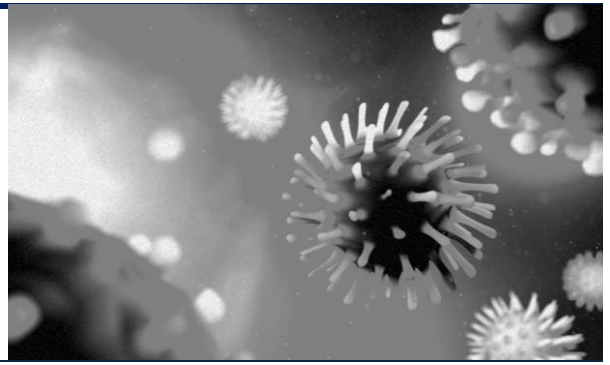


inBrief



New measures implemented by the UAE authorities in response to COVID-19

By Charles Laubach | 7 April 2020

Below is a summary of key new measures, as well as clarifications on previous measures we reported on, that have been implemented by various UAE authorities since 5 April 2020 and the time of this inBrief, 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 7 April 2020.

Clarification on the movement of employees of exempted categories during the extended *National Disinfection Programme* and *Stay Home* initiatives

In our inBrief dated 6 April 2020 we reported that employees of “vital sectors” are permitted to leave their house at any time of the day to commute to work, and that employees of exempted “support sectors” are permitted to commute to work between 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation clarified that these employees are not required to get a movement permit to commute back and forth from work. However they must obtain a letter from their employers confirming their movement to and from work.

A further clarification by the Department of Economic Development (DED) was issued through Circular No. 10 of 2020 issued on 6 April 2020. In the circular the DED reiterated the above measures and added that employees at corporate offices and headquarters (as opposed to public-facing personnel) of both local companies and multi-national corporations in vital and exempted support sectors may commute back and forth from work between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 2 p.m. without receiving customers. Once again, these corporate offices and headquarters must adhere to the 30 per cent of the total workforce capacity guideline, and employees must observe the necessary precautionary measures with regard to sanitisation and social distancing.

Additionally, the DED clarified that suppliers of building materials and A/Cs to the construction and contracting sectors are considered as an activity under the Supply Chain sector which is

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exempted from obtaining the movement permits. However, they shall operate with the same guidelines as employees of corporate offices and headquarters in vital and exempted support sectors.

Company Reporting

Taking into account that annual general meetings of public joint stock companies fall within the period of government restrictions on meetings and gatherings, the Securities & Commodities Authority (SCA) announced on 2 April 2020 the following extensions of deadlines for local public joint stock companies, listed foreign companies, companies licensed by the SCA and local investment funds registered with the SCA:

- Disclosure of 2019 audited annual financial statements and reports are extended for an additional period of 45 days ending on 15 May 2020. Local public joint stock companies and local private joint stock companies listed with the stock exchange shall publish their 2019 audited annual financial statements concurrently with the announcement of their annual general meeting.
- Disclosure of 2020 interim financial statements for the period ending 31 March 2020 are extended until the intended deadline for disclosure of the interim financial statements for the period ending 30 June 2020.

Abu Dhabi Courts

Pursuant to Circular No. 7 of 2020 issued on 23 March 2020, with regards to continuity of the judicial process during the COVID-19 period, the Abu Dhabi Courts announced that all first instance and appellate judicial departments and case preparation offices, should be guided by the following procedures:

Matters	Procedure
Cases being deliberated before the Courts of First Instance and the Courts of Appeal that are not ready for pronouncement of judgment	To be postponed for a period of no less than 30 days with notification sent by a text message to the parties' phone numbers.
Cases being deliberated before the Courts of First Instance and the Courts of Appeal that are ready for pronouncement of judgment	To remain scheduled for pronouncement of judgment and for judgment to be pronounced and recorded, and with notification sent by a text message to the parties' phone numbers.
Cases that were scheduled for pronouncement of judgment on a date prior to the date of this Circular	All courts shall pronounce and record judgment.
Judges deciding on urgent matters (civil, commercial, labour and personal status departments)	Judges will work remotely from their places of residence and will adjudicate registered urgent applications submitted to them in addition to the cases that were set for adjudication on a date prior to the date of this Circular. Cases and appeals that are being deliberated and that are not ready for adjudication will be postponed for a period of no less than 30 days, with notification sent by a text message to the parties' phone numbers.

Cases being deliberated before the Courts of First Instance and the Courts of Appeal	Case management offices shall postpone these cases and hearings for a period of no less than 30 days starting from the date of this Circular, with notification sent by a text message to the litigants. All cases ready for pronouncement of judgment will be referred to the concerned panels without the presence of the litigants.
Filing of civil, commercial, labour, and personal status cases, appeals, grievances, writs on petition and other grievances	The presiding judges of the courts shall instruct the presiding officers of the relevant registries that they must accept the filing of cases, appeals and grievances (ex parte orders in civil, commercial, labour and personal status cases and other grievances) if missing the filing deadline would result in rejection of the same or loss of rights.

Free Zones

In line with various government directives on staying home and avoiding meetings and gatherings, as well as the extended national disinfection programme implemented by Dubai's Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management, Jebel Ali Free Zone (JAFZA) announced through a circular on 5 April 2020 the reduction in physical presence in JAFZA and asked all customers of JAFZA to work remotely and cancel or postpone all in-person meetings.

JAFZA also announced on 5 April 2020, through a separate circular, the temporary closure of medical fitness exam centres.

Economic Stimulus

As we reported in our inBrief dated 3 April 2020, the UAE Central Bank (CBUAE) has launched a comprehensive Targeted Economic Support Scheme (TESS) to contain the repercussion of COVID-19, with immediate effect. The purpose of TESS is to provide temporary relief from payments of principal and interest on outstanding loans for all companies and retail customers in the UAE affected by COVID-19.

In addition to TESS, the CBUAE issued on Sunday, 5 April 2020, a joint guidance for banks and finance companies on the application of International Financial Reporting Standard 9 (IFRS 9) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance was issued in cooperation with the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) and the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA).

The guidance, developed collectively by the authorities, provides practical solutions for banks and finance companies in managing the impact of the current economic uncertainty on expected credit loss, while remaining compliant with IFRS 9 and promoting consistency of approach.

The overriding objective of the guidance is to ensure that financial reports are based on up to date estimations of the risks faced by banks and finance companies, while recognising the magnitude of support measures implemented by the authorities, and acknowledging that the decision-making process related to IFRS 9 application will need to be adjusted in the current environment.

Travel Restrictions and *Early Leave Initiative*

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization, in cooperation with the Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the General Civil Aviation Authority, and the National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority, launched the Early Leave initiative on 5 April 2020.

The initiative enables residents who work in the private sector and wish to return to their home countries to do so during the period of precautionary measures undertaken in the UAE to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, COVID-19.

Movement Permits in Dubai

In our inBrief dated 6 April 2020 we reported that Dubai's Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management mandated that the general public obtain a permit prior to any departure from the person's residence.

Our own staff have visited the website where residents can apply for a movement permit. Since the mode of transport is requested on the form, it is therefore intuitively implied that pedestrians and cyclists also require a movement permit.

There was some ambiguity in terms of requirement of a permit in situations where the destination (e.g. grocery store or pharmacy) is within a very short walking distance from the resident's home or located in the resident's building or housing complex. Our own interpretation is that regardless of the mode of travel and distance, it will all be considered as "stepping out of the house" for which a permit will be required. The aim of the permit is to limit movement and hence the spread of coronavirus. Any action to the contrary could be treated by the authorities and the police as an offence. ■

Afridi & Angell

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