

Media Conference Notes 24.03.2020

Possible questions:

How will workers support themselves during the 21 days shut down, or if they lose their jobs due to the Corona Virus?

Remember that a large cohort of workers will remain at work – in emergency services (medical and security personnel) and industries (such as food production and distribution and medical supplies).

For workers who are affected by the 21-day lock-down or become ill, from the side of the Department of Employment and Labour the main support will be as follows:

- In the first instance – activation of Basic Conditions of Employment Act rights to sick leave and annual leave. Thereafter, employers and labour – through Nedlac – have agreed to negotiate special leave conditions.
- For those who fall ill as a result of work, they will be covered by the Compensation Act.
- UIF (Unemployment Insurance Fund) existing benefits for illness, reduced work time and unemployment will then kick in. In addition the UIF will compensate affected workers through a new “National Disaster Benefit”.

This benefit will be de-linked from the UIF’s normal benefit structure. This benefit will be at a flat rate equal to the minimum wage (R3 500) per employee for the duration of the shutdown to a maximum period of three months.

- The TERS programme will be expanded and expedited (Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme) – funded by the UIF to assist distressed companies in the form of subsidies to fund directly workers’ wages. One of the

conditions is that the company embarks upon a turnaround or sustainability programme. TERS will be overseen by the CCMA (Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration). To obtain application forms and all relevant details, please send an email to: infoTERS@labour.gov.za.

- The UIF has produced an Easy Guide of these measures and requirements for distribution to employers – together with contact details in each province.
- We have also given commitments to employers to assist them through payment holidays for UIF and Compensation Fund payments. Remember that this is part of a much larger government programme of assistance to employers through the tax system, traditional funding bodies (eg IDC and government departments) as well as the new Solidarity Fund.
- More generally, in relation to the Corona Virus, as the Department and Nedlac, we have reminded all parties of their responsibilities in terms of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to take all measures to protect the health of employees, including:
 - o Conducting a risk assessment;
 - o Providing the necessary protective equipment, and
 - o To put in place systems to deal with any outbreak in the workplace.

What about workers in the informal sector – not registered for UIF or with the Compensation Fund. How will they be assisted?

Last night the President stated that a 'safety net' would be developed to assist those in the informal sector. This is still a work in progress – but already includes shelters for the homeless and those who are unable to self-isolate.

Can the UIF afford to pay for its expanded commitments?


All undertakings by the UIF are based on actuarial calculations. These will, of course, be updated as the situation unfolds.

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