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ANTIGUA BARBUDA HOTELS & TOURISM ASSOCIATION



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Health and Safety Protocols for Hotels

Enhanced Operational Guidelines In A Post
Covid-19 Environment

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COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

The Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is a new infectious disease that emerged at the end of 2019 and has since spread to over 216 countries and territories, with more than 4 million confirmed cases around the globe (WHO Situation Report 117). Since the first identified case in Wuhan China, the virus has rapidly spread across the globe and on 11 March 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. Impacts of the virus are far-reaching and continue to ripple throughout the world as businesses and people in their everyday lives get acclimated to their new reality.

Without dispute, the one industry that is suffering the most immediate repercussions is the hospitality and leisure industry. Hospitality is among the hardest hit due to fears of community spread through travel and group environments.

As the phrase “social distancing” becomes a household term, many consumers are playing it safe and staying at home, while some are attempting to continue typical day-to-day activities through restrictions. Curfews, and in some countries full lockdowns, have created a precarious business climate for this industry solely dependent on guests. As lockdowns and travel restrictions are lifted, travelers will be making their decision to travel in some sense based on their personal safety from airport check in to the sanitation standards in the resorts. It is therefore important for the establishment of a baseline standard for all properties to follow without fail. The foregoing is submitted for consultation.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

It is to be noted that the FTO Guidelines provides detailed and robust requirements for our sector as it relates to sanitation and managing infectious diseases. The following are baseline recommendations:

1. Training and education are vital to protect ourselves is by education and knowing causes infections and how to limit its spread.
 - Ensure that a training plan is in place for frequent training and at least once per quarter as new information about the virus and its spread / control becomes available.
 - Ensure adequate signage in key areas / communication with partners, suppliers, staff and guests, regarding regulations and polices related to the spread of infectious diseases.
2. Each property should have a COVID-19 **Emergency Response Policy** naming an emergency first responder and identifying key personnel and their respective responsibilities. It is recommended that this team include the GM or designated senior manager and should at a minimum include representatives from housekeeping, maintenance, food & beverage service, culinary, security, recreation and sanitation.
3. Conduct a workplace risk assessment to categorize job categories by risk level and institute mitigation measures accordingly¹.
4. Identification of potentially vulnerable staff is recommended to ensure appropriate risk management.

1 Considerations for Public Health and Social Measures in the Workplace in the Context of Covid-19. WHO, May 2020 <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/considerations-for-public-health-and-social-measures-in-the-workplace-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

5. Develop guidance on staff occupancy by area, adjusted shift system and staggered breaks for staff.
6. An established cleaning / sanitization of common areas is required as well as a system to ensure that employees observe good personal hygiene such as frequency of hand washing and proper sneeze and cough etiquette.
7. An established maintenance plan that includes general facilities management, sanitation guidelines²³⁴, strategies for air conditioning units, and considerations for improved ventilation. Particular emphasis should be placed on water and waste management (liquid and solid).
8. Establish a written policy governing the actions to be taken in the event of:
 - Suspected or confirmed Covid-19 case in resort, to include in room quarantine and isolation guidelines for guests⁵. Similarly, guidelines would be required to address suspected or confirmed cases among employees.
 - Establish internal and external reporting guidelines (Senior Management, Staff, Guests, Ministry of Health).

TEAM MEMBERS RESPONSIBILITY

Training is a critical component to ensuring an understanding of and commitment to the “new norm” policies are implemented and to be maintained. All employees returning to work post lock down must be required to:

1. Participate in minimum three (3) days training. Recommended day one covers state of the industry, the science behind the spread and control of infectious diseases, new and established best practices, hygiene and sanitation, PPE and proper usage, review of disciplinary action for non-compliance, and necessity to report any observed violations or operational gaps. The remaining two days should be spent in their respective department undergoing hands on practical training to ensure a full understanding of the guidelines/protocols and implications.
2. Report immediately to Human Resources if the individual, a member of their household has had, currently feeling unwell with like symptoms or they have been advised by MOH that they might have been in contact with a suspected case.
3. COMPLETE the DAILY health status certification form⁶, prior to leaving one’s domicile, and accurately and honestly report any symptoms as described on the form. Confirm that they have been trained and fully understand that any violation of the established guidelines will result in a disciplinary action since the stakes in this matter could mean death! Sign off to file is required.

2 Cleaning and Disinfection of Environmental Surfaces in the Context of Covid-19. WHO Interim Guidance, May 2020 <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/cleaning-and-disinfection-of-environmental-surfaces-inthe-context-of-covid-19>

3 List of Approved Disinfectant by the CDC <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

4 Cleaning and disinfecting your facility https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fdisinfecting-building-facility.html

5 As per Sector Quarantine Guideline

6 CDC Health Check Tool (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>)

FRONT DESK / RECEPTION LOBBY / CONCIERGE LOUNGES

- Conduct an evaluation of guest upon arrival. At a minimum it should include the checking the temperature of all arriving guests and looking for any respiratory issues such as a cough, runny nose or shortness of breath. Large properties to explore the option of having a nurse on staff.
- Entry to be fitted with alcohol-based hand sanitizing dispensers.
- Depending on resort configuration, the re-positioning of public area furnishings to establish larger separation in compliance with social distancing guidelines.
- It is highly recommended that all properties explore and implement an online/mobile check-in and check-out process to minimize contact and avoid guest congregating in lobby/reception area.
- For large properties, establish a structured line system to ensure 2-meter (6ft) distancing can be achieved (e.g. stripes / footprints on floor).
- Introduce keyless room entry where possible but at minimum ensure that physical keys are properly sanitized before being issued to guest and once returned to reception.
- All equipment used by staff or guests should be disinfected between each use.
- All restroom facilities within this area should be constantly sanitized based on occupancy and usage.
- Reduce cash transactions as well as the signing of individual tickets and room charges throughout the property. Credit and Debit cards should be the preferred method of payment.
- Explore ways to automate the arrival orientation. Consider walking all guests to their rooms and conducting the orientation on the way as opposed to the front desk.
- Face masks should be available and offered to guests who are without. Guest are encouraged to wear a face covering when traversing the property where they are likely to be in close proximity to staff and other guests. For beach activities where physical distancing requirements are met, the wearing of a face covering would not be required.
- Staff should wear resort approved face coverings while working.
- The WHO advice on the use of face covering should be utilized as a guide⁷.

STAFF SERVICES / FACILITIES

- Implement a process for checking the temperature of all employees at the point of entry to property at the start of each shift and monitor for any respiratory issues such as a coughing, runny nose or shortness of breath. Employees deemed unwell should not be allowed to work. Verify that the employee self-certification has been completed and received prior to the employee commencing work⁸.
- Staff transportation supplier to be fully compliant with all standards provided by MOH regarding max capacities on buses and must commit to ensuring frequent sanitization, particularly between trips and that employees observe social distancing and wear a mask. Any breach should be communicated to management.
- Sanitization station at all clock in points, touchless sign in software should be utilized or at minimum, disposable napkins and sanitizers should be in place for use where fingerprint time clocks or manual sign in sheets are used.

7 Advice on the Use of Masks in the Context of Covid-19. WHO Interim Guidance, 6 April 2020. [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak)

8 CDC provides a self-check tool that may be utilized as guidance for staff (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>)

- Employees should change into their uniforms upon arrival on property. Staff should be discouraged from wearing uniforms outside of the work setting.
- On-site laundering may be implemented where possible, as well as the provision of appropriate change facilities. These need to have running water (hot water as well) and adequate supply of soap.
- Staff restroom cleaning frequency should be increased based on the number of resort employees.
- All departments should limit items being brought into guest areas by employees. Lockers or a designated area for storage should be identified and frequently disinfected / sanitized at minimum between shifts.
- Cafeterias/Canteens should also be monitored to ensure social distancing. Install hand washing station. For larger resorts, a scheduling system might be needed. Eliminate any self-service options. Drinking glasses, plates and cutlery should be properly sanitized and handed to employees as opposed to self-help. Cutlery should be single-wrapped.
- Office layout / workspaces should be reviewed to ensure social distancing is achieved.
- Staff gatherings should be limited but when convened should allow for social distancing. Consideration should be given to postponing staff events such as awards luncheons, celebratory dinners and social club events on resort.
- Review of acceptable PPE per staff position / duties. At minimum, all employees should be provided an adequate supply of washable and reusable masks.
- Employee emergency contact information should be updated to include information on any comorbidities that might make them susceptible to the virus.
- Review of employment contracts in collaboration with the union with the view of including health & safety focus / responsibility at properties where it might not already be included.
- Management meetings should be held via Zoom, Microsoft team or other online platforms where a meeting space to allow for social distancing and open-air facilities does not exist. Disciplinary meetings when necessary should be kept to a minimum time period and in observance of social distancing guidelines with appropriate PPE being utilized.
- Cleaning standards, increased attention and frequency of cleaning should also be standardized for staff restrooms.
- Consider providing pay slips electronically via email or WhatsApp to avoid contact with physical slips

HANDLING OF GUEST LUGGAGE & PORTER SERVICE

- Luggage handles should be sanitized prior to handling. Staff are required to sanitize hands immediately after assisting guests and to wash hands at the earliest opportunity thereafter.
- Bags should be taken to the room and placed at the entrance door so as not to enter a guest room in the absence of the guest. After the guest breaks the sanitization seal on the guest room, bags may be placed in the room. On departure, the same standard should be followed.
- Luggage storage rooms should only be accessed by authorized employees and not by guests.
- Shuttles utilized to transport guests to their rooms or around the resort should be restricted to persons in the same room or travelling together.
- Transportation should be sanitized after moving each guest, paying attention to seats, seatbelts, grab rails, doors, and windows⁹.

9 Cleaning and disinfection vehicles <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

ELEVATORS, STAIRWAYS & PUBLIC AREAS

- Increased frequency of cleaning of elevator buttons based on the size occupancy of the resort. The higher occupancy, the higher the frequency of cleaning.
- Reduce riding capacity to persons travelling together.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available on each floor immediately outside the elevator.
- Provide appropriate guest signage that details COVID-19 precautions.
- Stairway handrails should be sanitized frequently, paying special attention to the most utilized stairways, and those that are indoor.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available on property and offered to each guest room.

GUEST ROOMS ¹⁰

- Document and implement plan to achieve and maintain a higher level of cleaning in guest rooms prior to reopening. Particular attention should be paid to light switches, toilet handles, doorknobs, sliding door handles, kettles, in-room coffee machines, alarm clocks / radios, patio furnishing and mini fridges.
- Review of air conditioning maintenance to include steam cleaning of evaporator coil and rotary wheel¹¹.
- Room amenities, if not possible to completely sanitized, should be discarded prior to a new guest arrival.
- Room disinfection to include steam cleaning of drapes, carpets, rugs and soft furnishing. Detailed cleaning of all surfaces and high touch areas as well as a comprehensive review of standards in rooms to be completed and monitored daily by the Executive Housekeeper. Records must be kept for sanitization of each room on every occasion.
- Covered waste bins should be provided and fitted with a plastic liner.
- Suggest the removal of any extra linen i.e. blankets, throw pillows, decorative throws, bed shirting, etc. Where these remain, they must be replaced or thoroughly cleaned after each check out.
- Recommend eliminating printed hotel material and accessories in rooms such as resort directories, tours and excursions flyers as well as pens & notepads. Instead utilize a digital option to provide information to guests. Where magazines and stationery remain based on contract, these should be replaced after each check out.
- Minimize delivery of extra amenities / daily mini bar restocking to rooms by concierge and other staff thereby reducing the need for multiple room entries. Place items on esthetic table or receptacle outside entry door.
- Toilet paper rolls, used facial tissue and amenities left in room after departure must be discarded using safety guidelines.
- Employees should not be permitted to accept used personal items given as a gift. These must be discarded.

¹⁰ Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection. CDC, 2020 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

Guidelines for Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities. CDC, 2003 <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/index.html>

¹¹ This mode of transmission has not been demonstrated. However, enhanced maintenance guidance should be contemplated particularly in an infected guest is confirmed.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

- Pool / Beach Attendant may be necessary to monitor social distancing rules such as limiting the number of persons in a pool at any given time.
- Eliminate the touch point of employees issuing beach / pool towels. Self-service huts should be implemented, or towels may be placed in guest room. A clearly identifiable, lined bin should be set up for used towels and a designated employee wearing full protective gear should remove used towels in plastic bags. Dependent on the location of the huts, appropriate markers for collection spot could be used. Bin / Cart used to transport used linen should be cleaned after each use.
- Public area cleaners must wear protective gear to include disposable aprons and disposable gloves¹². Increase focus on the cleaning and sanitizing of door handles, light switches, faucets, etc. The frequency of cleaning recommended is every 20-30 minutes, depending on the size and occupancy of the property.
- Restroom should have adequate soap, preferably hands-free dispensers. Signage should be prominently displayed advising guests of the necessity of washing their hands.
- Hand sanitizers should be available in all public areas.
- Pool and beach lounges should be cleaned and sanitized after each use having been set up in designated areas to promote social distancing.

LAUNDRY OPERATIONS¹³¹⁴

- All attendants must wear full protective gear to include disposable aprons and gloves.
- All laundry facilities must have the capability of washing linen at minimum 60 degrees C using detergents and sanitizing agents and facilities must be sanitized daily at the start and end of service.
- The flow of linen should be organized to ensure there is no chance of clean and dirty linen coming in contact with each other.
- Dedicated hand washing and sanitizing station must be available in this area and access to the laundry should be significantly limited to essential team only.
- Special care should be given to treatment of personal guest laundry. Laundry for guest of different rooms must never come in contact with each other or with hotel linen. Perhaps consideration should be given to putting this service on hold.
- Laundry staff uniforms must be changed before leaving property and must be laundered daily.
- Provision of specially marked bags (Bio hazard) for linen and other clothing items that are potentially contaminated for guests displaying signs and symptoms of COVID-19 or that been contaminated with blood or faeces.
- Mops, cleaning clothes, etc. should be soaked in an approved disinfectant solution before being used and between uses.

12 Handwashing rules should be strictly adhered to.

13 Guidelines for Infection control in Health-Care Facilities. CDC, 2003.
Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection. CDC, 2020.

14 See previously referenced guidance on the cleaning and disinfecting of facilities, which includes guidance on laundry facilities.

ACTIVITIES AND RECREATIONS¹⁵

- All in-resort activities that involve meeting in large groups at close proximity, where social distancing cannot be maintained, should be temporarily suspended. All activities should be reviewed based on whether the organizer can realistically achieve social distancing.
- External tours and excursions should be considered based on the tour company's safety record, COVID-19 plan in place and strictly adhering to social distancing guidelines by reducing their capacities.
- Independent Car Rental operators with a presence in the resorts must provide a written plan of their policies to mitigate any spread prior to operating and must be in compliance with all MOH guidelines.
- Evening entertainment would require review and should be restricted to events that can ensure adequate physical distancing and should be conducted outdoors.
- Indoor late-night discos / clubs should be suspended.
- Kids Club activities should be reviewed and amended based on the type of activity.

FOOD & BEVERAGE OUTLETS

- HACCP is the leading standard on food safety and should be adopted in all aspects of the F&B operation which already establishes the benchmarks for sanitation and food & beverage safety. This needs to be implemented in all operations and periodically monitored by MOT / MOH.
- Dining areas to be reorganized to achieve social distancing ensuring seating is minimum 6ft between tables, or seat guests so that they are not closer than 6 feet from other guests.
- Dining should be restricted to well-ventilated or outdoor areas.
- Suggest the elimination of buffets, coffee and beverage stations, sandwich, cookie stations and other related services that may compromise physical distancing rules. Such services may be resumed in a phased approach following an assessment of risk.
- Hand sanitizers to be installed at the entrance to all F & B outlets.
- Review workflow and implement a strategy to reduce the cluster of employees at any given time by creating new shifts.
- Reduce the use of printed menus where possible but at a minimum, these should be cleaned and sanitized before being given to another guest.
- Menus may be posted or displayed for the benefit of guests;
- Consider electronic delivery of menus to guests. Apps may be developed that outline hotel services.
- Where possible, eliminate tablecloths and ensure table surfaces and chairs are cleaned & sanitized before turned over to another guest using a food grade sanitizer and disposable napkin or cloth.
- Eliminate or at a minimum sanitize all tabletop settings to include S&P shakers, condiment holders, etc. to avoid any cross contamination.
- Eliminate self-service ice machines.
- Where guest aids are used, highchairs, boosters, etc. these should be sanitized after each use.
- Detailed cleaning and sanitizing of all restaurants and outlets must be done at the end of each service period.

¹⁵ Detailed guidance may be developed based on measure implemented by Governmental authorities. <https://www.interior-health.ca/YourEnvironment/TattooPiercingTanningHair/Documents/COVID-19%20Guidance%20for%20Gyms%20and%20Fitness%20Centres%20-%202014May2020.pdf>

RETAIL SPACES

- Staff occupancy should be reviewed to ensure adequate physical distancing.
- Disinfection and sanitation guidelines should be adhered to.
- Hand sanitizing station to be placed at the entrance of the outlet.
- Where retail operations are managed or operated by third party, their employees should be compliant with the resort standards for cleanliness, wellness and wear the appropriate PPE.
- Markers should be utilized to denote standing distance outside and at check-out points.
- Manage and control number of persons in store at once. Based on the size of the outlet, number of guests should be limited, and policy should be clearly communicated.
- Fitting room should be discontinued or closed. Items fitted by a guest but not purchased must be steam cleaned.

SPA & FITNESS CENTERS¹⁶

- Due to the close contact needed for spa treatments, it is recommended that services are limited or suspended for the immediate future.
- Saunas, whirlpool, etc. operation would require a full review to ensure monitoring, cleaning and sanitizing between each guest use.
- Depending on the size of the hotel, fitness Center if not already manned, should have an employee assigned to clean equipment after each use. Guests should be required to wash their hands prior to using any equipment and hand sanitizers in place. For small facilities, frequent sanitization should occur, and sanitizer should be available for guests to sanitize equipment themselves.
- Fitness equipment should be reorganized to ensure 6 ft between each equipment or limit use of multiple equipment in close proximity to each other.
- Yoga, Pilates and other fitness classes should limit the number of participants per class to effect social distancing based on the space being used.
- Self-serve drinking water dispensers to be removed. Individual drinking water bottles only.
- Ventilation within the facility should be increased.

SAFETY & SECURITY

1. Internal & contracted Security officers must adhere to social distancing protocols of 6 feet.
2. Hygiene and sanitization measures must be outlined in security booth/stations / provided to contractors for staff compliance.
3. All equipment and implements (phones, portable radios, walkie-talkies, batons, etc.) used by security must be completely sanitized before shift change.
4. All Security booth must be outfitted with hand sanitizing station(s).
5. Security offices must be outfitted with required PPE.
6. Security must exercise required physical distancing during bag checks, avoiding touching as much as possible.

16 Further guidance may be developed for gyms and fitness centers based on advice given in footnote 15.

WAREHOUSE / STORES

1. Suppliers must remain in their vehicles as much as possible. Where there is need to exit, they must undergo temperature checks and wear proper PPE including masks.
2. Suppliers should not be allowed inside the receiving area / inside general stores
3. Staff must wear PPE's and maintain physical distancing to receive food and beverages items from suppliers.
4. Establish an area for fruit and vegetables to be washed and sanitized upon receipt from supplier and before being stored.
5. All suppliers must be provided a copy of the resort "safe food" policy and should be required to acknowledge receipt of and understanding of resort protocols in writing.
6. Implement proper scheduling to reduce congregation of suppliers at any given time.

SPECIAL EVENTS

1. Meeting and conventions should be put on hold.
2. Any resort with a disco, night club or any enclosed / air conditioned entertainment spaces should not operate these venues
3. Families/groups traveling for weddings, traveling together or part of the same group etc. should be required to limit their number to max as recommended by MOH guidelines for any event.

HOSPITALITY & GENERAL CHANGES

- All hurricane & emergency contingency plans must be updated to reflect our "new norm". Hoteliers must have clear knowledge of new shelters and guidelines.
- Tour operator partners who provide rep service must be subject to the same screening process and should no longer conduct meetings with groups. Masks must be worn during each interaction with guests.
- External visitors to the resort such be minimized. By appointment only, if absolutely necessary. Supplier payments should be paid via direct deposit to avoid contact with cheque or cash.
- Certified first responders on resort will need to undergo additional training to handle suspected Covid-19 guests.
- Review of Liability issues with individual insurance providers if guest becomes ill in resort.
- Review / establish policy on employee medical treatment if they become ill as a result of exposure to a suspected / confirmed Covid-19 guest.
- First Aid kits should be updated to include face masks, shields, extra gloves, etc.
- Administration and office spaces should be reviewed for safety compliance.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The likely generation of potentially hazardous waste necessitates the enhancement of existing policies with respect to waste management and/or the proper implementation of existing guidance. To this end, the following basic requirements should be adhered to:

1. All waste containers should be fitted with lids and lined with an appropriate plastic liner.
2. Potentially hazardous waste from suspected positive Covid-29 guests should be clearly identifiable.
3. External waste collection area should be adequately protected and managed to prevent spillage of waste or damage by pests and animals¹⁷.
4. Waste collection routine should be adhered to and waste should not be allowed to accumulate.
5. Cleaning and sanitation procedures should be adhered to and approved detergents and sanitizers utilized for effectiveness.
6. Waste contractor should be adequately advised as to the policies in relation to the handling and removal of waste.
7. Liaise with Waste Management Authority to ensure that measures are in place to ensure that transported waste is delivered to disposal site.

SEWAGE MANAGEMENT¹⁸

There has been no evidence to date that Covid-19 is transmissible through sewerage or faecal matter. However, due to the presence of the Coronavirus in faeces, and its detection in sewage, a level of risk is contemplated. It would be prudent to ensure the following:

1. Wastewater treatment plants are operating optimally.
2. Optimized aeration and retention times are adhered.
3. Improved maintenance regime.
4. Final disinfection is optimized, and efficacy determined through testing and record keeping.
5. Irrigation practices that utilize reclaimed water are reviewed to ensure that undue contact with drift spray from irrigation systems is minimized.
6. Wastewater treatment personnel are provided with appropriate PPE during the course of their duties.

DRINKING WATER RESOURCES

The spread of Coronavirus through potable water supplies has not been demonstrated, and there are no specific guidelines in the context of Covid-19. It remains prudent that water sources are adequately protected from extraneous sources of contamination and that routine disinfection practices are maintained.

17 What waste collectors and recyclers need to know <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/waste-collection-recycling-workers-h.pdf>

18 <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/water-sanitation-hygiene-and-waste-management-for-covid-19>