groups**

Most people that are infected with COVID-19 show mild symptoms and recover from the ailment when they receive the right medical attention. However, the risk of serious illness from the infection tends to increase with age and pre-existing health conditions. Generally, persons above the age of forty (40) are at a higher risk of serious illness. Likewise the WHO suggests that persons with weak immune system or pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung diseases are also more susceptible to serious illness from the infection.

## **Recommended Preventive Measures**

Measures to prevent the spread of infection include regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooking meat and eggs. As well, members should avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

## **National Response Plan**

In view of the risk of further infection, the Government of Ghana announced a series of measures that were intended to curtail the spread of the disease. These are as follows<sup>4</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200315-sitrep-55-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=33daa5cb\\_8](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200315-sitrep-55-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=33daa5cb_8)

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/> (accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 at 15:05 GMT)

<sup>3</sup> <https://ghanahealthservice.org/covid19/>

<sup>4</sup> Available at <http://www.presidency.gov.gh/index.php/briefing-room/speeches/1535-president-akufo-addo-addresses-nation-on-measures-taken-by-gov-t-to-combat-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

**REF NO.: GCM/COVID-19/001**

- ❖ All public gatherings, including conferences, workshops, funerals, festivals, political rallies, sporting events and religious activities, such as services in churches and mosques, have been suspended for the next four (4) weeks. Private burials are permitted, but with limited numbers, not exceeding twenty-five (25) in attendance;
- ❖ All Universities, Senior High Schools and basic schools, i.e. public and private schools, will be closed Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, till further notice. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication, has been tasked to roll out distance learning programmes. However, BECE and WASSCE candidates will be allowed to attend school to prepare for their examinations, but with prescribed social distancing protocols;
- ❖ The Government of Ghana's Travel Advisory should be observed as announced:
  - Travel to Ghana is strongly discouraged until further notice
  - Any traveller, except for Ghanaian citizens and persons with Ghana residence permits, who within the last 14 days, has been to a country that has recorded at least 200 cases of COVID-19, will not be admitted into the Ghanaian jurisdiction
  - Airlines are instructed not to allow such persons to embark. Border posts are instructed not to allow such persons into the jurisdiction
  - There will be a mandatory 14-day self-quarantine for persons who are otherwise allowed to enter the Ghanaian jurisdiction. Guidelines for self-quarantine will be available at the various Ghanaian ports of entry. Enforcement protocols are being deployed in collaboration with state security and health authorities. Persons determined to be unable to satisfactorily self-quarantine will be quarantined by the State
  - Any admissible traveller, who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 will be quarantined and tested upon reaching Ghana
- ❖ Businesses and other workplaces can continue to operate, but should observe prescribed social distancing between patrons and staff;
- ❖ Establishments, such as supermarkets, shopping malls, restaurants, night clubs, hotels and drinking spots, should observe enhanced hygiene procedures by providing, amongst others, hand sanitizers, running water and soap for washing of hands;
- ❖ The Ministry of Transport should work with the transport unions and private and public transport operators to ensure enhanced hygienic conditions in all vehicles and terminals, by providing, amongst others, hand sanitizers, running water and soap for washing of hands; and

- ❖ The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should co-ordinate, with the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, measures to enhance conditions of hygiene in markets across the country.

### **National Emergency Centre**

The Government of Ghana has designated the following telephone numbers as the contact numbers for issues relating to the outbreak of COVID-19

- ✓ 0558-439-868
- ✓ 0509-497-700
- ✓ 0552-222-004
- ✓ 0552-222-005

As well, the Ghana Health Service has set up a dedicated website to provide regular information on COVID-19 to the populace: <https://ghanahealthservice.org/covid19/>

### **Chamber's Recommended Response**

In addition to observing the guidelines issued by the government, the Chamber also recommends that members should take every measure to protect their workplace, employees and immediate community members from exposure to the COVID-19. Specifically, we recommend that each member should develop a site or work place protocol to respond to this unprecedented situation. This plan should clearly indicate thresholds for risk of infection and responses that will be triggered by the management of the company. A sample plan is attached in appendix one (1) for members' guidance. It would be expedient for members to simulate their responses to the outbreak of the disease based on their plans.

Furthermore, the Chamber encourages members to follow the WHO work place guidelines for responding to the COVID-19<sup>5</sup>. The overall objective of such measures should be to minimize the risk of infection at the work place. These could include the following measures:

#### **At the work place**

- ❖ Employers should profile employees based on their risk of exposure to COVID-19 and take required measures to mitigate its infection;
- ❖ Members should empower their employees, support service providers and community members with information on the transmission mechanism of the disease as well as measures that could be taken to prevent its infection;
- ❖ Members should improve the general hygiene at their workplace, including kitchen and eating areas. More so, management of the firm must provide employees with alcohol based sanitizers and provide sanitizers in shared areas of the office or work place, which could also be used by visitors. Employees, support service providers and visitors must be encouraged to regularly wash their hands under running water and with antibacterial soap. It is expected that member companies of the Chamber will regularly provide the required amenities to facilitate improved hygiene at the work place;

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<sup>5</sup> Available at [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7\\_6](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6)

- ❖ Members should endeavour to promote good respiratory and ventilation hygiene in the work place:
  - For underground operations, employees who show signs akin to that of COVID-19 should be immediately removed from such work areas and tested after taking the required precautions
- ❖ Access control points that require bio-information such as finger prints should be disabled and replaced with other medium such as cards;
- ❖ Tool box meetings, security drills or other forms of employee gathering should be reduced to the barest minimum and should not be more than groups of ten (10) persons.

### **Transportation of Employees**

- ❖ We encourage members not to transport more than twenty (20) persons in a vehicle wherever possible;
- ❖ Occupants of a bus should be seated at least a metre apart from each other;
- ❖ Persons who show respiratory symptoms should be discouraged from joining a firm's bus;
- ❖ The windows of buses should be opened when they are in motion;
- ❖ Occupants should sanitize their hands before boarding and after alighting from the bus;
- ❖ The buses should be regularly disinfected and occupants should be advised to observe good hygiene practices while in the bus;

### **Meetings**

- ❖ If possible, members are encouraged to avoid face-to-face meetings and resort to virtual platforms such as SKYPE, Microsoft Teams, WebEx and other applications that support online meetings;
- ❖ However, if it becomes absolutely important to convene physical meetings, we implore members to observe the following:
  - The number of participants should be reduced to the barest minimum
  - Participants should be pre-screened for travel history and symptoms of COVID-19 before admission to the meeting
  - Participants should be provided with masks, tissues and hand sanitizers as well as discouraged from shaking hands or any other form of personal or intimate greetings such as hugs

- Participants should be briefed on the company's response plan to COVID-19 before the commencement of any meeting
- The host of the meeting should have an isolation room where persons who suddenly show signs of coughing, sneezing or any other symptoms of COVID-19 could be kept pending further investigations by competent health authorities
- The other participants should be encouraged to self-isolate till the test results are returned
  - If the test results of a participant returns positive, the others must be informed immediately and encouraged to report to the designated health centres
- The seats of participants should be a minimum of one (1) metre apart from each other
- Where possible, the doors and windows of the meeting room should be kept opened
- The host must retain the contact details of attendees of the meeting for at least a month and share same with public health authorities in the event that a participant tests positively for the COVID-19 virus

#### **Business and Personal Travels**

- ❖ The Chamber advises against personal or business related travels by principals and employees of member companies
- ❖ If an employee has to travel for medical or other important reasons, he or she must inform the relevant supervisor and self-quarantine for 14 days after returning to the jurisdiction
  - Where possible, the returnee employee should be encouraged to test at a health facility
- ❖ Foreign employees and consultants who are already out of the jurisdiction should be discouraged from returning or visiting the work place until the global health situation normalizes

#### **Well-Being of Employees**

- ❖ In the event that an employee shows signs of flu, cold or any other respiratory symptoms, he or she should be encouraged to seek medical attention and work from home after showing proof of visiting a medical practitioner

**Liaison with National and Local Medical Authorities**

The Chamber recognizes that it is in the interest of the mining industry to support the response efforts of the local and national governments to deal with the disease. In that regard, members are strongly encouraged to work closely with the district and municipal health authorities to improve on their capacity to deal with the disease. Such measures could include assisting the relevant public health directorate to educate the community members on COVID-19 and providing critical infrastructure such as isolation rooms. As well, members are strongly encouraged to assist the national testing centres with personal protective equipment (PPE) and any other logistics they may require.

On the part of the Secretariat, we will endeavour to build relationships with the relevant public health authorities as well as support the designated national testing facilities; Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR) and Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research (KCCR).

**Support from the Chamber to Member Companies**

The Secretariat has set-up a response team that comprises the medical officers of producing member companies to advise members on how to respond to the infection. Any enquiries on the Chamber's response to COVID-19 should be e-mailed to [covid19@ghanachamberofmines.org](mailto:covid19@ghanachamberofmines.org) or call telephone number **0558-148-717**.

The Secretariat will continue to keep members abreast of any other developments as we work together to surmount the challenges presented by this extraordinary situation.

## Appendix

## Appendix one: Sample Response to COVID-19 Outbreak in Ghana

Risk Level	Status of the COVID -19 Outbreak	Measures
Level 0	➤ No evidence or reports of Corona Virus cases anywhere in the world	Monitor
Level 1	➤ Evidence and reports of Corona Virus cases limited to only China.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and communicate</li> <li>• Stay alert</li> <li>• Educate on preventive measures and provide the necessary facilities</li> <li>• Training at risk workers</li> <li>• Prepare by stocking up on case specific PPEs, identify and prepare isolation areas, transport for confirmed cases, networking with support teams from MOH</li> <li>• Limited Screening of visitors ( by use of questionnaire for travel history and temp checks)</li> <li>• Self quarantine of travellers from China for at least 2 weeks</li> <li>• Collaborate with local health authorities</li> </ul>
Level 2	➤ Corona Virus cases confirmed in multiple countries around the globe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Preparing</li> <li>• Screen of all visitors from outside Ghana and refuse entry for those with significant travel history</li> <li>• Self quarantine of all international travellers for at least 2 weeks</li> <li>• Suspend or limit international business travel</li> </ul>
Level 3	➤ Corona Virus cases confirmed within West Africa Sub-region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screening of all visitors from outside Ghana and refuse entry for those with significant travel history</li> <li>• Collaborate with local health authorities</li> <li>• Self quarantine of all international travellers for at least 2 weeks</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspend or limit international business/ personal travel</li> </ul>
Level 4	➤ Corona Virus case confirmed in Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Alertness</li> <li>• Preparation</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Expand Screening to include in country visitors and workers</li> <li>• Collaborate with local health authorities</li> </ul>
Level 5	➤ Multiple Corona Virus cases confirmed within Ghana.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Preparation</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Expand Screening to include workers</li> <li>• Suspend activities that may involve direct/indirect person to person contact</li> <li>• Advice and provide for the usage of face mask by workers and visitors</li> <li>• Encourage self quarantine and isolation of potentially infected persons</li> <li>• Isolation and Transfer of confirmed cases</li> <li>• Contact tracing</li> <li>• Collaborate with local health authorities</li> </ul>
Level 6	➤ Corona Virus cases evident in areas where, employees and/or Contractors are likely to be located	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensify screening</li> <li>• Cancel all non-vital mass gatherings</li> <li>• Close down any schools and markets on site</li> <li>• Self-quarantine and isolation</li> <li>• Encourage workers with sick family members to stay at home</li> </ul>

**REF NO.: GCM/COVID-19/001**

Level 7	➤ Suspected/ confirmed corona virus case/s on site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Isolate suspected case/s and contact national authorities for specimen and laboratory testing</li><li>• Confirmed case - transfer to a treatment centre in Accra /Tema</li><li>• Contact tracing and isolation</li><li>• Note: never keep 2 or more suspected cases together</li></ul>
Level 8	➤ Containment and control of the Corona Virus spread in Ghana appears to be ineffective with high number of cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue with our site specific measures</li><li>• Follow national/international directives</li></ul>
Post epidemic / pandemic	➤ Post epidemic phase of Corona Virus in Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decontamination of isolation areas etc.</li><li>• Continuation of behavioral changes and preventive measures</li></ul>

*NB: The sample response plan was generously shared with the Ghana Chamber of Mines by Gold Fields Ghana and it is used in this communique with their permission*