



Client Bulletin No. 23 (Updates on COVID-19-related PH Issuances of PEZA):

PEZA Guidelines in Setting Up a COVID-Free Ecozone, Transactions at PEZA Offices, and Other Related Issuances

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) has released several issuances on COVID-19 prevention and management in PEZA Ecozones.¹ This is a briefing on these issuances as of June 19, 2020.

- [A. Establishment of Internal Policies and Procedures for COVID-19 Workplace Prevention and Control](#)
- [B. Guidelines in Setting-Up COVID-Free Ecozone](#)
- [C. PEZA Construction Safety Guidelines](#)
- [D. Self-Assessment Checklist on COVID-19 Measures in the Workplace](#)
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A. Establishment of Internal Policies and Procedures for COVID-19 Workplace Prevention and Control

On May 4, 2020, the PEZA issued *Memorandum Circular No. 2020-0026* (accessible [here](#)) on the establishment of internal policies and procedures for COVID-19 workplace prevention and control. Under the Memorandum Circular, all PEZA-registered enterprises and developers are enjoined to establish written policies and procedures to prevent and control transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace. This may be done “through the Occupational Safety and Health Committee, with the Safety Officer as the lead.” The Memorandum Circular cites a number of issuances which may be consulted and used as guides in formulating the internal controls.

¹ Please note that these PEZA guidelines should be read together with the guidelines applicable to the type of community quarantine imposed on the local government unit where the PEZA zone is located, in accordance with issuances of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases Resolutions.

B. Guidelines in Setting-Up COVID-Free Ecozone

On May 15, 2020, the PEZA issued *Guidelines in Setting Up COVID-Free Ecozone* (accessible [here](#)). These Guidelines apply to all public and private ecozone developers and operators, including ecozone locator companies. The General Guidelines provide, among others, the following:

1. Ecozone developers/operators must regularly disinfect the ecozone premises such as “the common areas, roads, bridges, sidewalks, ancillary facilities and utilities infrastructures such as waste treatment facilities, substations, power and water generation facilities, including parks, greens and buffer zones.” Ecozone developers/operators may also provide disinfectant chambers through installation of gantry facilities within the main gate of the zones for spraying of incoming trucks/vehicles.
2. Registered enterprises must regularly disinfect their premises, especially the workplace and production areas where the majority of the workers are located. This is in addition to requiring the “wearing of masks and other protective gears, provision of alcohol and sanitizers in strategic areas in the workplace, and strict observance of social distancing.” Disinfectant chambers or “sanitents” within the main entrance of the building/factory may also be provided for the incoming workers and guests.
3. Implementation of a work from home arrangement, maintaining a skeletal workforce on site, provision of housing for the workers either inside or near the zone, social distancing, and use of shuttle services to ferry the employees must be strictly complied with. Directives on “physical distancing, thermal scanning, provision of face masks and other protective equipment for employees and provision of alcohol, sanitizers and frequent sanitizing of the workplace shall always be observed.” Doctors and nurses should be available in the ecozones as much as possible.
4. In accordance with the Department of Health (DOH) guidelines, COVID-19 testing centers and isolation facilities in all public and private PEZA ecozones shall be in place.
5. Registered enterprises are encouraged to develop an Infectious Disease and Response Plan or Business Continuity Plan that will guide the management and the workers against COVID-19.
6. An Ecozone-Wide Emergency Response Plan should be implemented which would include “basic orientation about COVID-19, how it spreads and affects the work place, its symptoms, who are considered as high risks, steps to reduce exposure and development of policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of infected workers.”
7. Registered enterprises also have to comply with the risk-based public health standards set by DOH, sector-specific policies and plans by other government agencies, and other relevant rules and regulations.

C. PEZA Construction Safety Guidelines

On May 20, 2020, the PEZA issued *Memorandum Circular No. 2020-0030* (accessible [here](#)) to provide Construction Safety Guidelines for its Developers and Locators within the PEZA Zones and IT Centers, including PEZA Projects for Areas under Various Types of Quarantine Classifications during the COVID-19 crisis.

According to PEZA, notwithstanding Department of Public Works and Highways' (DPWH) *Department Order No. 39* (which allows certain public and private construction projects to commence construction activities during the quarantine), PEZA shall require all ecozone locators and IT enterprises to file online applications for building permits together with supporting documents through the respective PEZA Office of the Building Official.

Moreover, prior to the project construction, the locator-enterprise applicant or its authorized contractor must first coordinate with the Zone Administrator/Zone Manager/Officer-in-Charge and the Building Official assigned for the briefing on COVID-19 safety compliance and developer's construction house rules.

D. Self-Assessment Checklist on COVID-19 Measures in the Workplace

On May 22, 2020, PEZA issued *Memorandum Circular No. 2020-0031* (accessible [here](#)) on the PEZA's self-assessment checklist on COVID-19 measures in the workplace. PEZA formulated the online self-assessment checklist "to allow company Safety Officers or Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) personnel to determine their level of compliance" with the COVID-19 workplace guidelines issued by the DOH, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

All PEZA-registered enterprises and developers are requested to accomplish the online form. The responses will be used by PEZA to identify companies who may need assistance in understanding the requirements of the various regulatory agencies. The aggregated results will be used by PEZA as a tool in reporting "the level of compliance of the economic zones with the COVID-19 policies" issued by the regulatory agencies. No company-specific data will be used in the reports to be generated by PEZA.

E. Required Physical Distancing at Workstations or Production Areas Inside PEZA Ecozones

On May 23, 2020, the PEZA issued *Memorandum Circular No. 2020-0032* (accessible [here](#)) on the required physical distancing at workstations or productions areas inside PEZA ecozones including IT/BPO centers under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ), General Community Quarantine (GCQ), and modified general community quarantine (MGCQ).

Under the Memorandum Circular, all ecozone developers and locator companies, including their IT/BPO enterprises, are directed to comply with the physical distancing standards provided under *DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0015*² and the *DTI-DOLE Interim Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19*.³ These include the practice and implementation of strict physical distancing of at least one meter apart, the one-seat apart policy if the existing distance between seats in the workstations or in production areas is less than the required minimum of one meter radius spacing requirement, and the placement of red markings on the floors as guide and installation of protective barriers in front-desks/counters/between cubicles.

F. Tools to Assist PEZA Clients during the Community Quarantine

On June 8, 2020, PEZA released Memorandum Circular No. 2020-0033 (accessible [here](#)) which discusses *Tools to Assist PEZA Clients during the Community Quarantine*. These include the Client Assistance Portal, which aims to limit face to face transactions at the PEZA Head Office, the posting of mobile numbers in the PEZA website, and the Safety Guide posted on the PEZA website.

G. Guide to Visitors and Clients in PEZA Offices

On June 10, 2020, PEZA issued a *Guide to Visitors and Clients in PEZA Offices* (accessible [here](#)) which encourages the transacting public to use alternate modes of meeting through video or phone conference. Where face-to-face meetings are unavoidable, the public is urged to comply with the Safety Guide and to accomplish the Health Declaration Form, which will be retained by PEZA for at least 30 days.

For more information about the legal issuances discussed in this bulletin, please contact -

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² Available at <https://www.doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/health-update/ao2020-0015.pdf>.

³ Available at

https://www.dole.gov.ph/php_assets/uploads/2020/05/DTI_and_DOLE_InterimGuidelinesonWorkplacePreventionandControlofCOVID19__3.pdf.

Other bulletins and briefings

We have prepared other COVID-19-related bulletins and briefings. The links to those materials are [here](#).

Please note that there are other COVID-19 related government issuances which are not covered by our bulletins. For more information about other regulations, please contact your account partner or sshg@syciplaw.com or info@syciplaw.com.

This bulletin contains a summary of the legal issuances discussed above. It was prepared by SyCip Salazar Hernandez & Gatmaitan (SyCipLaw) to update its clients about recent legal developments.

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