FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR STAY-HOME NOTICES (SHN) FOR WORK PERMIT (WP) AND S PASS (SP) HOLDERS IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q1. Which groups of foreign employees are affected under this policy? How do I check if S Pass and Work Permit Holders (WPHs) under my company would need to be served with the SHN from 20 April 2020 to 4 May 2020?

A1. As a precautionary measure, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) will require all work permit holders and S Pass holders (including their dependent pass holders) (except those currently residing in dormitory gazetted as an “isolation area”, or any foreign employee dormitory as defined in the Foreign Employee Dormitories Act (FEDA) 2015) in the construction sector to be placed on mandatory stay-home notices (SHNs) from 20 April to 4 May. This will affect foreign employees, including those involved in essential services.

Employers can check the front of the foreign worker’s work permit or S-pass card. For construction foreign workers, ‘CONSTRUCTION’ is indicated under “Sector”.

These mandatory measures are introduced to allow more effective suppression of the COVID-19 outbreak, given a higher incidence of such infections detected amongst foreign workers in the construction sector. It is critical for employers to undertake this joint duty to exercise greater control and support for their foreign employees to serve the mandatory SHN, so that we can stop further community transmission. This would be an important prerequisite for the sector to be able to resume operations sooner rather than later.

Q2. Does this apply to construction S Pass and WPH that are not working on construction site (e.g. admin staff)?

A2. Yes. The SHN will apply to all foreign employees in the Construction Sector holding Work Permits and S Passes (including their dependent pass holders).

Q3. How is the government going to enforce this?

A3. Enforcement officers will be contacting your Foreign Employees and their Dependants based on the mobile numbers registered with MOM. Employers should ensure that the Foreign Employees and their Dependants’ addresses and mobile numbers registered with MOM. Enforcement officers will also be going to construction sites and places of residence for inspection.
Q4. Why are Employment Pass holders under the construction sector exempted from this policy?

A4. While Employment Pass (EP) holders are not affected by the SHN issued as they are generally less exposed to the worksites and live in non-communal premises. Notwithstanding, the Employment Pass holder should stay at home or wear a mask to go out if necessary, such as to buy daily necessities or for urgent medical needs.

Q5. Will there be safety concerns at construction sites if the foreign employees are serving their SHN?

A5. With the announcement of the COVID-19 Circuit Breaker, all construction works have ceased since 7 April with a very select number of construction sites allowed to continue works because of critical timelines or safety reasons. For other construction sites, contractors must continue to make sure that security, environmental control (including preventing mosquito breeding) and safety of building works are not compromised. [refer to Q10 – 15 for processes related to Appeals]

EMPLOYER’S RESPONSIBILITY TO THEIR FOREIGN EMPLOYEES

Q6. As an employer, what are my responsibilities to ensure the health and wellbeing of my foreign employees during their SHN?

A6. As an employer, you will be responsible to make arrangement to deliver food and other daily essentials to your foreign employees for the SHN Period, as they are not allowed to leave their premises to purchase these.

   Employers can do so through various options:
   i) Foreign employees staying in factory-converted dormitories, construction living quarters and temporary living quarters:
      a. Arrange for delivery of catered meals as they should not cook at the communal cooking facilities to minimise the risk of transmission.
   
      ii) Foreign employees staying HDB flats and private residential properties:
      a. Ask the employees to order in groceries for cooking or catered meals
      b. Arrange for delivery of groceries for cooking or catered meals

  Employers should also regularly check on your foreign employees to monitor their health and welfare. Should any of your foreign employees develop fever, cough or breathlessness, or are feeling unwell, you shall arrange for him/her to seek medical attention immediately. Please inform the staff and doctor of your foreign employee’s symptoms. All persons must wear a surgical mask when going outside the residence (whether to seek medical assistance or otherwise), and do not take public transport.
In emergency situations (e.g. difficulty in breathing), call 995 for an ambulance to take your foreign employees to the hospital. Please inform the 995 operator of your foreign employee’s symptoms.

*Ramadan falls on 24 April 2020 to 23 May 2020. Employers should take this into account when planning for the delivery of food or groceries to their Muslim foreign employees.

Q7. Must employers bear the full cost of the food/groceries?

A7. Employers may choose to reimburse their foreign employees for the cost of food/groceries provided or work out a mutual agreement on how the cost will be borne between the employer and foreign employee.

Q8. I am unable to source for handphones/sim cards for my foreign workers at such short notice during the CB period. Can MOM/BCA allow extension of time to provide this?

A8. Employers must ensure that the foreign employees stay at home and do not leave the residences during the SHN period. For the provision of handphones/sim cards, you are to source for it as soon as possible, and register the foreign employees’ latest mobile numbers with MOM at OFWAS (WP holders) and EPOL (S Pass holders).

Q9. Are there any responsibilities for the Dorm Operators/landlord to meet?

A9. Employers (not the operator or landlord) are required to keep track and take care of their foreign employees both at work and their places of residence during this SHN period.

For dorm operators, MOM regularly issues advisories to share guidelines and good practices. For further details, please refer to https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/advisory-for-employers-of-workers-in-fcd-ctq-tol.

APPEALS

Q10. My construction foreign workers are engaged in essential services (e.g. maintaining security, environmental control and maintaining safety of building works). How can I obtain exemption for my foreign workers to continue with their work?

A10. Any construction company involved with essential services that wishes to apply for an exemption would need to submit an appeal to BCA, using this link, to allow their
foreign employee(s) to leave their places of residence to perform work in respect of the permitted essential activities during the SHN Period.

Appeals would be subject to BCA’s approval on a case-by-case basis and the number of foreign employees approved may also be limited.

Q11. My company was previously granted approval to continue with the essential works. Does my company still need to apply for exemption for my foreign workers to continue to work?

A11. Yes, you would need to submit an appeal to BCA using this link to allow your Foreign Employee(s) to leave their places of residence to perform work in respect of the permitted essential activities during the SHN Period.

Q12. Is there a cut-off date to submit the appeal?

A12. No. Companies should apply as soon as possible so that they can continue to provide essential services.

Q13. I need to proceed with works urgently. How do I check my application status? How long will BCA take to assess my appeal?

A13. BCA will send a reply to your application as soon as we can (via bca_covid19@bca.gov.sg). We seek your kind patience. Meanwhile, please do not proceed with works involving your foreign employees until you have received your appeal results from BCA.

Q14. Can my foreign workers continue working while waiting for the appeal results?

A14. No. They should wait for the appeal results from BCA first.

Q15. Can I re-appeal if my application was rejected?

A15. Please write to bca_covid19@bca.gov.sg with your application reference number and justifications for re-appeal.