

Telecommuting as the default mode of working

Singapore formally exits the eight-week Circuit Breaker period when it ends on June 1, with the country beginning a three-phase approach to resume activities safely. In Phase One, Singapore will gradually reopen economic activities that do not pose a high risk of Covid-19 transmission. In the second of a three-part series, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) answer some common questions by workers on whether they have to return to their workplace on June 2, and what they should take note of if they are unable to telecommute.



Are all employees required to return to their workplaces from June 2?

No. Working from home should be the default mode of working. Employees who are working from home during the Circuit Breaker period must continue to do so even after the end of the Circuit Breaker period.

They can only go to the office when there is no alternative and when it is demonstrably necessary to do so, for example, to access systems or equipment that cannot be accessed from home, or to fulfil legal requirements (e.g. to complete contracts or transactions).

For employees who are still unable to work from home, employers should review work processes, provide the necessary IT equipment to employees and adopt solutions that enable remote working and online collaboration.



I have been told to return to the office from June 2 despite being able to perform my work from home during the Circuit Breaker period. What do I do?

All employers must put in place Safe Management Measures and should communicate the measures clearly to all employees before resuming business. The measures include ensuring all employees continue to work from home as much as possible, so as to reduce physical interactions at workplaces.

It is the responsibility of employers to show that they have made a reasonable effort to facilitate working from home for all days and at all times, including reviewing and transforming business processes through technology to support remote working (e.g. e-payment, e-invoicing, e-signatures).

Businesses that do not implement Safe Management Measures are liable for penalties under the Covid-19 (Temporary Measures) Act and to have their operations suspended. Breaches or poor practices of Safe Management Measures can be reported via SnapSAFE (www.mom.gov.sg/eservices/snapsafe).



Under what circumstances may I return to my workplace from June 2?

Employers are permitted to allow employees to go to the office if there is no alternative and it is demonstrably necessary (e.g. to operate a system or equipment that cannot be accessed from

home, or to fulfil legal requirements). For example, if your job involves operating machinery or equipment on-site, or systems that cannot be accessed outside of the office, you may return to work to do so.



What should I take note of if I am really unable to telecommute and need to be in office?

You will need to adhere to Safe Management Measures while working in the office. These include undergoing temperature screenings and declarations, wearing a mask at all times except during activities that require masks to be removed, practising good personal hygiene and keeping at least one metre distance from others. If you feel unwell, you must not go to work.

Functions that can be done through email, telephone or video-conferencing should be conducted remotely. Employers should review work processes, provide the necessary IT equipment to employees and adopt solutions that enable remote working and online collaboration.



Are there any available resources to help businesses review work processes to enable employees to work from home?

Yes, the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) has a variety of digital solutions and resources that help businesses implement some of the Safe Management Measures. Eligible SMEs that wish to adopt digital solutions pre-approved by IMDA can also apply for the Productivity Solutions Grant (PSG). PSG has been enhanced to provide up to 80 per cent support from April 1 to Dec 31 this year, with additional categories of supported solutions like remote working and visitor management.

More information is available at www.imda.gov.sg/BizGoDigital. Other resources to help SMEs digitalise is available through the SMEs Go Digital programme at www.imda.gov.sg/SMEsGoDigital.

For the list of services that can resume on June 2, 2020:

<https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/guides/permittedserviceslist.pdf>

For Safe Management Measures and sector-specific requirements:

<https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/safemanagement/general> ("Safe Management Requirements")

For info on SafeEntry:

go.gov.sg/safeentry-visitor-management-system

For info on other support measures:

covid.gobusiness.gov.sg

Queries? Call **6898 1800**

Our hotline operates from:

8.30am - 5.30pm (Monday - Friday)

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