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Updated Circular on Safe Management Measures Required for Backpackers' Hostels

1. To slow the rate of transmission and protect the healthcare system, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce ("MTF") announced on [20 October 2021](#) that it would extend the Stabilisation Phase with effect from 25 October 2021 through 21 November 2021 (both dates inclusive).
2. We strongly urge all backpackers' hostels to continue surveillance and monitoring of potential non-compliance within their premises. STB takes a serious view on establishments who do not comply with the SMMs and will continue to impose strict enforcement actions against all establishments who breach them.
3. The information in this circular (which includes its annexes) supersedes that in previous advisories or statements.

Key Updates to Implementation of Safe Management Measures

Workplace arrangements

4. **Work-from-home remains the default.** Hostels must ensure that staff who are able to work from home do so. During this period, the snap 10-day Work from Home (10D WFH) regime will be suspended. There must continue to be no cross-deployment of staff to multiple premises. Social gatherings at the workplace within hostels will continue to be disallowed.
5. Employees who are unable to work from home will be strongly encouraged to self-test weekly via an Antigen Rapid Test (ART) before working onsite, if tested negative. Similarly, this applies to employees, on-site contractors and vendors, who need to return to the workplace for ad hoc reasons. The ART should be completed within 24 hours before the end of their return to the workplace. Employers should continue to stagger the start times of employees who need to return to the workplace and implement flexible working hours.
6. MTF further announced on 23 October 2021 that **from 1 January 2022**, only employees who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or have recovered from the disease within the past 270 days will be allowed to return to workplaces. Unvaccinated employees will not be allowed to return to their workplaces unless they have tested negative for COVID-19. These employees will bear the costs of testing.
7. Hostels are strongly encouraged to give special consideration to employees who are pregnant or medically ineligible for vaccines. Employees who are medically ineligible for all the vaccines under the national vaccination programme will be exempted from the vaccination requirement if they need to work-on-site.
8. Please refer to MOM's advisory on workplace SMMs¹ for more details.

¹ <https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/requirements-for-safe-management-measures>



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Dining-in at F&B Establishments

9. **Groups of up to 2 individuals will be allowed to dine-in at F&B establishments if all the diners are fully vaccinated².** If a group comprises 2 such children, both children must be from the same household.
10. F&B establishments that are not able to ensure that all dine-in patrons meet the criteria for full vaccination may only operate only take-away and delivery services. At this stage of the transition, entertainment such as live performances, recorded music, and videos/TV screening will continue to be prohibited. Patrons to F&B establishments are also reminded to adhere to all safe management measures and keep their masks on at all times except when eating or drinking.
11. Hostels are reminded to comply with the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) (Control Order) Regulations 2020³ and **the current Safe Management Measures (SMMs), including ensuring that there are no gatherings in the hostel premises and to comply with bedding arrangement whereby single beds are placed 1m apart and bunk-beds are arranged in alternating manner.**
12. For backpackers' hostels who are accommodating long-term guests, any changing of rooms by guests should be disallowed, where practicable. Backpackers' hostels should keep real-time updated records of the guests in each room for expedient contact tracing purposes and ensure charted access to facilities within the hostel premises at all times. All other recreational facilities within the hostel premises, for e.g. TV/Games room, shall continue to be closed until further notice. In addition, all individuals who enter the hostel premises must check in using their TraceTogether app or token.
13. Backpackers' hostels must not allocate accommodation (e.g. accept bookings) to individuals for the purposes of leisure (i.e. provide leisure bookings) without the prior written permission of MTI. Backpackers' hostels with private ensuite rooms (i.e. rooms which have at least one private bathroom) may submit an application to STB for assessment on accepting guests for leisure purposes, such as staycations. Please note that all leisure guests will only be allowed to be accommodated in the private ensuite rooms.

Updates to Testing Regimes

14. Since 15 July 2021, regular Fast and Easy Test (FETs) are mandatory for all staff, whether frontline or back-of-house, in the following higher-risk settings:
 - a. Dine-in F&B establishments and settings (e.g. restaurants, club lounge, function rooms, etc).
 - b. Personal care services (e.g. facial and nail services, spas/ saunas, massage establishments, hairdressing, and make-up services).
 - c. Gyms and fitness studios where clients are unmasked, and
 - d. Housekeeping (e.g. laundry, room and public area cleaning).

² An individual is considered fully vaccinated if he/ she has been: a) fully vaccinated, i.e. has received the full regimen of Pfizer-BioNTech/Comirnaty, Moderna or WHO EUL vaccines, with an additional two weeks for the vaccine to be fully effective, b) fully recovered from COVID-19, or c) has obtained a negative result on a pre-event test taken in the past 24 hours before the expected end of the event.

³ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/COVID19TMA2020-S254-2020>



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15. With effect from **13 September 2021**, the mandatory Fast and Easy Test (FET) Rostered Routine Testing (RRT) regime for staff has been increased to once every week. The Government will subsidise costs for the ART kits and supervisory training under the FET RRT regime until the end of 2021.
16. For more information, please refer to the [“Fast & Easy Testing” \(FET\) notice](#) on Gobiz.

“Vaccinate or Regular Test” (VoRT) Regime

17. From **1 October 2021**, vaccination, or regular testing in lieu of vaccination, will be required for staff working in higher-risk settings listed in paragraph 11 above. Unvaccinated individuals will have to be tested with an ART kit twice a week. For the small group that remains medically ineligible for vaccines, the Government will subsidise their tests. We strongly encourage all employers to facilitate vaccination for your employees.
18. For more information, please refer to the [VoRT notice](#).
19. Vaccination remains critical in our fight against the pandemic. Hostels should also strongly encourage any remaining un-vaccinated employees to get vaccinated and facilitate their vaccination.
20. Hostels should review and reinforce current SMMs and remind employees to take all the prevailing measures seriously even if they have been vaccinated.

Applications to Provide Leisure Bookings in Private Ensuite Rooms

21. Backpackers’ hostels that have private ensuite rooms and wish to resume accepting leisure bookings must abide by the following:
- Comply with the Sector Specific Requirements for leisure bookings, which can be found within **Annex A**, and any additional safe management measures (SMMs) proposed by the hostel in its application, over and above compliance with the Control Order and all other applicable SMMs and the Sector Specific Requirements applicable to hostel facilities.
 - Submit the application found at **Annex B** to STB via go.gov.sg/localbookingapplication. STB and MTI will take up to 14 working days to assess each application.
 - Undergo an inspection scheduled and conducted by STB as part of the assessment process.
 - Resume the accommodation of guests for leisure purposes only after receiving approval from MTI. Backpackers’ hostels whose applications have been rejected by MTI will not be allowed to resume leisure stays at its premise.
22. In addition, we would like to highlight the following arrangement which approved applicants are to follow (more details can be found in the annexes):
- Each private ensuite room can only permit one booking and **can accommodate no more than 2 individuals in total (including guests and visitors) gathering on any single day in any guest room when these rooms are sold for leisure, except where the individuals are all from the same household (i.e. same**



address on NRIC), and even then up to the maximum number of occupants for the room type (as per the approved plans by URA and/or SCDF), **whichever is the lower**. All hostel guests must be pre-registered prior to being allocated a room.

- b. Visitors are allowed in the hostels subject to the prevailing social gathering cap as stated in paragraph 22a or room cap, whichever is lower. Hostels should ensure that they have the means to detect entry of every individual into a guest room, such as through CCTV monitoring or having staff stationed at lift lobbies.
- c. The bedding requirements of single beds placed 1 metre apart and bunk beds arranged in a top-down alternating fashion **will not** apply for private ensuite rooms booked for leisure stays. For avoidance of doubt, if the hostel is not selling the private ensuite room for leisure, and the room is booked by a company for their workers, the current set of bedding requirements shall continue to apply.
- d. Guests staying for non-leisure purposes should not be allocated the same room as guests staying for leisure purposes.
- e. All other recreational facilities within the hostel premises shall remain closed until further notice, for example, TV/Games room. The pantry area may continue to be used by hostel guests; however, each guest should be seated individually and at 1 metre apart from all other guests at all times in the pantry and at common areas such as corridors/ lobbies. There should be no gatherings or inter-mingling within the hostel premises at all times.
- f. The hostel must implement staggered check-in for leisure guests.

Hostels must comply with the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) (Control Order) Regulations 2020; all prevailing Sector Specific Requirements as outlined in Annex A of the hostel circular; and advisories of respective agencies.

23. Hostel operators must also explain how they will address key outcomes in their application to STB, to reduce potential transmission risks and support contact tracing efforts. Risk factors for hostels to consider include proximity between guests, propensity for crowds to form, level of activity and number of high-touch surfaces. Each application must show how the hostel will achieve all the following key outcomes:

Outcomes

Ability to meet density requirements

Limit occupancy to no more than 1 person per 10sqm guest-accessible public space per person (excluding hostel staff) at any point in time, where practicable.

Implement more stringent SMMs at areas where guests and staff spend more time, as opposed to areas which see more transient traffic.

Reduce face-to-face mingling among guests, between employees and between staff and guests



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Stagger timings for guests to be at hostel lobby and guest facilities, and employees at back-of-house work environment.

Ability to disperse crowds and prevent bunching

Mandatory implementation of Trace Together-only SafeEntry

Implement rigorous cleaning and disinfecting regimes, particularly for high touch elements

24. The application must also detail plans addressing operational areas such as SMMs for workplaces, response plans (to handle unwell guests, suspected/confirmed cases), and marketing and communications plan for re-opening.

25. Hostels whose applications have been approved must submit the following information:

- a. Submit a set of required data every Friday before 10am via go.gov.sg/covid19-hotellupdates. This information will be used only as internal reference for public policy purposes and will not be shared with other hostels.
- b. Submit the number of staff who are working on-site within 2 weeks of the date of resumption of on-site operations for leisure bookings following approval from MTI via <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

Inform STB immediately whenever there is a positive COVID-19 case at the hostel⁴, providing such particulars of the case as may be requested by STB.

Enforcement of Safe Management Measures

26. STB will conduct enforcement checks to ensure compliance with SMMs, including SMMs proposed in the hostel's application. Enforcement action will be taken against offenders who operate without MTI's approval to provide leisure accommodation and/or fail to comply with SMMs.

27. Under the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act passed in Parliament on 7 April 2020, first-time offenders may be fined up to \$10,000, imprisoned up to six months, or both. Repeat offenders may be fined up to \$20,000, imprisoned up to twelve months, or both. Also, under the Act, businesses that are not compliant may be ordered to cease business activities or close altogether. Businesses that do are not compliant may also be ineligible for government grants, loans, tax rebates and other assistance.

Eligibility as a SingapoRediscovers Vouchers merchant

28. Backpacker's hostels with private ensuite rooms which have received MTI's approval to accept leisure bookings will be eligible to participate in the SingapoRediscovers Vouchers scheme if the hostel is licensed under the Hotels Act and SG-Clean certified. To be whitelisted as a merchant, you will need to abide by the Merchant Terms and Conditions. Please reach out to STB if you meet the eligibility criteria and would like to be whitelisted.

⁴ Includes guests and visitors that have patronised or visited the hostel, and hostel staff.



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Thank you.

SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD

Updated as of 1 November 2021