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Guidelines

Health Guidelines for Reopening of Cinemas/Theatres

Objective

To provide the health guidelines for reopening of cinemas/theatres while minimizing the risk of spreading COVID-19. The guidelines provide practical considerations and safety recommendations for agency workers, contractors, employers and employees in cinema sector along with customers and visitors.

Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic had substantial impact on cinema industry mirroring its impacts across all sectors. Cinemas and movie theaters had been closed to a varying degree across the world. This was with a view to avert potential risk of disease transmission that may result due to mass gatherings in theatres and cinemas. It was critical to keep workforce associated with the sector and visitors/customers safe but on the other hand it also resulted in economic damages to the industry and its employees.

Envisaging the flattening of epidemic curve in Pakistan and keeping in view the importance of recreational sector including cinemas and theatres, the Government of Pakistan has decided to reopen the sector in the wake of current post peak COVID-19 period. However, it is critical to understand how to work safely and keep customers safe during their visits. A practical framework is therefore, desired to devise strategy for continuing or restarting, operations, as it is vital to avert or manage potential threat of infection spread or disease transmission from cinemas or theatres.

Instructions

A) General Preventive Measures/Key Principles to Avoid Exposure

Protect yourself while visiting theatres by adopting following preventive measures;

- Maintain at least 6 feet/2 meters distance between any two persons.
- Wear a face mask (disposable/cloth face covering) at all times while in the premises of cinema/theatre.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Practice respiratory hygiene i.e. sneezing or coughing into a tissue/handkerchief followed by discarding it immediately and hand washing, OR coughing into own elbow.
- Use touch less payment (pay without touching money, a card, or a keypad), if possible. In case, you must handle money, a card, or use a keypad, use hand sanitizer immediately after.



- After leaving the theatre, wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer (70-90% alcohol content).
- Follow standard operating procedures for the containment and disposal of used PPE.
- Vulnerable group including elderly (age > 65) or people of any age who have underlying medical conditions, should avoid visiting cinemas/theatres.
- Stay home, if sick.

B) Preparation of Premises by Managers/Owners

- Perform an assessment for all sites, or parts of sites that have been closed, before restarting work.
- Provide access to soap and water for hand washing or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol content) at multiple stations around the theatre/cinema complex and at entrance of auditorium, for use by employees and clients.
- Before using the air conditioning and ventilation system, it should be cleaned and appropriate filters should be put in place (see guidelines for ventilation systems). It can be disinfected by spraying, soaking or wiping with chlorine (bromine), quaternary ammonium salts, or chlorine dioxide disinfectant.
- Natural ventilation should be encouraged.
- There should be designated entry points deputed with trained personnel for “Thermal screening” of all who enter the premises.
- Posters should be pasted at prominent places reflecting information regarding possible ways of exposure and preventive measures.
- Clean frequently the work areas, equipment and objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, including ticket ATMs, cash registers, staff handheld devices etc., and making sure there are adequate disposal arrangements for cleaning products.
- Clear workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift.
- Set clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage.
- Clean the auditorium and seats between each screening, with particular attention paid to surfaces that are frequently touched with hands including (but would not be limited to) doors and handles in entrance/exiting areas, etc.
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection in auditoriums.
- Fumigate in order to dis-infect the premises, if required.
- Provide visual indication of physical distancing measures to assist visitors/customers either by floor/wall markings, bollards, spacing of furniture/materials or installing physical barriers in high traffic areas

C) Safety of Staff/Employees/Workers

The theatre/cinema employer must ensure following measures for the safety of staff;

- Theatres must educate and train all individuals including employees, temporary employees, contractors, vendors, etc., regarding preventive measures and protective approaches.



- Ensure that the employees wear cloth face coverings/face masks and practice social distancing for any interactions between clients and co-workers or while in common travel areas of the business (e.g., aisles, hallways, stock rooms, break rooms, entries and exits).
- Staff must follow hand and respiratory hygiene (as stated above).
- Employees must use gloves, along with any PPE normally used for routine job tasks, when cleaning equipment, workspaces, and high touch areas of the business.
- Ensure the availability of hand sanitizer, antibacterial wipes, gloves and masks for the staff.
- Ensure that the employees use digital files rather than paper formats (e.g., documentation, invoices, inspections, forms, agendas) to the greatest extent practicable.
- Create distinct groups or split the workers into teams/shift groups to reduce the number of contacts each worker has.
- Staggering arrival and departure times for staff to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace.
- Implement symptom screening for employees prior to the start of their shift.
- Encourage the staff/workers to self-monitor for signs and symptoms.
- Sick worker should be allowed to stay at home.
- If any staff member develop flu like symptoms;
 - Isolate the individual and provide with face mask
 - Notify the health care authorities immediately and follow the instructions
 - Clean and disinfect work area as per standard guidelines.

D) Managing Cinema Operations

It is prudent to follow various measures keeping in view the safety of customers and to avert risk of disease transmission;

- “No mask No entry” principal has to be strictly followed by all staff and customers.
- Limit the number of patrons to one third of the occupational capacity of the facility (excluding employees).
- Adopt the 1 person per 4 meter square rule, checkerboard seating or other separated seat allocations format to separate booking in each auditorium (each person to be 6 feet away from other person). Mark the seats in cinemas accordingly.
- Individuals exhibiting fever (temperatures equal to or greater than 99°F) or having other prominent signs of COVID-19 (cough or shortness of breath) during screening, should not be allowed access into the premises.
- Minimize the use of any waiting areas, sell tickets online and instruct patrons to arrive at the start time (or no more than 15 minutes) on their pre-purchased ticket. For those theaters/cinemas that cannot utilize online ticketing, install floor or wall decals for cashier queuing areas to demark safe waiting distances of a six (6) feet minimums.
- Ticketing employees should be shielded by glass or plexiglass and utilize appropriate PPE.
- Provide bar coded tickets which can be scanned in a way that protects the patron and employees, if possible
- Operate with reduced occupancy with special attention to limiting areas where customers and employees can congregate.
- Consider scheduling staggered show times to prevent congregating in waiting areas.



- Introduce one-way flow through auditoriums, including the potential use of emergency exits as exits from the auditorium. (Where such changes are made, a new fire risk assessment will be required).
- Ensure availability of sufficient staff to support customers and ensure social distancing is being observed
- Theaters/cinemas with snack bars must ensure employees utilize proper social distancing while preparing and serving food, to the greatest extent practicable.
- Cinemas/Theaters should not permit live performances, including music, to take place in front of a live audience. This is important to mitigate the risks of aerosol transmission - from the performer(s) to the audience.
- Encourage guests to take their own garbage and discard it in the proper receptacles as they exit.

E) Record of Staff & Attendees for Contact Tracing

- Attendee's and staff contact record must be kept securely for at least 14 days to aid in public health officials in contact tracing if any attendee contract COVID-19 and should contain at a minimum:
 - Full Name
 - Phone or Mobile Number
 - Email Address (Residential , if not available)
 - Data and Time of Visit
 - Carer's name and contact detail for children
- For group bookings, one contact is sufficient to support contact tracing.
- Electronic system or hard copy sign in registers may be used.

Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international & national recommendations and best practices.

The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Dr Farah Ashraf, Dr Ahsan M Ahmad and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.



References:

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3. Requirements for Movie theaters, Team Kentucky, Version 1.0 – Effective June 1, 2020
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5. Cinema Industry COVID 19 Safe Plan, updated 2 July 2020, Version 2, Queensland Government
6. Guidance for movie theatres during COVID-19, Version 1 – July 30, 2020, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/guidance-movie-theatres-during-covid-19>

For more information, please contact:

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<http://covid.gov.pk/>

<http://nhsrsc.gov.pk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NHSRCOfficial>

<http://www.hsa.edu.pk/>

<https://twitter.com/nhsrcofficial>

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<https://www.youtube.com/NHSRC-PK>