

Circular for Backpackers' Hostels in Phase 3 (Heightened Alert)

With effect from Monday, 14 June 2021

1. On 10 June 2021, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce (MTF) announced that Singapore will move back to Phase 3 (Heightened Alert) in two steps as part of a calibrated re-opening.
2. The new measures for re-opening will take effect from Monday, 14 June 2021. Further measures for re-opening will take effect from 21 June 2021, subject to the prevailing public health situation in Singapore. The information in this circular (which includes its annexes) supersedes that in previous advisories or statements.
3. The backpackers' hostel industry has played a critical role in keeping Singapore safe, and it is imperative that the industry remains vigilant and disciplined in maintaining health and safety protocols.
4. All backpackers' hostel should review and reinforce your current Safe Management Measures (SMMs) and remind employees to take all the prevailing measures seriously even if they have been vaccinated. Vaccination remains critical in our fight against the pandemic. Backpackers' hostel should also strongly encourage any remaining unvaccinated employees to get vaccinated when it is offered to them. For frontline employees who are working on-site to support operations, there must not be any cross-deployment of workers across work-sites or departments.

Implementation of Safe Management Measures

5. Hostels are reminded to comply with the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) (Control Order) Regulations 2020¹. **All backpackers' hostel are reminded to review and reinforce your current Safe Management Measures (SMMs) including to ensure 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.**
6. 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 to ensure cohorted 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 from 17 May 2021 onwards.
7. 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). Such hostels may resume accepting guests for leisure purposes, such as staycations, from 1 April 2021 onwards. The leisure guests will only be allowed to be accommodated in the private ensuite rooms.

Applications to Provide Leisure Bookings in Private Ensuite Rooms

¹ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/COVID19TMA2020-S254-2020>

8. Backpackers' hostels that have private ensuite rooms and wish to resume accepting leisure bookings must abide by the following:
 - 8.1. 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.
 - 8.2. 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.
 - 8.3. Undergo an inspection scheduled and conducted by STB as part of the assessment process.
 - 8.4. 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.
9. In addition, we would like to highlight the following arrangement which approved applicants are to follow (more details can be found in the annexes):
 - a. Each private ensuite room can only permit one booking and **can accommodate no more than 5 individuals in total gathering in the room on any single day unless they are from the same household (i.e. same address on NRIC), capped at the room's maximum capacity as per the approved plans by URA and/or SCDF**. All hostel guests must be pre-registered prior to being allocated a room.
 - b. Visitors who are not staying in the hostels are not allowed to enter the hostel premises. Hostels should also 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.
9. 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
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 (starting 17 May 2021)
Implement rigorous cleaning and disinfecting regimes, particularly for high touch elements

10. 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.

11. Hostels whose applications have been approved must submit the following information:
- Submit a set of required data every Friday before 10am via go.gov.sg/covid19-hotelupdates. This information will be used only as internal reference for public policy purposes and will not be shared with other hotels.
 - 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 hotel², providing such particulars of the case as may be requested by STB.

¹Includes guests that have patronised or visited the hotel, and hotel staff.

Enforcement of Safe Management Measures

12. 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.

² Includes guests and visitors that have patronised or visited the hotel, and hotel staff.

13. 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 SingapoRediscovered Vouchers merchant

14. Backpacker's hostels with private ensuite rooms which have received MTI's approval to accept leisure bookings will be eligible to participate in the SingapoRediscovered 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.

Thank you.

SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD

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