

Dos and Don'ts for Sanitation Workers and Supervisors for COVID – 19

In current situation of COVID-19 outbreak wherein the general public dread touching surfaces, sanitation workers are performing duties at the very site of infection. The sanitation workers as part of their various routine activities such as disinfecting hotspots, sanitizing the houses of infected persons, collection of household garbage, cleaning public places and disposal of highly infectious biomedical wastes increases the risk of exposure to Covid -19.

The transmission of COVID-19 virus through respiratory droplets and fomite surfaces is well-proven; therefore anyone dealing with disposal of waste of any kind should take necessary precautions. The following category sanitation staff but not limited to what is mentioned, should take necessary precautions:

- Sanitation workers / Door to door Garbage pickers / Safai Karmachari;
- Rag pickers / Street Sweepers;
- Waste segregators;
- Biomedical Waste Management handlers;
- Other Cleaners.

Steps at Monitoring / Supervisory levels

- Ensure that the sanitation workers are aware of their importance and how essential their services are in limiting the spread of disease.
- Ensure a regular (weekly or fortnightly) briefing of sanitation workers by their supervisor to combat fear and stigma, advise on best practices and address queries related to COVID-19.
- The medical management should take appropriate steps to brief the sanitation staff working in hospitals or medical facility as they have relatively higher risk.
- Encourage them to follow the best practices such as hand hygiene and cough etiquettes even at their homes.
- If someone is having fever and cough or shortness of breath, he/ she or a colleague working together should immediately report to the supervisor.
- Create awareness regarding segregating bio-medical waste from general waste among sanitary workers.
- The supervisor must ensure strict adherence to the Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules, 2016.
- Discourage door to door collection of waste to prevent contact with the infected.

- Ask the workers engaged in door to door collection not to open door/ gates of houses/premises/societies to avoid risk.
- Encourage workers ask the house owners to drop their garbage into the collection cart.
- Focused and contextualized do's and don'ts targeting this special groups needs to be widely circulated in local languages
- Workers shall be provided with adequate PPEs including three layered masks, splash proof apron/ gown, heavy-duty gloves, gum boots and safety goggles; supervisor to keep a track to replenish the supply for PPEs.

Advisory for sanitation workers:

- Carry proper identity cards to establish your identity as essential staff.
- Wash uniforms, duty clothes on daily basis.
- Take regular bath after duty hours
- Wash hands with soap and water immediately after handling human waste or sewage.
- After handling human waste or sewage, wash your hands with soap and water before eating or drinking.
- After handling human waste or sewage, wash your hands with soap and water before and after using the toilet.
- Before eating, remove soiled work clothes and eat in designated areas away from human waste and sewage-handling activities.
- Mask and gloves should be used while performing duty. Avoid touching masks after wearing it.
- Keep open sores, cuts, and wounds covered with clean, dry bandages.
- Sanitize and clean the vehicles, doors and handles commonly touched of the collection vehicle
- Do not mix masks, gloves, tissues, other biomedical wastes. Segregate and dispose them separately as advised.
- In case waste is collected from a COVID-19 quarantined home, the waste must be segregated separately. The treatment and disposal should be as per biomedical waste.
- Always follow Social Distancing or disciplined self-distancing even with your co-workers.
- If someone is sick, he or she must not report to duty.
- If someone at your home/ immediate relatives falls sick, seek immediate medical intervention. Kindly take them to nearest health facility or contact your local healthcare worker or call the local helpline.

- Avoid spitting, smoking, chewing tobacco.
- The medical waste must be incinerated to avoid handling by rag pickers/ recyclers.
- Do not contribute to miscommunication or spreading rumors. Listen carefully and follow instructions and messages conveyed by the government and reliable sources. Contact your supervisor for any support.