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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR

NO. 2020-10

**SUBJECT : GUIDELINES ON THE INVESTIGATION OF COVID-19
CASES AND CONTACT TRACING OF CLOSE
CONTACTS**

In the interest of the service and in line with the instruction of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte on 24 March 2020 for the adoption of a whole-of-government approach in addressing COVID-19, there is a need to implement Contact Tracing guidelines in the DENR to contain the spread of the virus among its officials and employees who are reporting for work pursuant to the approved work arrangement prescribed by the Civil Service Commission.

I. COVERAGE

These guidelines shall cover all DENR officials and employees in the Central Office, Bureaus, Attached Agencies and Regional Offices.

II. OBJECTIVES

The goals of establishing contact tracing guidelines in the DENR are as follows:

1. To interrupt transmission and reduce the spread of the virus among the officials and employees who are reporting for work under the approved work arrangements;
2. To alert close contacts of the possibility of infections;
3. To provide guidance to the Heads of Office when to declare temporary closure of offices for disinfection and sanitation;
4. To organize contact tracing teams in each office that will conduct identification, tracing and investigation; and
5. To ensure proper recording, safekeeping, release/disclosure and disposition of records/information related to the conduct of contact tracing and investigation.

III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- A. **Contact tracing** – the identification, listing, and follow-up of persons who may have come into close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case. Contact tracing is an important component in containing outbreaks of infectious diseases. Under Code Red Sublevel 2, contact tracing is aimed at mitigating the spread of the disease.
- B. **Close contact** – a DENR official or employee who may have come into contact with the probable or confirmed case two (2) days prior to onset of illness of the confirmed COVID-19 case (use date of sample collection for asymptomatic cases as basis) until the time that said cases test negative on laboratory confirmation or other approved laboratory test.

1. **Face-to-face contact** with a probable or confirmed case within one (1) meter and for more than fifteen (15) minutes;
2. **Direct physical contact** with a probable or confirmed case; or
3. **Direct care** for a patient with probable or confirmed COVID-19 disease without using proper personal protective equipment.

C. **Confirmed COVID-19 case** – any individual who tested positive for COVID-19 through laboratory confirmation at the national reference laboratory, subnational reference laboratory, or a DOH-certified laboratory testing facility.

D. **Probable COVID-19 case** – a suspect case who fulfills any one of the following listed below:

1. Suspect case whose testing for COVID-19 is inconclusive;
2. Suspect who tested positive for COVID-19 but whose test was not conducted in a national or subnational reference laboratory or officially accredited laboratory for COVID-19 confirmatory testing; or
3. Suspect case who died without undergoing any confirmatory testing.

E. **Case Investigation** – the identification and investigation of an individual with confirmed and probable diagnosis of COVID-19.

IV. CASE INVESTIGATION WORKFLOW

A. Case Identification

A COVID-19 case investigation will be initiated when an official or employee tested positive for Swab Test (RT-PCR) from the Department of Health through the local Health Department or laboratory or health care provider. Upon receipt of the information, it will be entered into the DENR Contact Tracing Database.

B. Case Triage for Assignment

The Head of the Contact Tracing Team shall convene the team within two (2) hours from receipt of the information, through any available virtual avenue. He/She shall assign an investigator for a case and/or contact tracer for the close contact.

C. Case Interview

The investigator shall ascertain the following during the interview:

1. Confirm if the official or employee is aware of the positive test result;
2. Advise the official or employee to proceed to an isolation or quarantine facility. If he/she refuses, his/her case will be referred to the local jurisdictions having authority to mandate isolation;
3. Identify the close contact/s;
4. In case of severe symptoms, he/she shall be referred to a medical provider and support services; and
5. Advise the official or employee that he/she will be regularly monitored for symptoms for ten (10) consecutive days.

D. Case Close Out and Submission of report to Team Leader and Management

The case investigator shall submit a report to the team leader after the official or employee is cleared.

V. CONTACT TRACING WORKFLOW

A. Rapid Notification of Exposure

The official or employee shall immediately inform his/her supervisor of the result of the test. The latter shall directly report the result to the Contact Tracing Team.

The data privacy provisions under the Data Privacy Act shall be strictly complied with to ensure that the data privacy rights of patients/subjects are respected and protected.

B. Contact Interview

The contact tracer shall interview all close contacts of the COVID-19 positive official or employee. The close contacts will be informed that they may have possible exposure to a COVID-19 positive without divulging the identity of the latter.

The close contacts shall be given instructions to undergo testing and quarantine.

C. Medical Monitoring

The contact tracer will regularly monitor the close contacts to know if they manifest any symptoms. Their temperature shall be checked twice a day.

D. Contact Close Out and Submission of Report to Team Leader and the Management

The contact tracer shall close out the case by submitting a report to the Team Leader who shall, in turn, forward the same to the management.

VI. COMPOSITION OF CONTACT TRACING TEAMS

All DENR offices shall form their respective contact tracing teams consisting of personnel with backgrounds preferably in the medical field, i.e. Doctors of Medicine, Nurses, Medical Technologists, and in investigations, i.e. investigators in the DENR.

The contact tracing teams shall be responsible in the case investigation and contact tracing of cases involving DENR employees within their respective jurisdictions. The investigation and contact tracing may involve permanent officials or employees, persons hired contract of service, security guard personnel, janitorial staff or canteen staff.

The following shall have their respective functions:

- a. **Team Leader** - Directly oversee or supervise the case investigator and the contact tracer; assign work/case to a case investigator and contact tracer and oversee quality of work; ensure the completion of case investigations and follow-ups; and review work for missing information, inconsistencies, and other areas which need further explanations.
- b. **Case Investigator** - conduct interviews with COVID-19 positive officials or employees either tested through Swab Test; elicit their close contacts; monitor them for their symptoms; and, connecting them to resources to support their isolation.
- c. **Contact Tracer** - conduct interviews with the close contacts of the COVID-19 positive officials or employees; inform close contacts of their exposure and possible transmission of the virus; advise the close contact to undergo Swab Test; monitor them for COVID-19 symptoms; and connect them to resources to support their quarantine.

VII. CLEARANCE TO REPORT FOR WORK

Officials or employees who tested positive for COVID-19 shall not be allowed to report for work without complying with the following requirements:

1. If an official or employee was absent due to any COVID-19 symptoms, the supervisor should refer the employee to the Contact Tracing Team for proper advice as to when he/she may be allowed to report back for work. As a rule, an employee **MUST NOT REPORT FOR WORK** if he/she has any fever, cough, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste/smell, and/or other COVID-19 like symptoms within the past fourteen (14) days.
2. An official or employee who tested positive for Rapid Antibody Test but later on tested negative for the Swab Test should submit a copy of the negative test result and/or a clearance from his/her local barangay health center indicating that he/she has completed the fourteen (14)-day quarantine, whichever comes first.
3. An official or employee who tested positive for Swab Test should submit a Medical Clearance from the quarantine facility he/she was admitted to or a Medical Certificate from a Health Care provider from his/her local barangay health center indicating the negative result of a Swab Test and that he/she has completed isolation and/or the prescribed quarantine period.
4. All documents, including medical clearance and barangay health clearance, should be submitted to and approved by the Contact Tracing Team.

Before working in or reporting to the office, the official/employee shall accomplish and send to their immediate supervisors via text/email/message a sworn health declaration. The form of said declaration is attached hereto as **Annex A**.

Failure of the official or employee to comply with the above protocols shall be a ground for a disciplinary action for violation of reasonable office rules and regulations punishable under the 2017 Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service.

VIII. DISINFECTION AND CLOSURE OF BUILDINGS

If one (1) confirmed case of COVID-19 is detected in any DENR office, the building shall be disinfected with an appropriate disinfectant solution (0.5% bleach solution). The conduct of a comprehensive disinfection by specialists is recommended.

The building must be temporarily closed for twenty-four (24) hours prior to disinfection to lessen transmission to sanitation personnel. During the disinfection process, all doors and windows should be opened to maximize ventilation. The building may only be opened for work resumption twenty-four (24) hours after the disinfection process.

Heads of DENR offices shall ensure that the temporary closure of their respective offices for disinfection purposes be done in accordance with the National Task Force Against COVID-19 Memorandum Circular No. 2 dated 15 June 2020 on the Operational Guidelines on the Application of Zoning Containment Strategy in the Localization of the National Action Plan against COVID-19 Response.

IX. RECORDS AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Data gathered during contact tracing and investigation shall be taken with full consent of the official/employee. Information recorded in print or electronic form shall be coded to ensure confidentiality, unless the person agrees to have his/her full information disclosed for the purpose of contact tracing.

All records pertinent to contact tracing and investigation shall be lodged with the Health and Wellness Team, with assigned records officer who shall be responsible in the safekeeping of such records.

Disclosure of such records shall be authorized by the Contact Tracing Team, following protocols prescribed in the Freedom of Information Manual.

Destruction/disposition of these records shall be done upon authorization from the Contact Tracing Team, after one (1) year from the date these were created.

X. EFFECTIVITY

These guidelines shall take effect immediately and shall be re-evaluated regularly to be continuously responsive to the prevailing circumstances in the locality.

For strict compliance.


ROY A. CIMATU
Secretary



**Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Health and Wellness Program**

COVID-19 DECLARATION FORM

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11332. Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable and Health Events of Public Health Concern Act. It requires the patient to provide truthful information about one's health condition and possible exposure. Violation of this act shall be PENALIZED with a fine not less than Php 20,000.00 but not more than Php 50,000.00 or imprisonment or not less than one (1) month but not more than six (6) months, or both such fine and imprisonment, at the discretion of the proper court.

PART 1. SIGNS AND

- Coughing
- Cold
- Fever
- Difficulty of Breathing
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea

SYMPTOMS (Check the box if applicable)

- Loss of Appetite
- Nausea & or Vomiting
- Body Weakness / Muscle pain
- Difficulty of Breathing
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea

PART II. TRAVEL AND EXPOSURE HISTORY (Check the box if applicable)

- Exposure to cluster of individuals with flu-like illness in household or workplace
- Exposure to confirm case of COVID-19
- Exposure to suspect case for COVID-19

In accordance with RA11332, I certify that the above declaration is TRUE and CORRECT. I Understand that any dishonest answer(s) may have serious public health implications and may be subjected to penalties.

Employee's Printed Name and Signature

Office

Contact No (s)

Date



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