

	Guideline	
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Title: **Guidelines on management of vulnerable employees during COVID-19 Pandemic**

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1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO), the National Department of Health (NDOH), and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) declared a category of people as being vulnerable to COVID-19 and requiring protection. The medical advice and recommendation from the WHO and the NDOH is that vulnerable people should self-quarantine in their homes and limit contact with those outside their immediate households as much as possible.

Eskom provides an essential service to the country and acknowledges that some employees may, due to their medical conditions, be vulnerable to COVID-19. The health and safety of all employees are paramount to Eskom, especially those at high risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Supporting Clauses

2.1 Scope

2.1.1 Purpose

This guideline aims to assist managers in identifying and protecting employees who are vulnerable to COVID-19.

2.1.2 Applicability

This document shall apply throughout Eskom Holdings Limited Divisions.

2.1.3 Effective date

The document is effective from the date of signature.

2.2 Normative/Informative References

Parties using this document shall apply the most recent edition of the documents listed in the following paragraphs.

2.2.1 Normative

- [1] ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems
- [2] 32-1122: Health and Wellness Policy
- [3] 32-1250: Health and Wellness PCM
- [4] 32-520: Occupational Health and Safety Management Risk Assessment Procedure
- [5] Health Professions Act, No 56 of 1974
- [6] National Health Act, No 61 of 2003
- [7] Nursing Act No 33 of 2005

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2.2.2 Informative

[8] 32-727 Safety, Health, Environment and Quality (SHEQ) Policy

[9] Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

[10] Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997

[11] Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995

[12] Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993

2.3 Definitions

An employee vulnerable to COVID-19 is a person who due to their health and medical conditions is at high risk of contracting COVID-19.

2.4 Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
COVID-19	means the Coronavirus Disease 2019
Coronavirus	SARS-CoV-2 virus
PPE	means personal protective equipment
NDOH	National Department of Health
NICD	National Institute for Communicable Diseases
WHO	World Health Organization

2.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Not applicable

2.6 Process for Monitoring

Not applicable

2.7 Related/Supporting Documents

Not applicable

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3. General Considerations

3.1 Principles

- 3.1.1 The **work-from-home principle** should be applied in protecting employees vulnerable to COVID-19 in the organisation.
- 3.1.2 Every decision made must be guided by a risk assessment considering all the factors in relation to the **risk of exposure to the SARS-CoV-2 virus** (coronavirus).
- 3.1.3 Managers have a responsibility to manage outputs and maintain contact with such employees, including offering them care and support.
- 3.1.4 Employees have a responsibility to inform their managers if they are diagnosed with COVID-19.
- 3.1.5 All medical information of employees must be treated as private. Confidentiality should be maintained by all parties at all times.
- 3.1.6 There will be zero tolerance of discrimination and stigmatisation on the basis of having COVID-19.
- 3.1.7 It is the responsibility of the manager to approve or reject the option of working from as guided by a risk assessment.
- 3.1.8 Employees vulnerable to COVID-19 shall be managed in a fair and equitable manner at all times.
- 3.1.9 Employees who will be working from home must be provided with all the tools of the trade.
- 3.1.10 If the employee has to come back to work, the manager must ensure that there are additional risk control measures in place to limit the risk of exposure, including appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- 3.1.11 Social distancing and hand hygiene measures (that is, hand washing facilities with soap and water and > 70% alcohol-based sanitisers) must be adhered to at all times (at home and at work).
- 3.1.12 Administrative controls (for example, staff rotation, management of shift work, etc.) should be applied.

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3.2 The criteria for an employee vulnerable to COVID-19

An employee shall be considered as an employee vulnerable to COVID-19 if he/she is:

- 60 years and older;
- Pregnant;
- Diagnosed with one or more of the following chronic medical conditions:
 - (a) HIV/AIDS with low CD4 count;
 - (b) Severe chronic lung disease (for example, severe asthma, severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pulmonary tuberculosis, cystic fibrosis, bronchiectasis);
 - (c) Autoimmune disease;
 - (d) Chronic kidney (renal) disease, including renal failure, and is on dialysis;
 - (e) Cardiovascular (heart) diseases;
 - (f) Poorly controlled diabetes mellitus
- Significantly immunocompromised or taking immune suppression treatment after an organ transplant
- A person with a disability who due to their impairment may be susceptible to contracting COVID-19. A risk assessment should be conducted, as not all persons with disabilities are susceptible to contracting COVID-19.

The above list is not exhaustive, additional categories of employees may be considered as people vulnerable to COVID-19.

3.3 The identification of an employee vulnerable to COVID-19

3.3.1 The occupational health nurse (OHN) can identify an employee from available medical surveillance and fitness for duty medical records and advise the manager and the employee that the employee meets the criteria of an employee vulnerable to COVID-19.

3.3.2 An employee who believes that he/she should be considered as an employee vulnerable to COVID-19 must approach his/her manager and request that he/she be categorised as an employee vulnerable to COVID-19. That employee should be requested to provide a medical report from his/her treating health practitioner. This medical report should be submitted to the Eskom occupational health practitioner at the nearest Eskom clinic.

3.3.3 The wellness functionaries who believe that an employee meets the criteria of an employee vulnerable to COVID-19 must notify the occupational health practitioner at their nearest Eskom clinic, who will then inform the manager.

3.4 The management of employees vulnerable to COVID-19

3.4.1 Eskom employees who meet the criteria of employees vulnerable to COVID-19 must be allowed to work from home until the pandemic has been contained.

3.4.2 Employees should self-quarantine while working from home by following the NICD protocol until the pandemic has been contained.

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- 3.4.3 Any deviation from the work-from-home principle should be made in consultation with the employee, his/her treating health specialist, and an Eskom occupational health practitioner. Relevant medical reports may be requested to support the deviation. The agreement to deviate from the work-from-home principle should be in writing.
- 3.4.4 An employee will undergo a fitness for duty assessment on his/her return to work. This assessment will be conducted at his/her nearest Eskom clinic.

3.5 Process

- 3.5.1 The responsible manager must perform a risk assessment to determine whether an employee is considered a critical staff member and to ensure business continuity.
- 3.5.2 The responsible manager and employee should work together to assess any risks and agree on actions to address identified risks.
- 3.5.3 If the medical condition is not known to the manager, the employee must declare to his/her responsible manager that he/she meets the criteria of an employee vulnerable to COVID-19. (The declaration should not include the medical condition if the employee does not want to declare his/her medical condition but medical evidence such as a medical report from the treating health practitioner that an employee is living with a chronic medical condition may be requested from the employee).
- 3.5.5 The responsible manager may also draw on his/her existing knowledge of an employee's health and well-being when considering whether the employee meets the criteria of an vulnerable employee to COVID-19.
- 3.5.6 It is the responsibility of the manager to approve or reject the option of working from home.
- 3.5.7 The medical conditions and actions to be taken in the management of employees' vulnerable to COVID-19 are outlined in **Table A**

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">The employee may be required to provide additional medical information during this process.
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4. Acceptance

This document has been seen and accepted by:

Name	Designation
P Mkalipe	Senior Manager Health & Wellness

5. Revisions

Date	Rev.	Compiler	Remarks
May 2020	1	Dr Mmuso Ramantsi	Business requirement.

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7. Acknowledgements

Not applicable.

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