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Apr 05, 2021

8:49am

BY TIME:  
DOC NO.G. Ledesma  
AG-2021-01265

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**MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2021- 005****HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS OF SHORE EXCURSION PROGRAMS UNDER THE NEW NORMAL**

WHEREAS, pursuant to Republic Act No. 9593 or the *Tourism Act of 2009*, the DOT is mandated to promulgate rules and regulations governing the operation and activities of all tourism enterprises;

WHEREAS, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) *Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines* defines the “New Normal” as emerging behaviors, situations, and minimum public health standards that will be institutionalized in common or routine practices and remain even after the pandemic while the disease is not totally eradicated through means such as widespread immunization;

WHEREAS, there is a need to provide guidelines to institutionalize health and safety protocols in the operations of Shore Excursion Programs in the New Normal Scenario;

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing, these Health and Safety Guidelines Governing the Operations of Shore Excursion Programs under the New Normal are hereby issued:

**I. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**Section 1. Short Title.** This Circular shall be known as the “*New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for the Operations of Shore Excursion Programs*”.

**Section 2. Definition of Terms.** For purposes of these Guidelines, the term:

- (a) “Community Quarantine” refers to the restriction of movement within, into, or out of the area of quarantine of individuals, large groups of people, or communities designed to reduce the likelihood of transmission of COVID-19 among persons in and to persons outside the affected area (*IATF Omnibus Guidelines*).
- (b) “Confirmed COVID-19 case” refers to a person with laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 infection, irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms (*DOH DM No. 2020-0439*).
- (c) “Contact Tracing” refers to the identification, listing, assessment, and monitoring of persons who may have come into close contact with a Confirmed COVID-19 case. Contact tracing is an important component in containing outbreaks of infectious diseases. (*DOH DM No. 2020-0439*).
- (d) “Contact Tracing Form” refers to the form a person must fill out to provide contact information whether through a mobile application or other contactless means, substantially following the template in Annex A-2 of the DTI-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04-A.
- (e) “Cruise Passengers” refer to sea passengers making a journey on a cruise ship for tourism purposes.
- (f) “Free and Easy Tours” or “Do-It-Yourself Tours” refer to flexible tours wherein Cruise Passengers make their own itineraries upon disembarkation and book their desired services such as, but not limited to, activities, transportation, or tour guide on-site.

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- (g) "Health Declaration Form" refers to a form that a person must fill-up, whether through a mobile application or other contactless means, to declare his or her current health condition and travel history for the past fourteen (14) days substantially following the template in Annex A-1 of the DTI-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04-A.
- (h) "Minimum Public Health Standards" refers to guidelines set by the DOH under Administrative Order No. 2020-0015, as well as sector-relevant guidelines issued by national government agencies as authorized by the IATF, to aid all sectors in all settings to implement non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI), which refer to public health measures that do not involve vaccines, medications or other pharmaceutical interventions, which individuals and communities can carry out in order to reduce transmission rates, contact rates, and the duration of infectiousness of individuals in the population to mitigate COVID-19. For this purpose, the Department of Tourism and Department of Public Works and Highways are recognized as the sector-relevant agencies with respect to tourism and construction, respectively. (*IATF Omnibus Guidelines*)
- (i) "New Normal" refers to the emerging behaviors, situations, and minimum public health standards that will be institutionalized in common or routine practices and remain even after the pandemic while the disease is not totally eradicated through means such as widespread immunization. These include actions that will become second nature to the general public as well as policies such as bans on large gatherings that will continue to remain in force. (*IATF Omnibus Guidelines*).
- (j) "Personal Protective Equipment" or PPE refers to protective garments or equipment worn by individuals to increase personal safety from infectious agent. (*DOH DM No. 2020-0439*).
- (k) "Physical Distancing" or "Social Distancing" refers to the strict maintenance of a distance of at least one (1) meter radius between persons (*Memorandum from the Executive Secretary dated 13 March 2020*).
- (l) "Shore Excursion" refers to a tourism activity conducted in conjunction with a cruise, whereby Cruise Passengers are allowed to disembark from a cruise docked in a port of call, and undertake off-site sightseeing activities.
- (m) "Shore Excursion Program" refers to Shore Excursion packages sold by cruise lines or Tour Operators to Cruise Passengers.
- (n) "Shore Excursion Handlers" refers to the Tour Operators and agencies responsible for the Shore Excursion Programs or tours during disembarkation during a cruise call.
- (o) "Shore Excursion Suppliers" refers to accommodation establishments, supplier of food and beverage, souvenirs, health and sanitation equipment, transport providers local Tour Operators, and Tour Guides involved in the conduct of the Shore Excursion Programs.
- (p) "Tour Guide" refers to an individual who guides tourists, both foreign and domestic, for a fee, commission, or any other form of lawful remuneration.
- (q) "Tour Operator" refers to any person or entity engaged in the business of inbound and/or local tour operation such as organizing and/or conducting tours as well as making online reservations, arranging and booking for transportation and accommodation for a fee, commission, or any form of remuneration

**Section 3. Scope and Application.** This Circular shall apply to all Shore Excursion Handlers and Suppliers who will be offering Shore Excursion Programs in the Philippines in areas where a

Community Quarantine is no longer in place.

## II. PRE-EXCURSION POLICY

**Section 4. Shore Excursion Itinerary.** The Shore Excursion Itinerary must include only destinations that are low risk or with zero or minimal cases of COVID-19 as identified by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF-EID).

**Section 5. Coordination with Local Authorities.** Shore Excursion Handlers shall coordinate with local government units (LGUs), tourism officers, and local health authorities at least one (1) month prior to the arrival at the port of call. Local protocols on tour group handling, travel advisories, airport and seaport announcements and other related ordinances and circulars shall be considered in planning the activities before finalizing the itineraries. Digital copies of said documents must be made available for all the members of the operations team of the Shore Excursion Handlers.

**Section 6. Shore Excursion Suppliers.** All Shore Excursion Suppliers must be DOT-Accredited, and/or are compliant with the guidelines set by DOT, the IATF-EID or other relevant agencies for their respective businesses or nature of operation. All Shore Excursion Suppliers shall provide a database for all their staff involved in every Shore Excursion operation for possible contact tracing purposes.

**Section 7. Coordination Between Handlers and Suppliers.** Shore Excursion Handlers shall closely coordinate with all Shore Excursion Suppliers or service providers in the entire value chain to implement strict observance of enhanced cleaning protocols, Physical Distancing, and other Minimum Public Health Standards during the Shore Excursion.

## III. BOOKING POLICY

**Section 8. Booking Requirement.** All tours and other services shall be booked prior to arrival at the port of call. Free and Easy Tours and Do-It-Yourself Tours booked on site or upon arrival shall not be allowed.

**Section 9. Cashless Payment.** Cashless methods of payment, online transactions and other options for contactless transactions (e.g. e-itineraries, e-tickets, etc.) that promote minimal physical contact is mandatory.

**Section 10. Undertaking.** The Shore Excursion Handler/s shall secure an undertaking from the Cruise Passengers, stating that they will comply with the terms and conditions of their booking, and they understand that they will not be allowed to join the tour if they are not cleared under the Mandatory Testing or Screening or start to feel unwell before or during the tour.

**Section 11. Medical or Travel Insurance.** The inclusion of a medical or travel insurance covering COVID-19 related risks such as hospitalization, travel disruption, and repatriation, is highly encouraged.

## IV. PRE-DISEMBARKATION

### Section 12. Passenger Arrival Handling

#### A. Mandatory Screening

1. All Cruise Passengers joining the Shore Excursion Program shall be screened through body temperature check using a thermal scanner or thermometer gun prior to disembarkation. Health assessment of Cruise Passengers shall be supervised by medical doctors.

2. Symptomatic Cruise Passengers or those with body temperature exceeding 37.5 degrees Celsius or those exhibiting flu-like symptoms shall not be allowed to disembark and join the tour through the non-issuance of shore pass and shall be transferred to quarantine/isolation facilities in the port.
3. All Cruise Passengers joining the Shore Excursion Program shall complete a Health Declaration and Contact Tracing Form using a mobile application or other contactless means. Accomplished Health Declaration and Contact Tracing Forms shall be handled and processed with confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Privacy Act, and shall be disposed of after thirty (30) days from the date of accomplishment, unless a longer period is required by the authorities.

**B. Passenger Arrival**

1. Arrival receptions, such as cultural or musical performances, donning of leis, and distribution of souvenirs, shall be prohibited to maintain Physical Distancing.
2. Disembarking Cruise Passengers shall be required to wear the proper PPE such as face masks and face shields. Children with ages between two (2) to eight (8) years old must use facemasks under adult supervision to ensure that they can breathe safely and avoid suffocation.
3. The Shore Excursion Handler shall ensure that Physical Distancing is observed by maintaining at least one (1) meter distance among passengers.
4. Cruise Passengers shall be provided with sanitation kits, which should include 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizers, wet wipes, and disposable tissue paper.

**C. Cruise Passenger Briefing**

1. Cruise Passengers shall be briefed on the health and safety protocols, such as the proper wearing of face masks, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, Physical Distancing, proper disposal of wastes and other relevant guidelines imposed in areas included in the itinerary in the transport vehicle before the start of the tour.
2. Cruise Passengers shall be provided with:
  - a. Official up-to-date information about travel to and from countries and/or other areas, including local destinations, that are identified by the Department of Health (DOH) as high-risk in spreading the virus or disease; and
  - b. Emergency contact numbers of public health authorities, nearest hospital or medical center, and the DOH Assistance Center.
3. Cruise Passengers shall be provided with refillable water bottles in the transport vehicle before the start of the tour. Shore Excursion Handlers shall ensure that water refilling stations are available in the attractions included in the itinerary.
4. Signage and visuals, through bulletins or TV screens, shall be available at the ports with terminal buildings showing sanitation and good hygiene reminders, emergency contact numbers, and other "must-do" tips.

**Section 13. Contactless Transaction**

- A. Contactless processes with the Cruise Passengers and Shore Excursion Handlers or



Suppliers shall be strictly observed.

- B. The use of technology such as QR codes, virtual or downloadable maps, or other digital pass/ tickets, to monitor passenger participation or entry and exit in itinerary destinations, that promote minimal physical contact with Cruise Passengers is highly encouraged.

## V. TRANSPORTATION AND CONDUCT OF TOURS

**Section 14. Transportation.** When transporting Cruise Passengers through land transport, Shore Excursion Handlers shall ensure that the health and safety protocols under DOT Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 2020-003 or *The New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Tourist Land Transport Services*, or any of its subsequent amendments, are observed.

**Section 15. Conduct of Tours.** In the conduct of tours, Shore Excursion Handlers shall ensure that the health and safety protocols under DOT MC No. 2020-008 or *The New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Travel and Tour Agencies and Tour Guides*, or any of its subsequent amendments, are observed.

## VI. OTHER PROVISIONS

**Section 16. Reportorial Requirement.** Shore Excursion Handlers shall report to the DOT Regional Office with jurisdiction over their area the following information not more than seven (7) working days after the Shore Excursion Program:

- A. List and Number of Cruise Passengers who joined the Shore Excursion Program;
- B. Number of Cruise Passengers who have developed the symptoms of the illness, if any; and
- C. Number of Cruise Passengers who were transferred to the appropriate facility, if any.

**Section 17. Supplementary Application.** DOT MC No. 2020-003, DOT MC No. 2020-008, and other relevant IATF-EITD, DOT, DTI, or DOH issuances on health and safety standards for the New Normal, as well as rules and regulations imposed by the LGU having jurisdiction over the Shore Excursion Handlers, or in the case of Boracay Island, the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF), shall apply to these Guidelines in a supplementary character.

**Section 18. Penalties.** Any violation of these Guidelines may subject the Shore Excursion Handler and Suppliers to the appropriate fines and penalties, including revocation of its DOT Accreditation, in accordance with relevant laws, rules, and regulations.

**Section 19. Separability Clause.** If any portion or provision of this Circular is declared void or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in force and in effect.

**Section 20. Repealing Clause.** All issuances, orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provision of this Circular are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

**Section 21. Effectivity.** This Circular shall take effect immediately upon publication in a newspaper of general circulation or the Official Gazette and upon filing with the university of the Philippines – Office of the National Administrative Register (UP-ONAR) and shall remain effective until otherwise superseded, amended, or repealed accordingly.

For guidance and strict compliance.

23 March 2021

  
BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT  
Secretary

