

## COVID-19 Transitioning – Standards for Indoor Cinemas and Theatres

The following standards are issued under the Public Health Act Chapter 465 of the Laws of Malta and require strict adherence.

Employers and workers must minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with updated advice from the public health authorities.

Employers and workers must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with specific recommendations from public health authorities.

### Standards to be observed in indoor cinemas and theatres

All indoor cinemas and theatres shall

- a) exercise the right of refusal of entry onto the premises of patrons if they are visibly unwell or have respiratory symptoms
- b) subject patrons to temperature screening at the entrance for the presence of fever (persons with a temperature of 37.2° Celsius or higher will be denied entrance)
- c) provide adequate and easily accessible hand sanitisers with an appropriate 70% alcohol hand-rub at the entrance of the premises and ensure that all persons sanitise their hands prior to entrance
- d) regulate entrance into and exit from the premises adopting crowd management techniques as necessary
- e) ensure that the maximum number of patrons at any one time is one person per 4 square metres of each seating area being utilised, including staff
- f) indicate with visible markings outside and inside the premises two (2) metre distances that patrons shall respect whilst queuing, including queuing for rest rooms and purchase of tickets
- g) affix visible signage at the entrance of the premises indicating the maximum capacity that the premises can hold at any one time
- h) records of the contact information (name and a phone number) of at least one person per party need to be kept for up to 28 days after the show/performance
- i) except in the case of families with children and people from the same household, no more than 6 persons should be allowed to sit together in a group
- j) ensure that audiences are seated in such a way that each seated group maintains social distancing of at least 2m from other seated groups
- k) the distribution of 3-D glasses that are reused by multiple patrons is not allowed
- l) ensure that staff and patrons wear masks or visors while on the premises
- m) inform performers and crew utilising theatre facilities that they are required to follow the obligations detailed in this guidance even if they are not employed by the theatre operator, and ensure that they fulfil said obligations
- n) provide ongoing cleaning and disinfection operations of all the common areas inside the premises
- o) ensure that bar, restaurant or café facilities operate on the premises within the respective applicable guidelines.

### Guidelines for the application of COVID-19 standards in indoor cinemas and theatres

Theatres and cinemas involve the provision of a service to the public but may also involve the sale and distribution of goods such as refreshments and programmes. Premises include both areas where workers interact with patrons and closed areas such as the 'back of house', backstage and/or projection room that may involve only minimal face-to-face contact with patrons.

Adapting cinemas and theatres to manage and mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID-19 requires a thorough risk assessment. These guidelines provide considerations that cinema and theatre operators must take into

account when deciding on control measures such as restrictions within their premises to allow for social distancing, the adequacy of facilities for proper personal and public hygiene, cleaning arrangements, and other changes that may affect the health and safety of workers and performers. They also provide further details regarding the standards listed above.

#### Determining the premises capacity for indoor cinemas and theatres

Operators shall ensure that on the premises there are 4 square metres of space per person, including staff.

To achieve this 4 square metre 'rule':

- i. calculate the area of the premises (e.g. length of premises in metres x width of premises in metres = area of premises in square metres)
- ii. divide the area of the premises by 4
- iii. the answer of that division (ignoring any remainder) is the maximum capacity that the premises can hold at any one time.

By way of example, if the premises are 205 square metres in size,  $205 \div 4 = 51.25$ , ignoring the remainder of 0.25, the operator should allow only 51 patrons at any time on the premises, including staff. For larger venues the value of the areas of separate sections of the premises should be summed up to calculate the total area. Only usable areas of the premises that can be accessed by patrons should be included when calculating premises capacity. Area pertaining to sections of the premises such as backstage and back of house should not be included.

Visible signage shall be affixed at the entrance of the premises indicating the maximum number of patrons that the premises can hold at any one time.

#### Enabling contact tracing

Cinema and theatre operators are required to collect the contact details (name and a phone number) of at least one person per party and keep a record of this information for 28 days after the show, explaining that these will only be divulged to an authorised officer in case contact tracing is required. This will enable contact tracing to be carried out should a positive case result among patrons or staff. To facilitate contact tracing it is highly recommended that a record of the seating plan of the patrons is kept.

#### COVID Alert Malta

All staff and patrons are encouraged to download the COVID Alert Malta application to help facilitate the contact tracing process in case they develop COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19. Instructions for downloading the application can be found at <https://covidalert.gov.mt>

#### Social/physical distancing for audiences

Social distancing refers to the requirement that people physically distance themselves from others. Public Health Authorities have determined that everyone must keep at least 2 metres from all others that are not from the same household. Visible signs and/or markings outside and inside the premises shall indicate 2 metre distances that customers shall respect whilst queueing, e.g. to enter the premises or use restroom facilities. The collaboration of Local Councils shall be sought, where applicable.

Operators should also review tasks and processes that usually require close interaction and identify ways to modify these to increase social distancing between workers themselves and between workers and patrons (e.g. payment counters) as well as decrease the need for queuing. Measures that decrease points of contact between staff and patrons include digital tickets and online booking and purchase of tickets, which should be encouraged as much as possible. Online and/or cashless payments should also be encouraged, without disadvantaging patrons who may not have access to such means of payment. When contactless payment is not possible, payment portals should be disinfected after each use. Self-scanning of tickets by customers can eliminate another point of contact between patrons and staff.

Crowd management techniques should also be used to ensure audiences maintain social distancing while taking and leaving their seats and to avoid groups gathering in common areas, for example before or after the performance. In the interest of reducing the duration of activities in a closed space and opportunities for face-to-face interactions between patrons, operators should consider omitting intermissions.

With respect to the seating areas, for seating that is not socially distanced (e.g. seating fixed in place or fixed to adjoining seats) operators should ensure that seating patterns allow 2m between groups of patrons who have attended the cinema/theatre together. Except in the case of families with children and people from the same household, no more than 6 persons should be allowed to sit together in a group. In the case of movable seating that can be spaced out as necessary, this should be laid out in such a way as to respect the 2m distancing requirement. These restrictions should be kept in mind when theatre/cinema seats are being booked. Operators may wish to employ techniques such as use of a checkerboard pattern or blocking off certain rows to help achieve the required distancing or employ software solutions that allow dynamic seat selection that respects distancing requirements at the booking stage.

When changing the social layout of the premises, the layout must allow for workers, performers and crew to enter, exit and move about the both under normal working conditions and in an emergency without risks to their health and safety.

#### Social/physical distancing for staff

Working in close contact increases the risk of workers being exposed to COVID-19. If the task must be completed and workers will be in close contact, undertake a risk assessment to determine what control measures are reasonably practicable in the circumstances to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks from COVID-19. For example, if close contact with others is unavoidable, implement other control measures that can apply such as:

- implement measures to decrease points of contact between staff and patrons and between members of staff
- minimising the number of people within an area at any time
- staggering start, finish and break times where appropriate
- moving work tasks to different areas of the premises or off-site if possible
- if necessary, separating workers into dedicated teams and have them work in shifts, with teams avoiding interacting with each other. Split or stagger shifts to reduce the number of workers on the premises at any given time
- if adopting a shift system, do not rotate workers between teams. Keep team members fixed so that if a team member develops COVID-19, the number of exposed workers is minimised.
- schedule time between shifts so that there is no overlap of staff arriving at and leaving the workplace to avoid / reduce interaction. If handover is required, consider using digital means for this so that staff do not need to physically congregate in the same place.
- using social barriers, such as clear acrylic or tempered glass screens (e.g. Perspex), at ticket booths and ticket scanning areas wherever possible
- requiring workers to use methods such as mobile phone to communicate rather than face to face interaction
- ensuring each worker has their own equipment or tools
- ensure staff do not attend work if they are experiencing potential symptoms of COVID-19

#### Hygiene facilities

Operators must ensure there are adequate and accessible facilities to achieve good hygiene and that facilities are adequate, accessible, equipped with disposable hand wipes, soap and sanitizers, in good working order, clean and safe.

They should be thoroughly cleaned several times each day (see further details in section on 'Cleaning and Disinfection' below). Bathroom doors and windows should be kept open to allow for better ventilation. Hand dryers should not be used as these can potentially disperse viral particles into the air.

Air conditioning units shall be adjusted for more ventilation and recirculated air-conditioning shall be avoided. Airconditioning flaps should be directed towards the ceiling. Filters should be cleaned well and maintained properly. Doors and windows must be kept open and extractors are recommended which must be thoroughly cleaned every week.

### Considerations for common areas

- Show times should be staggered as necessary to allow time for adequate disinfection between screenings/performances and ensure that large numbers of people do not occupy and congregate in the common areas at the same time.
- Time spent in the lobby should be further minimised by allowing earliest possible entry into the theatre (without compromising on cleaning and disinfection procedures) and encouraging patrons to arrive close to the start time of the film.
- Recreational entertainment using shared equipment (e.g. games room tables, arcade games, billiards, darts, children's rides etc) are not allowed. Similarly, interactive exhibits/displays or play areas are not permitted due to the high-touch surfaces involved.
- make available open receptacles for disposal of waste

### Sale of refreshments

Bar, restaurant or café facilities operate on the premises within the respective applicable guidelines. Strict social distancing and hygiene precautions to be followed when selling refreshments:

- Markers two metres apart should be installed to facilitate social distancing while queuing to purchase refreshments.
- No communal food and beverage service or self-service items are allowed. Patrons are not to be allowed to serve themselves or help themselves to items such as straws, stirrers or condiments from a container that can be touched by the public, instead they should have such items handed to them by staff from behind the counter.
- If establishments wish to sell 'Pick and Mix' items, implements required to serve these should be handled solely by staff.
- Contactless payment or, if not possible, exact payment is preferable. The same member of staff who handles food and beverage items should ideally not be responsible for handling cash from customers, or, if such an arrangement is not feasible, should ensure that they sanitise their hands with soap and water or alcohol hand rub after each instance of handling cash.
- Any staff members handling food/beverage items should adhere to strict hygiene principles. These include frequent hand washing and use of gloves when handling such items, or, where possible, use of an implement (such as tongs) to eliminate direct contact with the items being sold to patrons. Any worker required to use gloves is advised to consult the advice on handwashing and the use of gloves published by the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate to ensure that gloves are used in an appropriate and hygienic manner (visit [covid19health.gov.mt](https://www.covid19health.gov.mt))
- Bins should be available for patrons to be able to safely dispose of any packaging waste.
- If vending machines are available on the premises, hand sanitiser should be easily available beside the vending machine, with signage affixed to the vending machine indicating that patrons should sanitise their hands before and after using the vending machine. Vending machines should be included in the list of high-touch surfaces prioritised for frequent cleaning (see section on 'Cleaning and Disinfection' below).

### Considerations for performers and crew

Actors and crew are also required to practice social distancing and should avoid physical contact as much as possible. Minimum possible numbers of cast and crew should be allowed. Actors and crew are subject to the same requirements regarding hygiene and other COVID-19 related precautions as other staff, excepting that actors are not required to wear masks/visors during a performance. Should physical contact be required by a scene, actors should sanitise their hands before and after. Shooting intimate scenes should be avoided if possible. The cast member has the right to refuse close contact with other cast members, e.g. hugging and kissing. Records of performers and crew present at each performance and in-person rehearsal should be kept in order to facilitate contact tracing in case of possible SARS-CoV-2 contagion.

Actors and guests must dress themselves and set up their own microphones according to the wardrobe and technical crews' instructions, respectively. Wardrobe hygiene must also be considered when costumes are in storage. If outfits cannot be cleaned, they must be kept in storage for 72 hours before being reused. If performers will not be applying their own make-up and hair styling, the makeup designer and hairdresser doing so should have the necessary protective wear, and the actors, crew, presenters and guests should bring their own make up kits, brushes and hair styling products to reduce the risk of contamination. The processes should be kept as short as possible and less than 15 minutes. Make-up equipment should not be shared between cast members. Each performer should have a dedicated space for their personal belongings (pens, glasses, clothing etc), which should not be kept 'floating around' the backstage area. Digital copies of scripts and other documents should be used whenever possible. If physical copies must be used, actors and crew should have their own copy of the script and copies should not be shared between users.

Workstations and equipment used by more than one person need to be cleaned between users. Hand props should be disinfected between each user or handled by one actor only. Backstage and 'back of house' areas should be kept well-ventilated.

### Special conditions for groups of performers who spend more than 2 weeks rehearsing together: 'Bubble' concept with respect to cast members

Only in instances where persons have been rehearsing together for a minimum period of 2 weeks would it be permissible to carry out the performance, event or broadcast with cast members not wearing a mask or visor provided that:

- All participants are aware of the potential risks involved of potential contagion with COVID-19 brought on by close contact with others particularly during a performance when persons require to project their voices, singing and the possibility of aerosols with infectious particles is increased
- All participants are aware that the chances of them being placed in mandatory quarantine if one of the said performers are subsequently found to have COVID-19 during the period in which they were infectious and were not wearing a mask/ maintaining an adequate distance are higher. This implies that they and their household members would be placed in mandatory quarantine for 14 days of the last exposure to the person who resulted positive.
- All participants are informed of these risks and can freely choose to participate or not.
- In order to minimise potential transmission is the **maximum number of persons on stage from the same cluster or 'bubble'(persons who would have rehearsed together for a minimum of 14 days) is 6 (six) persons with the total number of persons in the same production (cast members) being limited to a maximum of 10 (ten) persons.**
- It is highly recommended that for the safety of all involved a RT-PCR swab test is performed not more than 72 hours prior the first production day and at weekly intervals thereafter.
- It is critical that if any member of the cast or crew has any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, these should not attend for rehearsals/performances and should seek advice from 111 to determine if a swab test is warranted.
- During rehearsals it is highly recommended that cast members wear masks and maintain an adequate physical distance from each other.
- It must be kept in mind that risk is cumulative and calculated over 48 hours prior to symptom onset or to the swab test being taken in case of asymptomatic persons; thus, risk can be mitigated by increasing the distance between persons, wearing masks ensuring adequate ventilation of the premises and also general precautions as hand hygiene, cough etiquette and all other documented in this guidance and on the Public Health authorities' website.
- In every performance where a group of persons (>2 persons) are going to be appearing on stage in close proximity and without a mask, a disclaimer stating why masks are not being worn needs to be made in the beginning and after the intermission (if there is one). This could state for example: "During the live performance of this production, cast members from the same 'bubble' were permitted to remove their masks for the time they were actively performing in accordance with the relevant guideline issued by Public Health Authorities"
- There should be a minimum distance of four (4) metres between performers and any live audience present.

### Staff and crew meetings, training and rehearsals

Postpone or cancel non-essential meetings or training. If meetings or training are essential, use non face-to-face options such as tele and video conferencing. If this is not possible, ensure face-to-face time is limited, make sure the gathering, meeting or training goes on for no longer than it needs to, and hold the gathering, meeting or training in spaces that enable workers to keep at least 2 metres apart – e.g. outdoors or in a large conference room. Limit the number of attendees in a gathering, meeting or training by holding multiple training sessions. Ensure adequate ventilation if gathering, meeting or training is held indoors.

### Deliveries, contractors and visitors attending the premises

Additional persons beyond necessary staff, performers, crew and maximum allowed capacity of patrons should not be allowed on the premises. Minimise the number of workers attending to deliveries and contractors as much as possible. Delivery drivers and other contractors who need to provide maintenance or repair services or perform other essential activities, should be given clear instructions of requirements while they are on site. Ensure hand washing facilities, or if not possible, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, is readily available for workers after handling deliveries.

### Personal protective equipment for staff

If employers have a situation where, despite other control measures, workers will be in close contact with each other or with other people for longer than the recommended time (i.e. more than 15 minutes face to face cumulative over one day or more than 2 hours in a shared closed space), consider the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Workers must be trained in the proper use of PPE. Be aware of risks that may arise as a result of workers using and wearing PPE inappropriately.

In accordance with [L.N. 402 of 2020 PUBLIC HEALTH ACT \(CAP. 465\) Mandatory Use of Medical or Cloth Masks \(Amendment No. 3\) Regulations, 2020](#) masks should be worn at all times by all persons unless the exemptions included in the legal notice apply. Further guidance can also be obtained from the updated standards document which can be accessed at [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards %20Use of Face Masks and%20Visors.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards%20Use%20of%20Face%20Masks%20and%20Visors.pdf)

Gloves will not normally be necessary for most tasks in many theatre and cinema premises, apart from staff members selling food/beverages to patrons (see section on 'Sale of Refreshments' above) and for cleaning (see below). A risk assessment must be conducted to help inform what gloves, if any, are appropriate for the premises. If employers choose to supply or use gloves, they should make sure the gloves are suitable for the work; not all gloves are appropriate for all work or workplaces. Be aware that wearing gloves may result in new risks. For example, wearing disposable gloves could cause skin irritation, contact dermatitis or other sensitivities in some workers.

### Dealing with potential cases of COVID-19 among staff or visitors to the cinema/theatre

If someone develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while on the premises, especially if they may have had contact with a COVID-19 case, they should immediately put on a mask (if not already wearing one) and be isolated in an area at least 2m away from other people, ideally behind a closed door. Open a window for ventilation in the room where they are isolating, if possible. The individual affected should call the public health helpline on 111 for advice, unless they are seriously ill, in which case another person should call 112 on their behalf and explain the situation.

While the individual is awaiting advice/emergency services they should remain isolated and avoid touching other persons, surfaces and objects. Any tissues they utilise while awaiting advice should be placed into a bag or pocket and then thrown straight into the bin. They should be advised to cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. Once the individual suspected of having COVID-19 has left the premises, cleaning and disinfection of areas they have utilised is required (see section below entitled 'Cleaning workspaces and public areas used by suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19').

## Cleaning and disinfecting measures

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus. There shall be ongoing cleaning and disinfection operations of all the common areas. Premises must be cleaned at least daily. Cleaning with detergent and water is sufficient. Once clean, surfaces can be disinfected. When and how often the premises should be disinfected will depend on the likelihood of contamination. Alternatively, cleaners may be able to do a 2-in-1 clean and disinfection by using a combined detergent and disinfectant.

### How to clean and disinfect

Cleaning means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. A detergent is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water. Anything labelled as a detergent will work. Cleaning should start with the cleanest surface first, progressively moving towards the dirtiest surface. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of slips and falls, as well as spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets.

Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. Disinfectants containing  $\geq 70\%$  alcohol, ammonium compounds, chlorine bleach or oxygen bleach are suitable for use on hard surfaces (surfaces where liquids pool, and do not soak in). The packaging or manufacturer's instructions will outline the correct way to use disinfectant. Disinfectants require time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for ten minutes before removing.

### Areas to be cleaned and disinfected

Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, e.g. door handles, seating, counters, phones, POS machines, vending machines, acrylic screens (if installed) and bathroom and other sanitary facilities, including bathroom fixtures like taps and flushing handles. Any surfaces that are visibly dirty, or have a spill, should be cleaned as soon as they are identified, regardless of when they were last cleaned. The premises should be cleaned and disinfected at least every day. If the premises have many patrons entering each day, more frequent disinfection of areas used by patrons is recommended.

Seating and other surfaces frequently touched by patrons during a performance/screening (such as railings in the seating area, doors leading to the seating area, if applicable) should be disinfected after each performance. Seating surfaces should be wipeable and easy to clean, if seats have cloth coverings application of wipeable covers is required. If certain areas of the premises e.g. 'back of house', backstage, projection and storage areas are only attended by the same small work crew each day having little interaction with other people, routine disinfection in addition to daily cleaning may not be needed in these areas.

Establishments should have protocols in place for actions to be taken in case a patron or member or staff develops coronavirus symptoms while on the premises, including appropriate cleaning and disinfection.

### What should cleaners wear?

In most circumstances, it will not be necessary for cleaners to wear protective clothing to clean the premises. However, workers should use personal protective equipment (PPE) that is necessary for the products they are using. Gloves and a disposable apron are the minimum requirements. Medical masks should be used if cleaning an area impacted by a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case. Clothes that can be washed afterwards are suitable.

## Cleaning workspaces and public areas used by suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

All surfaces that the suspected/confirmed case came into contact with once they were symptomatic need to be cleaned including:

- All surfaces and objects visibly contaminated with body fluids
- All high-touch areas that are potentially contaminated (such as toilets, telephones, door handles, switches etc)

Public spaces (such as corridors) that the symptomatic individual has passed through but spent minimal time in and has not visibly contaminated with body fluids do not require special cleaning and disinfection.

If the suspected/confirmed case has spent time in a shared space while symptomatic, the area should be cleaned using disposable cloths and usual detergents. Measures should be taken to protect cleaners (including those described above). Any waste that has been in contact with the individual, such as used tissues and masks, should be placed in a plastic garbage bag which is tied and then placed in a second bag and disposed of in the mixed waste.

How to stay informed: [www.covid19health.gov.mt](http://www.covid19health.gov.mt)