

LEGAL UPDATE

## Werksmans response to COVID-19

20 March 2020    3 min read

Following the declaration by the President of the Republic of South Africa of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic as a disaster in South Africa, we thought it prudent to advise our clients of the steps that we are taking to address the position.

Our approach has been three-fold: firstly, to ensure the safety of the members of our firm, secondly, the continued delivery of legal services and thirdly, to begin preparing to advise our clients on the measures that they may need to take in order to ensure that their businesses continue to operate and that the possible risks and contingencies posed by COVID-19 are identified and addressed.

Whilst we see no basis on which to panic in reaction to the prevailing state of affairs presented by the spread of COVID-19, we have taken steps to ensure that we are able to maintain efficient business operations and that our services remain available to our clients. In this regard, in order to implement and co-ordinate a firm-wide response, Werksmans has formed a committee of attorneys and senior management to implement and co-ordinate the firm's COVID-19 response.

We have taken steps internally to educate and inform all of our staff about COVID-19 including the intensification of personal hygiene practices in all of our offices. We will continue to take these measures for as long as the circumstances require.

In light of the ban on groups of 100 or more people meeting, our client seminars, scheduled between now and 15 April 2020, will be postponed. We are also monitoring the travel requirements and obligations of staff and, where necessary, requiring members of our staff to take measures to avoid unnecessary travel and, as a matter of pure caution, to self-isolate where they have recently travelled overseas to high-risk COVID-19 regions. In this regard, we are taking guidance from the regular bulletins published by the World Health Organisation and the advice emanating from the National Department of Health.

Should we be required to close any of our offices, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that legal services to clients will remain uninterrupted. The necessary legal and information technology resources will be made available to allow for access to and the provision of essential legal services and that these services are not unduly compromised and that our staff are able to work safely and productively off-site. We intend to continue to provide the high level of service to which our clients are accustomed.

We continue to monitor developments both locally and internationally in respect of the response to COVID-19 and will continue to advise our staff and clients as to the steps that we are taking to address the position as it develops so as to provide for a response that is measured and appropriate.

Please be assured that we value your relationship and we are co-ordinating our response to the current circumstances to ensure that we are prepared and able to continue to provide our services seamlessly. Should you have any particular queries about our response to COVID-19, please contact the head of our Healthcare & Life Sciences Law Practice Area, Neil Kirby, on either +27 11 535 8198 or by e-mail: [nkirby@werksmans.com](mailto:nkirby@werksmans.com).

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