

**BIJLAGE 2 BIJ MINISTERIELE REGELING VAN 16 MEI 2020, NUMMER  
10493, TOT WIJZIGING VAN BIJLAGE 3 ZOALS BEDOELD BIJ HET  
LANDSBESLUIT VAN 10 MEI 2020, NO 2020/0324.**



**GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION  
OF  
COVID-19 PREVENTION AND SAFETY PLANS  
FOR THE  
BUSINESS COMMUNITY OF ST. MAARTEN**

Emergency Operation Center

May 2020

Second Quarter

+1721 520 5980

Government Administration Building

P.O. Box 943

Soualuiga Road

Philipsburg, Sint Maarten

## Information Guide

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- Coordinator:** Chairlady of the Emergency Operational Center (EOC)  
Minister of General Affairs,  
The Honorable Ms. Silveria Jacobs
- Organizers:** Emergency Operational Center Emergency Support Functions (ESF)
- Objective:** The Government of Sint Maarten encourages the business community and the public to observe the measures for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 on St. Maarten. The safety plan and guidelines will assist all businesses during this period to secure a safer and healthier environment. These efforts will also contribute to the restoration of business activities within our economy whilst ensuring the protection of all staff members, customers and extended communities.
- Goal:** With these guidelines, the Government of Sint Maarten seeks to assist the business community to develop operational plans that would ensure a safe and a healthy environment for workers and clients thus safeguarding the wellbeing of all citizens.  
All establishments are encouraged to incorporate these safety guidelines into their operational plans, and execute same, during and after the COVID-19 threat.
- Mission:** Adherence to the guidelines outlined in this document, will assist us to resume regular business hours and develop a long-lasting vibrant and stronger economy.
- Date:** Updated May 13, 2020
- Target group:** Business community, business owners, employers, employees, customers, consumers, clients, visitors, citizens and public at large

**Contact:** [Taskforce@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:Taskforce@sintmaartengov.org)

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction to the Guidelines on the Prevention and Safety Plan**

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Following the peak of COVID-19 cases on St. Maarten in April and May of the year 2020, and in view of the planned and gradual reduction in COVID-19 related lock down measures in the near future, it is essential for the business community of St. Maarten to prepare for the ‘*New Normal*’. This new reality will require organizational and physical COVID-19 prevention and safety measures at each business for the daily operations in St. Maarten.

### **General preventative measures**

To avoid resurgence of COVID-19 cases, a new wave of transmissions, further deaths, and the risk of a second lock down based on increased figures, it is crucial that the following basic rules are strictly adhered to by all staff, customers, clients, passengers, guests of the business community and the general public:

1. Maintain a distance of minimum 2 meters (or more) away from all co-workers and customers. Encourage all customers to maintain this 2 meters (or 6 feet) distance at all times and as much as possible. Avoid physical contact between co-workers and customers.
2. Businesses are encouraged to introduce and place markings based on our Social Distancing Standards of minimum 2 meters (6 feet) at cashiers, gathering locations and crowd control areas and also outside the establishment if necessary.
3. Managers are encouraged to accommodate floor plans, seating and large spaces to ensure social distancing.
4. Employers are encouraged to allow workers to execute their tasks from home to the extent possible.
5. Employees that are not well should report illnesses to their employer and contact their doctor immediately.
6. All customers and employees must sanitize their hands before entering and exiting the establishment. Keep windows open for proper air circulation to the extent possible.
7. All employees and customers must wash their hands with water and soap after the use of toilets. Lavatories must be kept clean at all times.
8. Keep doors open to avoid unnecessary touching and contact, frequently sanitize door knobs after opening and closing doors.

9. Encourage employees and customers to follow healthy hygiene practices with kind reminders using posters, and pictures of guidelines for safety and cleanliness.
10. Assure that safety and social distancing procedures are in place or appoint an employee to assure that safety procedures are followed.
11. Consider creating a task list with responsibilities and appoint persons to ensure that the safety procedures are followed.
12. Avoid using elevators when crowded. Consider taking the stairs when keeping a safe distance is proven difficult. Set a maximum limit of 3 persons of elevator.
13. Businesses are encouraged to arrange separate or special visiting hours to ensure that vulnerable groups are assisted and properly served, such as the elderly, pregnant women, women with young children and the physically impaired.
14. Cough or sneeze in your flexed elbow or in a tissue. Tissues must be properly disposed of after use.
15. Sanitize and clean surfaces or items which are regularly touched/used by customers, clients and employees.
16. Employers have a responsibility to do their utmost to protect the health and wellbeing of their staff, clients and customers on their premises and in their buildings. During the COVID-19 pandemic this responsibility is more important than ever before.

## **Objective**

These guidelines have been prepared to assist the business community to prepare and implement a mandatory Prevention & Safety Plan in order to operate after the lock down. The guidelines should be applied in the specific context of the operations. The actual 'translation' of the guidelines into organizational and physical adjustments in the business will very much depend on the type, size and layout of the business.

## **Contextual plan of action**

A '*one size fits all*' set of measures will not work for many businesses. Upon reading the guidelines, businesses should be able to prepare their own business specific COVID-19 'Prevention and Safety Plan'. A sample of the format for the COVID - 19 Prevention and Safety Plan can be found in Annex 1 of this document.

## Chapter 2. Categories of Businesses

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1. Businesses with operations that have a relatively low Public Health Risk<sup>1</sup>
2. Businesses with operations that have a high Public Health Risk

The steps outlined for these two categories are different, as follows:

### 2.1 Businesses with a relatively low Public Health Risk

All businesses of this first category will apply the general guidelines in the context of their business and can re-open if they have met all of the three following requirements:

- The business is in principle allowed to open (based on the timeline of the Phases)
- Have completed their Prevention and Safety Plan based on the general guidelines
- Have implemented their Prevention and Safety Plan in their business (organizational and physical measures)

Businesses falling within this category are not required to submit their operational plans to the task force prior to re-opening. However, following re-opening as with all businesses, they will be subject to inspection to assess whether the above mentioned requirements are met and are adequate from a Public Health Perspective.

For visualized steps, see Annex 2.

### 2.2. Businesses with a high Public Health Risk

Businesses of this second category shall:

1. Prepare their Prevention & Safety Plan based on:
  - general guidelines, in the context of their business and,
  - specific guidelines prepared for their particular type of business
2. Submit their Prevention & Safety Plan for assessment and approval to [taskforce@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:taskforce@sintmaartengov.org)
3. Receive either a go-ahead by email or a request to adjust their Plan to meet minimum standard
4. In case of the latter, adjust their Plan based on suggestions received

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<sup>1</sup> Public health risk in this context is the combination of the likelihood of getting and spreading the virus causing Covid-19 (caused by the particular nature of the business)

5. Submit their adjusted Prevention & Safety Plan for approval to the aforementioned email address: [Taskforce@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:Taskforce@sintmaartengov.org)
6. Upon receipt of approval, proceed to re-open to the public.

These business will be allowed to re-open after they have met five requirements;

- The business is in principle allowed to open (based on the timeline of the Phases)
- Has completed its Prevention and Safety Plan based on the general and specific guidelines
- Has submitted its Plan for assessment and approval
- Has received approval of its Plan (this must be available to inspectors in the business establishment)
- Has implemented its Plan in the business (organizational and physical measures)

Following re-opening businesses in this second category will also be subject to inspection to ascertain that all requirements have been met and that the measures taken are adequate from a Public Health Perspective.

For visualized steps, see Annex 3.

## **Chapter 3. General Guidelines for all businesses to prepare their COVID-19 Prevention and Safety Plans**

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All businesses are mandated to prepare a business specific COVID-19 ‘Prevention and Safety Plan’ with measures relevant to the business, based on the specific characteristics of the business.

Following is some general guidance to assist owners and employers of all businesses to prepare an effective COVID-19 ‘Prevention and Safety Plan’.

### **3.1 Guidelines from Public Health (ESF-6) with regards to the use of Facemasks, Gloves and Face shields**

There is no need for the use of face masks, gloves and/or face shields when social distancing of 2 meters is respected and regular hand washing with soap and water or a sanitizer is practiced.

The virus can be contracted by droplets of an infected person by:

1. being directly inhaled by another person who is less than 2 meters from the infected person through openly coughing, sneezing or having close physical contact such as kissing, hugging or sexual contact
2. another person touching his/her mouth, nose or eyes after touching the surface where droplets of an infected person have landed (hence the importance of regularly sanitizing frequently touched objects)

If social distancing of 2 meters cannot be practiced or realized, face masks, worn properly (covering both mouth and nose), are sufficient. Bear in mind that surgical masks need to be properly disposed of after use or after getting wet, and that cloth masks need to be washed regularly. Face masks and gloves can cause a false sense of security, thus becoming more of a liability than an asset. Face masks need to cover both mouth and nose.

Face shields and gloves are only recommended for medical staff closely dealing with confirmed or strongly suspected Covid-19 positive persons as well as food handlers. Medical masks should be limited to use by health care professionals.

**A. Provide information to clients and staff.**

1. Develop a section that is clearly visible to preview ‘*house rules*’ with clear messages (*do’s and dont’s*) for your clients outside and inside the establishment. The sign / message should be translated in multiple languages and most importantly the languages of the majority of your clients that the business caters to. The use of signage is also advised.
2. Train and remind staff to follow the guidelines. Raise awareness about the consequences for noncompliance.
3. Equip staff with the necessary tools to function under the new norms.

**B. Facilitate, organize and monitor social distancing guidelines of two (2) meter for staff, clients and general public, inside and outside of the physical location / establishment of your business.**

1. Place one-way direction movement signs clearly visible on the floor, or other applicable areas.
2. Spacing marks on the floor to maintain two (2) meter distance in queues, inside and outside.
3. Monitor adherence for social distancing (of 2 meters) by staff and clients. Instruct and train staff and guards to ensure that guidelines are adhered at all times.
4. Set a maximum number of clients allowed inside and outside of the establishment/ vehicle/ship/restaurant/hotel lobby/bar.
5. Stimulate staff to work from home as much as possible or when and of possible.
6. Determine a maximum number of staff working at the office. In the case of transport services or educational services, set a maximum number of passengers and students in the class rooms, based on guidelines for social distancing.
7. Hire additional or appoint existing staff and guards to manage and monitor compliance and manage expected crowds.
8. Organize a plan for crowd management. In case of expected waiting queues outside the establishment, provide shade, hand sanitizer and drinking water for clients or customers.
9. Encourage electronic payments (by bank card) instead of by cash.

10. Place a transparent sheet (e.g. plexiglass) between cashiers and clients, when social distancing parameters cannot be met.
11. For staff regularly exchanging goods or cash with clients: sanitize hands after every exchange. Encourage staff to refrain from touching their nose, eyes and mouth by placing signs or reminders or announcements via an intercom system or by introducing company commercials.
12. In case social distancing guidelines cannot be realized or guaranteed at your business due of the nature of the business and the specific work of the staff (e.g. cashiers, drivers, buses, taxis and ferries), please ensure that staff working within close proximity of clients or co-workers wear a facemask.

### **C. Facilitate and organize proper hand hygiene for clients and staff**

1. Place hand sanitizer at the entrance of the building and also in strategic areas of the building (such as fruit and vegetable stations).
2. Refill or replace the hand sanitizer as often as possible.
3. Ensure that every staff member and every client sanitizes his/her hands when they enter especially when dealing with fresh produce.

### **D. Prevent staff and clients from entering the building if they have any flu like symptoms**

1. Adjust personnel policy and communicate to all staff.
2. Staff (or guards) may monitor clients if they show symptoms.
3. Staff (or guards) are trained to notice and address clients with symptoms in a professional manner.

### **E. Inform staff and clients that if they have flu-like symptoms they must leave and contact their family doctor immediately**

Staff, clients, customers and visitors in the building or on the compound of the business must be requested to leave and contact their doctor.

**F. Ensure that staff and clients adhere to hygiene etiquette.**

1. Openly sneezing, coughing and spitting can cause transmission of the virus. Prevent spreading of the COVID-19 virus and other diseases by sneezing/coughing in flexed elbow or in a tissue which is then disposed of in a closed waste bin.
2. Ensure that sufficient waste bins are placed. Waste bins should be emptied on a regular basis.
3. Request clients, customers and visitors to leave the building if they do not adhere to the rules.
4. Carry out cautionary or disciplinary action if staff do not adhere to the rules.

**G. Sanitize surfaces and items regularly touched by different people.**

Regularly clean surfaces such as tables, door handles, toilet doors, taps and chairs with disinfectant products.

**H. Continuously evaluate plans and adjust**

Evaluate on a regular basis how the changes in the business are working out after introducing the measures and adjust your 'COVID-19 Prevention and Safety Plan' as necessary to help protect staff and clients.

## Chapter 4. Specific Guidelines for Businesses with a high Public Health risk

Businesses which are considered to constitute a potentially high Public Health Risk by the nature of their operations:

<b>Businesses with a high Public Health risk which should submit their plan for approval</b>	<b>Phase</b>
Bus, School Bus & Taxi services	<b>II</b>
Grocery stores	
Money transfer services	
Food vendors	
Construction companies	
Physical Therapy Practices /White & Yellow Cross	
Dental Clinics	
	<b>III</b>
Tours and groups	
Hair salons, Barbershops and nail salons	
Churches and other worship establishments	
Cinemas and theatres	
Bars, nightclubs & other dancing establishments	
On land indoor activities (e.g. game rooms, kids playrooms)	
Casinos	
Sport facilities - contact sports (incl gym)	
Recreational centers, e.g. dance schools, comm. centres etc.	
Weddings, funerals & others	
	<b>IV</b>
Market vending	
Massage Parlors	
Adult entertainment establishments	

### 4.1 Specific Guidelines for Buses – Public Transport

1. Stick a multilingual laminated notice outside of the bus at the entrance explaining the rules to all passengers who want to make use of the service
2. Determine and only allow the maximum number of persons per bus type for boarding at 50% of the seating capacity of the vehicle
3. Passengers should be seated at the window seats

4. Only pick up and drop passengers at designated bus stops (bushaltes)
5. ensure that the driver and passengers comply with the rules
6. Do not allow passengers to sit on the seat next to the driver
7. Mark the seats that can be used and those seats that cannot be used
8. Ensure each passenger properly wears a face mask as a strict condition for boarding
9. The driver properly wears a face mask during services
10. Get passengers to put only the exact amount for the trip in a box or in a bag on the chair closest to the driver (no change can be provided)

#### **4.2 Specific Guidelines for School buses**

1. The same as for public transport buses, with the exception of point 9
2. Maximum of 50% of seating capacity, contingent on meeting 2 meter social distancing.
3. Ensure orderly boarding and leaving of the school bus.

#### **4.3 Specific Guidelines for Taxis**

1. Allow a maximum of 2 passengers of the same family in sedan types of taxi
2. Sharing a ride in a taxi with other persons is not allowed
3. Passenger(s) to take the back seat of the sedan type of taxi
4. Driver and passenger(s) are to properly wear a facemask
5. Request passengers to pay the exact amount for the trip (no change can be provided) and to put the money on the seat next to the driver to avoid physical contact
6. For mini bus types of taxis, refer to the guidelines for Buses – Public Transport

#### **4.4. Specific Guidelines for Educational Institutions**

The Ministry of Education will communicate specific guidelines for the education sector separate from this document.

#### **4.5 Specific Guidelines for Money Transfer Services**

1. Consider service by appointment to avoid having more than ten (10) clients inside the establishment at one time (based on the size of the establishment). The number of limitation may be determined in the 'COVID- 19 Prevention and Safety plan'.

2. Introduce an appointment system and schedule for staffers and customers. Orchestrate schedule in such a way that would allow staffers and clients to execute service in a safe manner. When sending confirmations for appointments, notify clients about the mandatory safety procedures and requirements;

Clients must:

- a. Wear mask when entering and exiting the building and also during the transaction.
  - b. Sanitize hands at the entrance.
  - c. Clients must have monies placed in an envelope prior to entry and hand washing (or sanitizing) at any entry points.
  - d. Clients must have their own pen available for signing.
3. Employers should determine a time limit per client based on customary practices and experiences, in order to limit the number of clients receiving a service at once inside the establishment (based on size of the establishment).
  4. Appoint a safety floor manager or staffer to track time management. Include breaks that will allow staffers dealing directly with clients and money transfer, to wash their hands and refresh masks.
  5. Floor markings must be placed inside and outside the establishments to secure social distancing of minimum two (2) meters.
  6. Appoint a safety floor manager or staffer to ensure that staffers and clients are adhering to safety guidelines. Appoint a security guard or staff member to ensure that social distancing is being observed outside in the establishment. Instruct security guard or selected safety manager / staffer to restrict the number of passengers waiting outside the establishment in order to prevent crowd gathering.
  7. Employers are encouraged to place a sink at the entry or place automatic hand sanitizers at the all entry and exit points. Everyone entering and exiting the building must wash or sanitize hands before entry. Clients and staffers must sanitize hands when exiting the building.
  8. Employers must place plexiglass between staffers and clients.
  9. Place clear visual safety signs inside and outside the establishment to remind staffers, clients and visitors to practice safety at all times. Consider audio or visual commercials reminding clients to adhere to the safety rules (based on size of the establishment).

10. Staffers providing a direct service to clients must wear a mask during all money transactions.
11. Staffers providing a direct service to clients should regularly wash/sanitize their hands.
12. Employers must ensure that the establishment and frequently used equipment is regularly sanitized.
13. Employers must equip staffers at service desk, dealing directly with monies and clients with hand sanitizers. Employers must ensure that enough sanitary equipment is always at hand and regularly refilled.
14. Employers are encouraged to prohibit clients entering the establishment with animals.

#### **4.6 Specific Guidelines for Restaurants, Vendors & (Beach) Bars**

The Ministry of Public Health, Social Development & Labor will publish specific guidelines separate from this document.

## Important Notice

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- It is recommended to prepare the COVID-19 Prevention and Safety Plan in close consultation with staff and workers to achieve maximum buy-in and adherence.
- You are also encouraged to regularly consult with network contacts within your industry for consistency in the Prevention & Safety Plans, mutual learning, sharing, further development and growth.

## **Annex 1. Required Content for Business Specific Covid-19 Prevention and Safety Plans**

**Your safety plans should include specific signage, employee guidelines  
and be readily available for review when needed.**

### **COMPANY SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

Name of Business:

Main activities:

Business Address:

Contact Details:

Days and hours of operation:

Total number of staff/personnel/workers:

### **PLAN SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

Specific public health risks in your business:

Actions that you have introduced in your business to prevent Covid-19:

How you will make sure that all staff and customers respect and follow the rules?

Concerns and remarks

If necessary please use more space to fill in your information.

**Please ensure that the plan is signed and dated by the Owner/Managing Director.**

Signature:

Date:

**Annex 2. Flow chart for businesses in low risk category**



