

Containing virus in workplaces pushed

Depending on the operations, consider hiring cleaning and disinfecting services

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As government eases quarantine measures in certain areas, businesses should adopt health standards in the workplace to mitigate the threat of the coronavirus disease and make arrangements for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has developed an action checklist titled “Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work,” a management tool that enumerates practical action helping contain the spread of the pandemic at the workplace.

To assess and manage the risk, the ILO cite the need to have a work plan what to do if a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 is identified at the workplace, including, among others, reporting, monitoring and disinfection in line with the national guidelines.

Businesses can train management, workers and their representatives on measures preventing risk of exposure to the virus and how to act in case of infection.

For high-risk workers, the training should include the correct use, maintenance and disposal of personal protective equipment (PPE).

“Inform workers that each has a right to remove from a work situation that poses imminent and serious danger for life or health, in accordance with national law and laid out procedures and immediately inform their immediate supervisor of the situation,” the ILO checklist said.

Included in the prevention and mitigation measure is organizing work in a way allowing for the physical distancing of at least two meters or six feet from other people as prescribed by the relevant competent authority.

Staff, customers and visitors have to be provided with ample and easily accessible places where they can wash their hands with soap and water, disinfect hands with sanitizers, and in addition, promote a culture of hand washing.

“Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace and make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled,” it said.

“Promote a culture of regular wiping of desks and workstations, doorknobs, telephones, keyboards and working objects with disinfectant and regularly disinfect common areas, including rest rooms. Surfaces frequently touched should be cleaned more often. Depending on the operations, consider hiring cleaning and disinfecting services,” it added.

The management tool also cited the importance of improving exhaust ventilation and providing more clean make-up air to rooms and operations with high risk of exposure to the virus. San Miguel Corp. (SMC) now allows local farmers to sell their produce at Petron stations as part of a pilot program helping farmers.

Two fresh produce stores opened at Petron Katipunan, near La Vista subdivision and Petron Zabarte station in Caloocan. The stores are operated by the Department of Agriculture (DA). The program, which supports the DA’s “Kadiwa ng Ani at Kita” nationwide agri market program, provides farmers a ready market for their products, especially at this time when the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly restricted access to markets. At the same time, it makes fresh, healthy produce more easily accessible to consumers via Petron’s vast network of gas stations.

“During this time of crisis, our farmers, livestock raisers, fishermen and everyone in the agricultural sector, are also unsung heroes. We depend on them for our food supply. And yet, they are also among the most vulnerable to the crisis, especially since quarantine restrictions also impact their access to their traditional markets,” SMC president Ramon Ang said.

“That is why we are grateful to DA Secretary William Dar for giving us the chance to help our farmers through their Kadiwa program. This way, our farmers can still continue their livelihood even during this pandemic,” Ang said.

“At the same time, we will help boost food accessibility for our citizens, who are asked to limit their movement to essential activities during the quarantine,” he added.