25 May 2020

Dear Members and Friends,

SIFMA ADVISORY ON RECOMMENDED MEASURES FOR FACILITY MANAGEMENT IN PREPARATION FOR RESTART OR RAMPING UP OF OPERATIONS POST CIRCUIT BREAKER

1. Over the last two weeks, SIFMA has held several roundtable sessions with members and relevant industry professionals to garner feedback on challenges faced in facility management in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further to that, SIFMA has set up a COVID-19 Committee to provide recommendations in this advisory to help service buyers and service providers better manage and prepare their facilities for the restart or ramping up of operations and services post Circuit Breaker.

2. As Singapore makes its gradual restart in a calibrated and phased approach after 1 June 2020, SIFMA seeks the understanding and cooperation of building owners, service buyers and service providers like facilities management (FM) companies and contractors to work closely together to observe COVID-safe restart measures and remain vigilant to prevent a second wave of COVID-19 outbreak.

3. Building owners, service buyers and essential FM service providers are advised to continue moderating service level expectations and making adjustments to overcome the challenges of resource constraints and stringent control measures as we undertake a safe gradual restart.

4. This advisory is generally applicable to a wide range of buildings or facilities such as offices, retail malls, industrial buildings, residential buildings, etc., and recommended to be implemented where practical and necessary in conjunction with the company's business continuity plan. Specialist advice should be sought for specialised facilities.
Recommendations by SIFMA COVID-19 Committee

5. Engage and establish close communication between building owners, FM companies and tenants. This is critical prior to 1 June to set a clear understanding and expectation of service levels during the Phase 1 Safe Re-Opening period. During which, some of the workforce are still subject to movement restrictions and certain building systems require re-commissioning. The close communication is also important to ensure timely and effective dissemination of COVID-safe restart plans and measures to be put in place. It also provides an avenue for feedback and dialogue on the way forward as all parties transit out of the Circuit Breaker together into a sustainable “new normal”.

6. Heighten security and safety measures at buildings. These include:

   a) Use of temperature scanning stations at building entrances. Building owners and FM companies are encouraged to do so for all employees, visitors and contractors entering the building.

   b) Use of SafeEntry app at all building entrances and exits. All buildings or facilities must implement the SafeEntry QR code system at all building entry and exit points. To optimise resources and improve security, the number of entries and exits can be reduced. Scanners are to be deployed for people not using smartphones. The use of the SafeEntry app, as well as the TraceTogether app, aims to facilitate detailed contact tracing in the event there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the building or at the workplace.

   c) Implementation of safe distancing measures (SDM). This is necessary in the following areas, especially during peak hours. Visual SDM markings must also be put in place.
      - Building entrances/ entry points where people are screened
      - Taxi stands and pick-up/ drop-off points
      - Shared transportation services
      - Lobby and reception areas
      - Cafeteria/ food courts
      - Meeting rooms and workstations
      - Washrooms and pantries
d) **Review of the building’s evacuation and response plan.** Building owners and/or tenants must be well-prepared in managing potential risks and put in place a proper evacuation and response plan. This is imperative in ensuring the safety of all building occupants and employees with procedures and actions well-communicated to all parties. It is also necessary to have a proper isolation area for any person in the building or workplace who is suspected of having the COVID-19 virus. The person must remain in the isolation area until being evacuated by an ambulance.

7. **Prioritise and monitor employees’ welfare.** It is imperative for all employees returning to their workplaces to be assured that there are sufficient measures in place to safeguard their health and safety. These include:

   a) **Administration of Employee Deployment Plan and Work Location Register.** In addition to contact tracing measures like the use of SafeEntry and TraceTogether apps, companies/tenants can also consider establishing an employee deployment plan and work location register. These will allow the companies to implement the appropriate safety measures based on the risk level of the work location. It is also advisable for FM employees to be divided into two teams for deployment as part of the company’s business continuity plan. Both teams are encouraged to have separate safe accommodation to reduce risk of cross infection.

   b) **Allocation of proper rest spaces with safe distancing for employees.** Companies/tenants are encouraged to do so for employees to have appropriate places to take breaks and/or have their meals as dine-in options at F&B outlets are not available during the Phase 1 Safe Re-Opening period.

   c) **Ensure sufficient stock of hygiene materials and personal protective equipment (PPE).** Companies are encouraged to have a stockpile of hygiene materials such as hand sanitisers and appropriate PPE supply such as surgical or N95 masks, protective face screen or gloves, especially if they have frontline workers (e.g. security officers, receptionists, cleaners, FM personnel and other essential service providers) who are community facing with a higher risk of exposure to infection. Hygiene materials should be made available at lift lobbies, main entry or exit doors and reception desks for visitors and employees.
8. **Control potential human traffic at lifts and lobbies.** While the total occupancy and peak density of the building may decrease due to staggered working hours and telecommuting measures, the reduced throughput capacity of each lift due to SDM in closed and confined spaces is still likely to cause a congestion at lift lobbies. Close supervision is thus required to prevent over-crowding especially during peak hours. It is more practical to implement crowd control strategies at the main ground floor office lobby than at the lift lobbies of each respective floors. It is also recommended to seek lift companies’ advice to optimise the lift operations through destination or access control.

9. **Ensure proper restart to air-conditioning systems.** Proper restart procedures must be strictly followed for air-conditioning systems that have been partially or totally shut down during the Circuit Breaker period. These include safety and hygiene tests required by relevant authorities for e.g. water for cooling towers, indoor air quality, etc. It is also recommended to carry out air purging or install air purification systems or devices to allow for better indoor air quality in spaces.

10. **Check that water quality is safe for consumption.** Harmful bacteria may have built up during the Circuit Breaker period as water consumption and flow rate in buildings or facilities are expected to be lower than normal. To flush out the stagnant water and possible bacteria build up, the building or facility management team is encouraged to turn on taps that have not been used for more than a week for five to 10 minutes before use. It is also advisable to carry out water quality tests after resumption of maintenance of water tanks, pumps, etc.

11. **Implement COVID-safe workplace strategies.** Employers are to encourage employees who can work from home to continue doing so. Employees who are required to return to work are to observe the following:
   
   a) stagger working and lunch hours,
   
   b) cross out alternate seats at waiting, lounge or rest areas,
   
   c) discourage hot desking and implement designated working areas,
   
   d) install desk dividers, partitions and acrylic boards for separated workstations, and
   
   e) provide separate meeting points for visitors, away from the employees’ workspace.
12. **Step up cleaning and disinfecting routines.** This is necessary to prevent potential widespread of the COVID-19 virus amongst building occupants. Key recommendations include:

   a) **Increase frequency of cleaning for key areas of usage and high touch points.** Proper cleaning and disinfecting measures must be enforced. Offices, workspaces, toilets, common areas with higher human traffic and high touch points such as lift lobbies and reception areas should be cleaned and disinfected properly and regularly. It is recommended for cleaning to be carried out three times a day (morning, lunch time and afternoon) for common areas in the building and premises. Special attention should be paid to areas with potential bacteria growth. Employees and visitors are required to keep workstations and common spaces clean and regularly wash or disinfect their hands.

   b) **Review cleaning, waste disposal and pest control services.** As there is likely to be an increase in number of employees having dine-in arrangements within the building, workspaces and premises, the building or facility management team is encouraged to review the existing cleaning/ disinfecting, waste disposal and pest control arrangements to prevent possible cleanliness and pest growth issues.

13. **Scale up adoption of smart FM solutions.** It is a timely opportunity now to explore and/or scale up the adoption of smart FM technology solutions during this period to improve the overall operation productivity and manage manpower dependency for various services and to lower risks to businesses.

14. Further details and reference materials on various guidelines and COVID-safe measures are listed in **Annex A**, including BCA's latest Advisory on Safe and Controlled Restart of the Construction Sector from 2 June 2020 for employers who deploy construction account workers.

15. To be better prepared in the future, SIFMA will continue to engage with its members, industry professionals, authorities and FM companies to share knowledge and offer advice, best practices and management strategies. Please feel free to contact SIFMA via email at contact@ifmasingapore.org if you need further clarifications.
Acknowledgement

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Annex A – References

1. International Facility Management Association (IFMA):
   *Pandemic Manual: Planning and Responding to a Global Health Crisis for Facility Management Professionals*

2. CBRE:
   *COVID-19 Pandemic – Reopening the World’s Workplaces: CBRE Account Playbook*

3. C&W Services (S) Pte Ltd:
   *Recovery Readiness: A How-to Guide for Reopening Your Workplace*

4. Jones Lang LaSalle Property Consultants Pte Ltd:
   *Re-entry: Strategically prepare your buildings, space and people*

5. National Environment Agency:
   *Measures to be taken when restarting cooling towers*

6. Ministry of Manpower:
   *Requirements for safe management measures at the workplace after Circuit Breaker period*

7. Ministry of Trade and Industry:
   *Advisory on gradual resumption of business activities in phases starting from 2 June 2020*

8. Building and Construction Authority:
   - *Advisory on Safe and Controlled Restart of the Construction Sector from 2 June 2020 (dated 25 May 2020)*
   - *FAQs for a Safe and Controlled restart of the Construction Sector from 2 June 2020*
   - *COVID-Safe Restart Criteria*