

GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

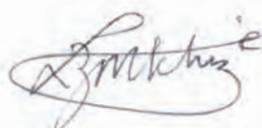
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

NO. 589

25 MAY 2020

AMENDMENT TO THE DIRECTIONS ISSUED IN TERMS OF REGULATION 10(1) OF THE REGULATIONS MADE UNDER SECTION 27(2) OF THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ACT, 2002 (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): MEASURES TO ADDRESS, PREVENT AND COMBAT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

I, **Dr Zwelini Lawrence Mkhize**, in terms of regulation 10(1)(b) of the Regulations issued in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002) hereby amend Government Notice No.457 published in Government *Gazette* No.43217 of 08 April 2020, as set out in the Schedule.



DR ZWELINI LAWRENCE MKHIZE, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH

DATE: 08/05/2020

SCHEDULE**Definition**

1. In this Schedule “**Directions**” means the Directions issued under Government Notice No. 457, published in Government *Gazette* No. 43217 of 8 April 2020;

“**Human Remains Regulations**” means the regulations made under section 68(1)(b) read with section 90((4)(c) of the National Health Act, 2003 (Act No. 61 of 2003) and published in Government Notice No. R. 363 of 22 May 2013;

“PPE” means personal protective equipment.

Amendment of paragraph 5 of the Directions

2. Paragraph 5 of the Directions is amended by the deletion of subparagraph (2).

Amendment of paragraph 8 of the Directions

3. Paragraph 8 of the Directions is hereby amended by the insertion of the following paragraphs:

“Handling of mortal remains¹: General

8A (1) The handling, transportation, importation, exportation and final disposal of COVID-19 mortal remains should be conducted only in accordance with chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the Human Remains Regulations.

(2) All persons handling COVID -19 mortal remains should wear suitable personal protective clothing at all times.

(3) All persons handling COVID-19 mortal remains should practice good personal hygiene such as washing hands with soap and water and using personal protective clothing.

(4) No person may at any given time make contact with, or touch, the mortal remains without wearing the appropriate PPE.

(5) Metropolitan and Local Municipalities should ensure that the burial or cremation of COVID-19 mortal remains takes place in suitably approved cemeteries or crematoria, respectively.

(6) Metropolitan and District Municipalities should ensure that they identify areas that may be utilised for mass burial should the need for same arise.

Handling of mortal remains in mortuaries or at funeral undertakers

8B. (1) The act of moving a recently deceased patient onto a hospital trolley for transportation to the mortuary might be sufficient to expel small amounts of air from the lungs and thereby present a minor risk.

¹ Mortal remains has similar meaning as “human remains”.

(2) A body bag should be used for transferring the body to the mortuary and those handling the body at this point should use full PPE.

(3) The outer surface of the body bag should be decontaminated immediately before the body bag leaves the ward or anteroom area and may require at least two individuals wearing such protective clothing, in order to manage this process.

(4) The trolley carrying the body must be disinfected prior to leaving the ward or anteroom.

(5) Prior to leaving the ward or anteroom, the staff members must remove their PPE.

(6) Once in the hospital or private mortuary, it would be acceptable to open the body bag for family viewing by family members (one at a time) only (mortuary attendant must wear full PPE) at the mortuary. Family must be provided with masks and gloves for the viewing and should not touch the body with bare hands.

(7) Washing or preparing of the mortal remains is allowed provided those carrying out the task wear PPE such as gloves, masks and waterproof coverall and all PPEs used must be disposed of immediately. However, the washing and preparing of the mortal remains by family members is not encouraged due to the health risks.

(8) Mortuary staff and funeral directors must be advised by the Environmental Health Practitioner of the biohazard risk.

(9) No washing is allowed out of the mortuary or funeral undertaker's premises.

(10) If the family wishes to dress the body, they may do so at the funeral undertaker's premises prior to the body being placed in the body bag and those carrying out the task should wear PPE such as gloves, masks and waterproof coverall apron and all PPEs used must be disposed of immediately.

(11) If a post mortem is required, safe working techniques should be used and full PPE should be worn.

(12) In order to avoid excessive manipulation of the body, embalming is not recommended, however, if embalming is undertaken, the embalmer should wear full PPE.

(13) After use, empty body bags should be cut and disposed of as health care risk waste.

(14) After use, the reusable empty heavy duty body bags must be treated in terms of existing procedures.

Measures when a person passes on at home

8C. (1) In the event that a person infected with COVID-19 dies at home, family members must not, at any stage, handle the body. An EMS must be called immediately to confirm death before removal by an undertaker.

(2) The belongings of the deceased person should be handled with gloves and cleaned with a detergent followed by disinfection with a solution of at least 70% ethanol or 0.1% (1000 ppm) bleach.

(3) Clothing and other fabric belongings of the deceased should be machine washed with warm water at 60–90°C (140–194°F) and laundry detergent.

(4) If machine washing is not possible, linens can be soaked in hot water and soap in a large drum using a stick to stir and being careful to avoid splashing.

(5) The drum should then be emptied, and the linens soaked in 0.05% chlorine for approximately 30 minutes. Finally, the laundry should be rinsed with clean water and the linens should be allowed to dry in full sunlight.

Conveyance of infectious mortal remains

8D. (1) The mortal remains of a COVID-19 patient may not be conveyed in public in any way unless-

- (a) such remains are placed in a polythene bag, sealed in an airtight container, placed in a sturdy non-transparent sealed coffin, embalmed and the total surface of the body is covered with a 5 cm layer of wood sawdust or other absorbent material which is treated with a disinfectant;
- (b) a medical practitioner declares, in writing, that in his or her opinion the conveyance of such mortal remains will not constitute a health hazard; and
- (c) the body is transported in an authorised vehicle designated and certified to transport mortal remains.

(2) No person other than an attending medical practitioner, an attending forensic pathologist or a medical practitioner who can prove that he or she has treated the deceased during illness, may certify that the person did not die of an infectious disease, a certificate or declaration that a person did not die of an infectious disease must—

- (a) accompany the mortal remains at all times during the conveyance and up to the burial; and
- (b) be shown to an Environmental Health Practitioner on demand, by the person responsible for the conveyance of the mortal remains.

(3) No person may—

- (a) damage a polythene bag or a sturdy non-transparent sealed coffin;
- (b) open such bag or coffin;
- (c) remove the mortal remains from the bag or coffin; or
- (d) come into direct contact with the mortal remains after the bag or coffin has been sealed.

Prohibition of viewing and storage of body at home

8E. A funeral undertaker must deliver the mortal remains on the morning of burial and not the night before the burial and must ensure that the remains are not touched during viewing.

Environmental cleaning and control

8F. (1) The mortuary must be kept clean and properly ventilated and illuminated at all times.

(2) Surfaces and instruments should be made of materials that can be easily disinfected as prescribed in the Human Remains Regulations.

(3) Surfaces, where the body was prepared, should first be cleaned with soap and water, or a commercially prepared detergent solution. After cleaning, a disinfectant with a minimum concentration of 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach), or 70% ethanol should be used to disinfect.

Disposal of mortal remains: Burial or cremation

8G. (1) Cremation is highly recommended where a person has passed on due to COVID -19.

(2) A burial or cremation of the mortal remains of a person who died of COVID-19 must be carried out in terms of the Human Remains Regulations.

(3) (a) Burial services should be as short as possible but may not exceed two hours in order to minimise possible exposure.

(b) Mourners should observe physical distancing during and after the burial service.

(4) Only close family members should attend a funeral service of a person that died of COVID-19 or of other infectious disease.

(5) For the purposes of protecting the health of the mourners at a burial service, a COVID-19 patient should not attend a burial service irrespective of his or her relationship with the deceased.

(6) Those tasked with placing the body in the grave, on the funeral pyre, etc. should wear gloves and wash hands with soap and water once the burial is complete.

Disposal of Mortal Remains in High Risk Situation

8H. (a) The mortal remains may not be kept for more than three days at the mortuary.

(b) Government may intervene where mortal remains are not claimed within two days.

(c) Should the death rate appear to exceed the capacity of available space to keep mortal remains, the Government may intervene to facilitate mass burials.

(d) District and Metropolitan municipalities should identify land that can be used for mass burial should a need arise.

(e) Municipalities should ensure that a mass burial is done in consideration of human dignity and necessary controls should be put in place to ensure that mortal remains can be identified.

(f) Machinery (for digging and closing of graves) can be used if deemed fit to prevent further spread of the virus and when hand tools are used during digging and closing the grave, the tools must be sanitised.

- (g) People carrying the coffin must wear disposable hand gloves which must be disposed of properly.

Burial of Non COVID-19 mortal remains

8I. (1) A mortuary or an undertaker must not keep the mortal remains for more than ten days from the date of death.

(2) Non COVID-19 mortal remains must be buried or cremated within ten days from the date of death.

Persons returning

8J (1) All persons arriving from outside of the Republic through any port of entry will be subjected to screening and mandatory quarantine for a minimum period of 14 days in designated quarantine facilities.

(2) In addition to screening, a person may be subjected to medical examinations to ascertain whether he or she is considered to be a suspect case for COVID-19.

(3) Persons placed under quarantine will be subjected to testing and daily screening by health personnel.

Aircraft or ship crew

8K. A crew member allowed to disembark, irrespective of circumstances, will be subjected to screening and mandatory quarantine for a minimum period of 14 days or until such crew member is due to embark, board or depart for international travel at the employer's cost.

Designation of quarantine facilities

8L. The National Department of Health, provincial departments of health, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and Municipalities must collaboratively allocate and designate quarantine facilities which will be under the management of the provincial departments of health which must provide, amongst others, the following:

- (a) Primary health care services including test swabs and supporting medical services;
- (b) Environmental health services;
- (c) Emergency medical services;
- (d) Forensic pathology services;

- (e) PPEs; and
- (f) Appropriate receptacles for the collection of medical waste including used PPE and the appropriate disposal thereof.

Transport to and from quarantine facilities

8M. (1) Transport to the quarantine facility must be provided by the designated quarantine facility.

(2) Transport from the quarantine facility at the end of the quarantine period, must be facilitated by that individual or his or her family.

(3) Transport from the quarantine facility where a crew member or traveller is due to embark, board or depart for international travel, will be facilitated by the designated quarantine facility.

Cost of quarantine

8N. All persons returning to the Republic may be required to pay for their mandatory quarantine, including transportation to the quarantine facility.

Evacuation of Foreign Nationals

8O. (1) All foreign nationals evacuated from South Africa must be subjected to exit screening at the point of exit prior to boarding any conveyance which will be used for such evacuation.

(2) Foreign nationals found to have an elevated temperature or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will be subjected to a medical examination which may include testing and will not be allowed to board the conveyance.

(3) Such persons may be subjected to mandatory quarantine at own cost for a minimum period of 14 days at a quarantine facility.

Control Measures for Public places

8P. Government departments, municipalities and private entities responsible for public places must-

- (a) ensure that public hygiene measures are implemented in all public places as described in the National Public Hygiene Strategy, 2020;
- (b) ensure that public places are cleaned and disinfected;
- (c) provide for hand hygiene; and

(d) enable the practice of physical distancing measures.”.

Commencement

3. These Amendment Directions come into effect on the date of publication in the *Government Gazette*.