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COVID-19 news from SAMED, Government and Abroad.

## NCD STRATEGIC PLAN & COVID MANDATORY REPORTS

The below is to provide a brief update on the [Presidential Lockdown Speech](#) of 12 July as it will affect the health sector, and a more important, practical update on what employer should be doing in contact tracing and mandatory reporting of COVID-19 cases & close contacts.

### Lockdown Speech, 12 July 2020:

- A copy of the new amendments to the Regulations is available [here](#).
- The state of disaster is extended until 15 August. This will be a monthly occurrence, due to the wording in the empowering Act.
- There is re-institution of a curfew from 21:00 - 04:00 which only allows movement for the provision and obtaining of urgent medical care. Practices and health facilities must, therefore, take note that "general" (non-urgent) care can only be provided from 04:00 - 21:00. Essential workers must continue to use Form 2 (on page 9 of the amendment) as a permit to perform a service permitted under Alert Level 3, or is attending to a security or medical emergency. "
- Employers may want to reconsider the implication of minibus taxi's operating at 100% capacity for their staff. This consideration must be taken into account in the employer's Annexure E plan.

### Reporting of COVID cases and contacts of COVID cases:

There are a number of mandatory reports that must be made in all COVID cases in workplaces, covering employees and non-employees:

- The patient's doctor would report the COVID-19 case to the NICD ([NMCsurveillanceReport@nicd.ac.za](mailto:NMCsurveillanceReport@nicd.ac.za)), using the [prescribed forms](#).
- The employer must undertake contact tracing, and, using the [Template COVID-19 contact Line list](#), report this to [ncov@nicd.ac.za](mailto:ncov@nicd.ac.za).
- Reporting to the Department of Employment and Labour must be done for all occupational illnesses resulting in absences of 14 days or more, using form [W.CI.1](#).
- If COVID-19 is occupationally-acquired, it must be reported to, and costs thereof can be claimed from, the **Compensation Fund**, using the [CompEasy system](#).
- Reports must also be made to provincial health authorities.

### Non-communicable Diseases Strategic Plan: comment

- Comment on the May 2020 version of the **NCD Strategic Plan**, recently released, is awaited till **31 July 2020**.

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## ECONOMIC RELIEF MEASURES DURING COVID-19

The Department of Small Business Development has several interventions available to qualifying SMMEs.

Download an overview of the available interventions [here](#) and [here](#).

The editable application form for Debt Relief and the Business Growth Scheme can be downloaded from any of the following websites:

- [www.dsbd.gov.za](http://www.dsbd.gov.za)
- [www.sefa.org.za](http://www.sefa.org.za)
- [www.seda.org.za](http://www.seda.org.za)

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Email applications to [smmerelief@sefa.org.za](mailto:smmerelief@sefa.org.za) or make a general enquiry on [info@dsbd.gov.za](mailto:info@dsbd.gov.za)

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## SARS NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION LIST OF COVID-19 MEDICAL SUPPLIES

SARS has published a National classification list of COVID-19 medical supplies which you can download [here](#).

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## LOCAL MANUFACTURERS AND IMPORTERS OF JUMPSUITS & GOWNS

Sivaya Trading is looking for local Manufacturers or otherwise importers of the below products. It is essential that those keen to supply must have the necessary certifications and that their products must have the required current test and conformity reports/certificates.

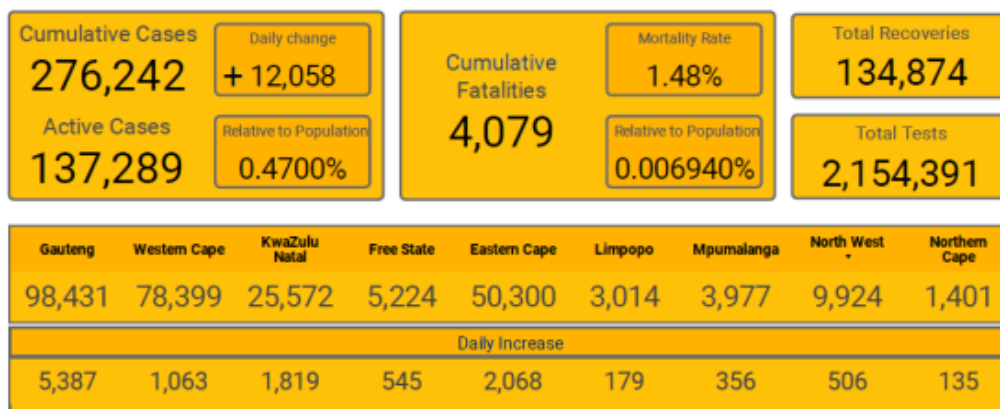
- SCRUBS & DISPOSABLE JUMPSUITS
- SURGICAL (Reinforced and Normal ) AND ISOLATION GOWNS.

If you are able to assist please contact Siva Doorsamy on 0845806122 or [sivaya@absamail.co.za](mailto:sivaya@absamail.co.za)

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## COVID-19 DEVELOPMENTS

### TRACKING THE PANDEMIC



The figures to focus on are the **12 058 new cases** overnight and particularly the figures for Gauteng (5 224) and the Eastern Cape (2 068). Gauteng's hospital facilities are about to be overwhelmed (see Health Developments).

It is striking that **three provincial premiers** – David Makhura of Gauteng, Job Mokgoro of North West and Alan Winde of Western Cape – are currently infected. (Mentioned last night in President's address)

### REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

Soon after President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation last night **new regulations were Gazetted**. "The storm is upon us," President Ramaphosa said, even as "many are downplaying the seriousness of this virus" and failing to adhere to the rules intended to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

The following summary is from Business Insider:

- **Mask crackdown: Jail-time or fines for store or property owners** - The wearing of a cloth face mask, a homemade item - and now also including "another appropriate item, that covers the nose and mouth" - remains mandatory for every person when in a public place. The new regulations determine that property and store owners, as well as all employers and school principals will face six months and/or fines if they allow mask-free people on their premises. Taxi operators will face the same penalties if they don't enforce mask-wearing.

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- **Curfew** - You are confined to your home from 21:00 until 04:00 daily, except where you have a permit to work, or attending to a security or medical emergency.
- **Public parks open for exercise** - Parks – but not beaches – will be open for exercising, “subject to health protocols”.
- **New rules for taxis** - For trips of 200km or more, taxis or buses may not carry more than 70% of the licensed capacity for their vehicle. On short trips, this has now increased to 100%. Taxis must have some windows open during all journeys.
- **Liquor sales banned - again** - The sale, dispensing and distribution of liquor is again prohibited. Liquor exports are still allowed, and companies can transport alcohol from manufacturing plants to storage facilities.
- **You still can't buy cigarettes – or stay over in a hotel for leisure** - The local sale and export of cigarettes and tobacco products remain prohibited. Also, the new regulations make it clear that hotels and guest houses aren't allowed to offer accommodation to leisure travellers.

### HEALTH DEVELOPMENTS

In the weeks ahead, **Gauteng** Health MEC Dr Bandile Masuku says people should expect the Gauteng death rate, currently "quite low" at around 2% of cases, to increase. He says provincial hospitals are set to reach **full capacity by next week**, which is when field hospitals will start taking patients in large numbers. (News 24)

The **shortage of hospital beds** – especially in Gauteng – is being flagged as a major crisis in the media. Sunday Times reported that the Gauteng COVID-19 Command Council estimated that as many as 50 000 beds might be needed by September and the current number was 8 300. The lack of a centralised referral system has led to a chaotic situation, with critically ill patients waiting hours to be admitted. Such an online system only went live this week. Health MEC Bandile Masuku indicated they were trying to get field hospitals operational early to plug the gap until extra ICU beds at state hospitals were in place. The targeted date for the latter was mid-August, he said. There appears to be anger in the sector at the lack of readiness and a feeling that the time bought by the initial weeks of lockdown has been squandered.

The **National Ventilator Project**, tasked with coordinating the manufacture of 20 000 non-invasive ventilators, is **running a month late** and will only deliver the first batch of 1 000 units at the end of July or first week in August. Contracts for half the targeted number of ventilators have not yet been awarded. (Sunday Times). Presently there are 7 134 mechanical and non-invasive ventilators in the private and public health systems, according to DOH spokesperson Popo Maja.

The **Solidarity Fund is set to purchase critical medical equipment** worth R405 million - including hospital beds, ventilators and high-flow oxygen devices - for Gauteng, the Western Cape and Eastern Cape. In a statement on Friday, Solidarity Fund interim CEO Nomkhita Nqweni said the fund would purchase medical equipment for Gauteng hospitals - including the Nasrec field hospital - beds and ventilators for the Western Cape, and ward capacity and oxygen devices in the Eastern Cape.

Doctors volunteering at the Nasrec Field Hospital have appealed to members of the public to **lend oxygen concentrators** to the hospital or **contribute to a fund** to rent these devices (which concentrate air and extract oxygen, obviating the need for oxygen supplies). Apparently private individuals have been snapping these up and keeping them at home “just in case”. Donations to Wits Health, Account number 548 611 653 89 (Branch code 255 005) Reference: AD51 Oxygen.

A News 24 article draws attention to the fact that some 250 **district hospitals** account for half the public hospital system and they are filling up fast. Many are hampered by poor infrastructure and a lack of skills. They would have oxygen for very ill patients but no ventilators.

### On the subject of testing:

- A **cheap COVID-19 rapid antibody test**, which will cost less than R300 a unit, has been **approved for use** in South Africa - but it is not yet available privately or to the general public. The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) has given the first licence to supply the rapid antibody test in South Africa to Johannesburg-based company Tip Top Trade. The antibody test reveals whether an individual has had the COVID-19 virus and enables scientists to better understand the extent and pattern of infections.
- **Dis-Chem** has decided to **close its COVID-19 testing** facilities “for the foreseeable future” as the company struggles with a backlog in obtaining test results from the testing labs. “The unanticipated increase in infections across the country, particularly in Gauteng has put severe pressure on testing labs, which has impacted on the turnaround time for Dis-Chem’s test results,” a spokesperson said.

### ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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been implemented. The B4SA plan identifies 12 priority initiatives which could create 1.5 million jobs and increase GDP by R1 trillion. They go hand-in-hand with key policy reforms. Among the priority initiatives are some aimed at stabilising the energy supply and reducing the cost of electricity, implementation of Transnet's road-to-rail strategy, and port and road infrastructure projects. (Business Times)

Private hospital groups are continuing to experience **low bed occupancy** largely as a result of low demand for surgery. Netcare says its occupancy has increased to 50% after a low of 33% during April's "hard" lockdown. While Netcare is not receiving many COVID-related referrals from the public sector, it acknowledges that this could change. Mediclinic indicates that ICU and high-care admissions are high (due to the demand for COVID-19 care) but surgical and other medical admissions are lower than before the epidemic. (Business Times)

### **SOCIAL, EDUCATION AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS**

News 24 has gathered some information on the impact of the epidemic on **old age homes**, which were particularly severely affected in the UK, US and Europe. It reports information from the Department of Social Development on infections at 69 homes where 520 people have been infected and 35 have died. The number of infections among staff slightly exceeded that among residents. However, data on old age homes is not being systematically collected.

The New York Times carries an article that describes how it has become impossible for many city dwellers to follow the tradition of burying their family members at their rural ancestral homes, among their ancestors. The paperwork and cost of doing this in accordance with COVID-19 regulations are prohibitive for many. "For some poorer families, the rules are forcing a **choice between breaking tradition and breaking the law.**"

### **RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

The **G614 variant** of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus has become more widespread than the original D614. A research team headed by Los Alamos National Laboratory in the US has concluded that the mutation "is more infections but, fortunately, is **not associated with a more severe form** of COVID-19".

The WHO has amended its guidelines on behavioural risk reduction to include avoidance of crowds and ensuring **good ventilation of buildings**, and is emphasising the importance of masks. This is a response to the possibility of **aerosol transmission** of the virus. The WHO notes that there is some evidence of this occurring indoors among choirs and fitness classes and observes that more research is needed.

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## **COVID-19 EVENTS**

### **EKA SHOW ME THE MONEY SESSION**

Elsabe Klinck and Associates have upcoming session which aims to empower attendees to deal with medical scheme matters.

**DATE:** 17 JULY 2020

**If you are unable to attend on Friday, licences for the recording and slides, as well as Q&A session, can be bought. Register [here](#).**

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### **IHRM: Webinar Update on the Impact of COVID-19**

IHRM invites you to join them for a webinar on 31 July at 09h00 when Christoff Raath, Joint CEO of Insight Actuaries and Consultants, will provide an updated analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 on Medical Schemes and Private Hospitals, as South Africa reaches the peak of the pandemic.

**For more details or to register [click here](#).**

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