

South Africa

Disaster Management Act, 2002

Directions Relating to Norms and Standards for Religious Gatherings

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Directions Relating to Norms and Standards for Religious Gatherings

Government Notice 609 of 2020

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Commenced on 1 June 2020

[Up to date as at 28 May 2020]

I, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, hereby, in terms of regulation 37(1)(a) of the Regulations issued in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 ([Act No. 57 of 2002](#)), issue directions in the Schedule hereto relating to norms and standards for religious gatherings.

Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma

Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

1. Definitions

In these Directions a word or expression bears the meaning assigned to it in the Regulations and unless the context otherwise indicates—

"places of worship" means any place or premises usually used for religious purposes; including churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other recognized places of worship;

"Regulations" means the Regulations made in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 ([Act No. 57 of 2002](#)) and published by Government Notice No. R. 480 of 29 April 2020, as amended;

"religious gathering" means a gathering at a place of worship for religious purposes; and

"religious leader" means a person recognized by a religious body as having some authority in that body;

2. Purpose

- (1) The purpose of these directions is to provide for the norms and standards for religious gatherings that are permitted under the Regulations to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19.
- (2) These Directions apply to all religious gatherings and persons entering places of worship.

3. Phased re-opening of places of worship

- (1) Religious gatherings of not more than 50 persons are allowed subject to the conditions outlined in these Directions.
- (2) Religious organisations should, where possible, convene services through virtual platforms (online and social media).
- (3) All religious services may not exceed 2 hours with a 30-minute intermission between services.

4. Health and safety measures at places of worship

- (1) All religious leaders or persons in charge of places of worship must—

- (a) ensure that every person entering a place of worship wears a face mask covering the nose and mouth;
 - (b) develop a plan for gatherings at the place of worship which incorporates measures set out in these Directions and the Regulations; and
 - (c) develop and maintain protocols on how they will ensure that there are no more than 50 persons within the place of worship at a time.
- (2) Every place of worship must implement the following health and safety measures;
- (a) Screen every person entering the place of worship for symptoms associated with COVID-19, namely fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, or difficulty in breathing;
 - (b) require every person to report whether they suffer from any of the following additional symptoms such as body aches, loss of smell or loss of taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, weakness or tiredness; and
 - (c) require every person to immediately inform the religious leader or person in charge of the religious activity if they experience any of the symptoms referred to above while at the place of worship.
- (3) If a person presents with those symptoms, or advises the religious leader or person in charge of the religious activity or person of these symptoms, the person in charge of the religious activity must—
- (a) not permit the person to enter the place of worship; or
 - (b) if the person is already at the place of worship, immediately isolate the person, and assist the person, to make arrangements to be transported, in a manner that does not place other persons or members of the public at risk, for a medical examination and testing;
 - (c) assess the risk of transmission, disinfect the area and, refer those persons who may be at risk for screening and take any other appropriate measure to prevent possible transmission;
 - (d) obtain from the person who is to be isolated, the contact details, including name, address and telephone numbers of the people they have been in contact with since entering the place of worship; and
 - (e) a person who has tested positive of COVID-19 must immediately inform the religious leader of any religious activity he or she has participated in, 14 days prior to the positive test result.
- (4) A person may not enter a place of worship if they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 referred to in paragraphs (2)(a) and (2)(b) above.

5. Social distancing

- (1) Every religious leader or person in charge of the place of worship must ensure that—
- (a) there is no physical contact between persons at the place of worship;
 - (b) there is a minimum of one and a half metres between persons;
 - (c) all social distancing measures and health protocols are adhered to at all times; and
 - (d) singing of hymns is limited to solo performances, or pre-recorded performances during the religious service or activity.
- (2) Where the religious activity, such as preaching or leading worship, cannot be performed with face masks, the distance between persons must be increased to 2,5 meters.

6. Personal protection

- (1) Wearing of face masks is compulsory for the duration of any religious activity.

- (2) Any religious ritual that requires personal contact may not be performed during any religious activity.
- (3) Any person counting offerings or gifts must sanitise their hands before, during and after the counting of offerings or gifts and must ensure that he or she does not touch his or her face during the process.

7. Sanitisers, disinfectants and other measures

- (1) A hand sanitiser must have at least 70% alcohol content, or a generic alternative with a similar sanitising effect, which is in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Health.
- (2) Every place of worship should ensure that—
 - (a) there are sufficient quantities of hand sanitiser available at the entrance of, and in, the place of worship, which all attendees are required to use; and
 - (b) there are facilities for the washing of hands with water and soap.
- (3) Every place of worship should implement measures to ensure that—
 - (a) all surfaces and equipment are cleaned before and after religious activities to ensure that the place of worship is sanitised before the next religious activity commences;
 - (b) that there is no sharing of equipment, objects, or religious scriptures; and
 - (c) all areas such as toilets, common areas, door handles, electronic equipment and objects are sanitised as regularly as possible as required in the circumstances to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

8. Health protocols for places of worship

- (1) Religious leaders and persons in charge of places of worship must ensure that seating arrangements, where applicable, are compliant with social distancing norms.
- (2) A place of worship must keep a register which must be retained for a period of not less than 6 months, with the following details of each person attending the religious activity:
 - (a) Full names;
 - (b) residential address;
 - (c) cell number, telephone number or e-mail address; and
 - (d) contact details of persons living in the same residence as the person attending the religious activity.
- (3) All attendees should be informed about the dangers of COVID-19 and how to prevent it.
- (4) Social activities before and after the religious activity is not allowed.
- (5) Where places of worship remain open to the public for visits, prayer or counselling, the provisions of these Directions apply.
- (6) No substance or liquid may be shared between persons.
- (7) Any person over the age of 60 and persons with co-morbidities are encouraged to continue worshipping at home.
- (8) All funeral services conducted in places of worship must be limited to 50 persons in line with the restriction on funerals as per the Regulations.

9. Commencement

These Directions come into operation on 1 June 2020.