

No. LCD-B (12)-1/2017  
Government of Himachal Pradesh  
Language, Art and Culture Department

Shimla-171002  
Dated 5<sup>th</sup> Septt, 2020

## ORDER

Whereas, in order to contain the spread of Corona Virus (COVID-19) and for taking preventive, precautionary and pre-emptive measures for social distancing, directions have been issued vide letter No. HFW-A-A(3)-1/2020, dated 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 by the Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Himachal Pradesh prohibiting the entry of general public in the places of religious worship in the State.

Whereas, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued an order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 30-05-2020 under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 extending the lockdown in Containment Zones upto 30-06-2020, and to re-open prohibited activities in a phased manner in areas outside the Containment Zones. The guidelines for phased re-opening (Unlock-I) lays down that religious places/places of worship for public shall be opened with effect from 08<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will issue SOPs for this activity.

And Whereas, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India has issued SOPs on preventive measure to contain spread of COVID-19 in religious places/places of worship on 04<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 and the matter has been under consideration of the State Govt. for quite some time in view of the prevailing situation of COVID-19 in the State.

Now, therefore, after considering the prevailing situation of COVID-19 pandemic and the overall circumstances which necessitate certain restrictions and in exercise of the powers conferred by clause of Himachal Pradesh Epidemic Disease (COVID-19) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020, directions are issued to all concerned to ensure strict implementation of the

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directions of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India as annexed at **Annexeure-A**. In addition, it has been considered appropriate to issue the directions annexed at **Annexure-B**.

These guidelines shall not be diluted in any manner and will come into force w.e.f. **10<sup>th</sup> September, 2020**. Meanwhile, all concerned authorities are directed to make all necessary arrangements for enforcing the guidelines.


  
Additional Chief Secretary (LAC) to the  
Government of Himachal Pradesh

To

1. All Deputy Commissioners of H.P.
2. The Additional Chief Commissioner (Temple)-cum- Director, Language, Art & Culture, Shimla-171009.

Copy to:

1. The Additional Chief Secretary (Health) to the Govt. of H.P.
2. The Additional Chief Secretary (Home) to the Govt. of H.P.
3. All Divisional Commissioners.
4. The Director General of Police, H.P.
5. Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, H.P. Shimla.
6. Sr. PS to the Chief Secretary to the Govt. of H.P. Sheila.

  
Under Secretary (LAC) to the  
Govt. of Himachal Pradesh

4<sup>th</sup> June, 2020

Government of India  
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

SOP on preventive measures to contain spread of COVID-19 in religious places/places of worship

1. Background

Religious places / places of worship get frequented by large number of people for spiritual solace. To prevent spread of COVID-19 infection, it is important that required social distancing and other preventive measures are followed in such premises.

2. Scope

This document outlines various generic precautionary measures to be adopted in addition to specific measures to be taken at particular places to prevent spread of COVID-19.

Religious places/places of worship for public in containment zones shall remain closed. Only those outside containment zones will be allowed to open up.

3. Generic preventive measures

Person above 65 years of age, persons with comorbidities, pregnant woman and children below the age of 10 years are advised to stay at home. Organisations managing the religious institutions to advise accordingly.

The generic preventive measures include simple public health measures that are to be followed to reduce the risk of COVID-19. These measures need to be observed by all (workers and visitors) in these places at all times.

These include:

- i. Individuals must maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet in public places as far as feasible.
- ii. Use of face covers/masks to be mandatory.
- iii. Practice frequent hand washing with soap (for at least 40-60 seconds) even when hands are not visibly dirty. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (for at least 20 seconds) can be made wherever feasible.
- iv. Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed. This involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/sneezing with a tissue/handkerchief/flexed elbow and disposing off used tissues properly.
- v. Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting any illness at the earliest to state and district helpline.
- vi. Spitting should be strictly prohibited.
- vii. Installation & use of Aarogya Setu App shall be advised to all.

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4. All religious places shall also ensure:

- i. Entrance to have mandatory hand hygiene (sanitizer dispenser) and thermal screening provisions.
- ii. Only asymptomatic persons shall be allowed in the premises.
- iii. All persons to be allowed entry only if using face cover/masks.
- iv. Posters/standees on preventive measures about COVID-19 to be displayed prominently. Audio and Video clips to spread awareness on preventive measures for COVID-19 should be regularly played.
- v. Staggering of visitors to be done, if possible.
- vi. Shoes / footwear to be preferably taken off inside own vehicle. If needed they should be kept in separate slots for each individual / family by the persons themselves.
- vii. Proper crowd management in the parking lots and outside the premises – duly following social distancing norms shall be organized.
- viii. Any shops, stalls, cafeteria etc., outside and within the premises shall follow social distancing norms at all times
- ix. Specific markings may be made with sufficient distant to manage the queue and ensure social distancing in the premises.
- x. Preferably separate entry and exits for visitors shall be organized
- xi. Maintain physical distancing of a minimum of 6 feet at all times when queuing up for entry.
- xii. People should wash their hand and feet with soap and water before entering the premises.
- xiii. Seating arrangement to be made in such a way that adequate social distancing is maintained.
- xiv. For air-conditioning/ventilation, the guidelines of CPWD shall be followed which inter alia emphasises that the temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30oC, relative humidity should be in the range of 40-70%, intake of fresh air should be as much as possible and cross ventilation should be adequate.
- xv. Touching of statues/idols / holy books etc. not to be allowed.
- xvi. Large gatherings/congregation continue to remain prohibited.
- xvii. In view of potential threat of spread of infection, as far as feasible recorded devotional music/songs may be played and choir or singing groups should not be allowed.
- xviii. Avoid physical contact while greeting each other.
- xix. Common prayer mats should be avoided and devotees should bring their own prayer mat or piece of cloth which they may take back with them.
- xx. No physical offerings like Prasad/distribution or sprinkling of holy water, etc.to be allowed inside the religious place.
- xxi. Community kitchens/langars / “Ann-daan”, etc. at religious places should follow physical distancing norms while preparing and distributing food.
- xxii. Effective sanitation within the premises shall be maintained with particular focus on lavatories, hand and foot-washing stations/areas.



- xxiii. Frequent cleaning and disinfection to be maintained by the management of the religious place.
- xxiv. The floors should particularly be cleaned multiple times in the premises.
- xxv. Proper disposal of face covers / masks / gloves left over by visitors and/or employees should be ensured.
- xxvi. In case of a suspect or confirmed case in the premises:
- a. Place the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others.
  - b. Provide a mask/face cover till such time he/she is examined by a doctor.
  - c. Immediately inform the nearest medical facility (hospital/clinic) or call the state or district helpline.
  - d. A risk assessment will be undertaken by the designated public health authority (district RRT/treating physician) and accordingly further action be initiated regarding management of case, his/her contacts and need for disinfection.
  - e. Disinfection of the premises to be taken up if the person is found positive.

  
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SOP's for religious places

1. Sanitization of frequently touched surfaces shall be done frequently with sodium hypochlorite solution (1%).
2. The bells may be removed, if feasible or be covered with the clothes to escape the touching by devotees.
3. Pilgrims/visitors should be prohibited/ from entering the sanctum/sanctorum (Garb Grih) of the religious premises.
4. No one shall be allowed to stand for more than a minute in front of the deities.
5. Persons above 65 years of age, persons with comorbidities, pregnant woman and Children below the age of 10 years will not be allowed to stand up in the queues or enter the religious places.
6. District Administration shall appeal to pilgrims to visit religious places only if necessary otherwise stay home and enjoy live darshan/Arti/online Darshan.
7. The movement in the worship hall/premises will not be allowed and if necessary shall be restricted to minimum by barricading.
8. LED Screens at different locations for live Darshan shall be placed, if feasible.
9. An isolation room will be created near the place of religious worship for isolating the symptomatic person(s). Symptomatic persons will be isolated in this room and concerned medical authorities shall be contacted for sampling and further isolation at appropriate facility.

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10. The concerned Chief Medical Officer will make arrangements through local health institution for testing of persons with symptoms in emergency as per protocol of Health Department.
11. No Puja ritual involving touching of devotees shall be done by Pujaris or any other person.
12. No events such as singing of devotional songs, marriages or mundan ceremonies shall be allowed in religious premises.
13. Screening counters at different locations shall be arranged as per requirement.
14. Over night stay in the premises of religious places shall not be allowed.
15. CCTV Cameras for monitoring and recording of daily visitors shall be installed, if feasible.
16. Special provisions for Divyangs for darshan shall be made.
17. No havans/or large gatherings shall be allowed inside the religious place.
18. Adequate stocks of 3 ply masks shall be maintained by the concerned administration.
19. The possibilities may be explored for creation of hand washing facilities at main location and touch free soap dispensers be arranged to avoid the physical contacts.
20. The common place for water logging for dipping feet and taking dip in Sarovar is to be avoided.
21. The provision of hand sanitizer dispensers (not involving touching) shall be made inside and around the places of religious places including at entry & exit gates.

