



ABSTRACT

Disaster Management Act, 2005 - COVID -19 - Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Religious Places / Places for Worship - Orders Issued.

REVENUE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT (DM-II) DEPARTMENT

GO.Ms.No. 326

Dated:30. 06.2020

சார்வரி, ஆனி 16
திருவள்ளூர் ஆண்டு 2051

Read :

1. G.O.Ms.No.172, Revenue & Disaster Management (DM-II) Section, dated 25.03.2020 and addendums issued thereon.
2. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs Letter No.40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 15.04.2020 and 29.4.2020.
3. G.O.Ms.No.193, Revenue & Disaster Management (DM-II) Dept, dated 15.04.2020.
4. G.O.Ms.No.198, Revenue & Disaster Management, (DM-II) Dated 20.4.2020.
5. G.O.Ms.No.215, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dated 30.4.2020.
6. G.O.Ms.No.225, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dated 7.5.2020.
7. G.O.Ms.No.299, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dated 16.6.2020.
8. The Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare F.No.Z28015/19/2020, EMR (Pt) dt. 4.6.2020.
9. G.O.Ms.No.324, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dated 30.6.2020
10. From the Principal Secretary/ Commissioner of Revenue Administration, letter No.OC1/563/2020 Dated.16.06.2020.

ORDER:

In the Government order ninth read above, the Government have issued orders with regard to Extending restrictions in the territorial jurisdictions of the State of Tamil Nadu till 24:00 hrs of 31.07.2020 and extending Complete Lockdown in Jurisdiction of Greater Chennai Police Limit

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and some areas in Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu and Thiruvallur Districts, Madurai Corporation limits and some areas in Madurai District till 24:00 hrs of 05.07.2020.

2. In G.O.Ms.No.324, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dated 30.6.2020, among others only small temples in rural areas with annual income of less than Rs.10000/-, small mosques, darghas, churches and other religious places will be allowed for public worship. These places of worship should adhere to social distancing norms besides following the measures for the containment of the disease. Places of Worship / Religious Places in Corporations, Municipalities, Town Panchayats areas and big places of worship / religious places in village panchayat limits would remain closed for public worship. The places of worship will also remain closed in containment zones and areas where complete lockdown is in force.

3. In the reference 8th read above, the Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have already issued guidelines among others in respect of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on preventive measures to contain spread of COVID-19 in religious places/places of worship for public

4. In the reference tenth read above the Principal Secretary/ Commissioner of Revenue Administration has proposed certain SOP for the religious Places/Places for Worship.

5. The Government after careful examination, hereby issue SOP for religious places based on the SOP issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and also taking into account the local requirements(Annexure). The general 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 the priests, workers, devotees and other visitors in these places.

(BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR)

**K.SHANMUGAM
CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT.**

To
The Principal Secretary/Commissioner
of Revenue Administration, Chepauk, Chennai – 600 005
All Secretaries to Government, Chennai – 600 009
All the District Collectors.
The Commissioner, Greater Chennai Corporation, Chennai.
The Principal Secretary, Tourism, Culture and Religious Endowments
Department, Chennai - 600 009.

The Commissioner, Hindu Religious and Endowments,
Chennai - 600 034.

Copy to

The Hon'ble Chief Minister Office, Chennai-09

The Special PA to Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Chennai- 09

The Special PA to Hon'ble Minister for Revenue & Disaster Management and
Information Technology, Chennai-9.

The Private Secretary to Chief Secretary to Government,
Chennai-9.

/Forwarded By Order/

Deviyam S
20/4/2024
SECTION OFFICER

Annexure

Standard Operating Procedure(SOP) for Religious Places / Places for Worship

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 as and when the religious places are opened for public.** The following SOP is issued for religious places based on the SOP issued by Government of India and also taking in to account the local requirements. The general 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.

Only small temples in rural areas with annual income of less than Rs. 10,000/-, small mosques, darghas, churches and other religious places will be allowed for public worship **from 01.07.2020 in all the areas throughout the State except Greater Chennai Police Commissionerate areas and in Containment zones and from early morning 00 hrs of 06.07.2020 in Thiruvallur District** - all village panchayats in Poovirundhavalli, Eekadu and Sholavaram blocks, in **Chengalpattu District** - all Village Panchayats of Kattankulathur Block and in **Madurai District** - all village Panchayats of Madurai East, Madurai West and Thiruparankundram Blocks. These places of worship should adhere to social distancing norms besides following the measures for the containment of the disease. **Places of Worship / Religious Places in Corporations, Municipalities, Town Panchayat areas and big places of Worship / Religious Places in Village Panchayat limits would remain closed for public worship.**

A. General Preventive Measures

1. Religious places / places of worship for public in containment zones shall remain closed. Only those outside containment zone will be allowed to open up.
2. Person above 65 years of age, persons with co-morbidities, pregnant women and children below the age of 10 years are **advised to stay at home.** Organisations managing the religious institutions to advise accordingly.
3. Individuals must maintain a minimum distance of six feet in public places. They shall also observe physical distancing of a minimum of six feet at all times when queuing up for entry. Individual shall avoid physical contact while greeting others.

4. Use of face covers / masks to be mandatory. All persons to be allowed entry only if using face cover / masks.
5. 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.
6. Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed. This involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing / sneezing with a tissue / hand kerchief / flexed elbow and disposing off used tissues properly.
7. Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting any illness at the earliest to state and district helpline.
8. Spitting should be strictly prohibited.
9. Installation & use of Arogya Setu App is **advised**.
10. Entrance to have mandatory hand hygiene (sanitizer dispenser) and if possible, thermal screening provisions.
11. Only asymptomatic persons shall be allowed in the premises.
12. 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.
13. Proper crowd management in the parking lots and outside the premises - duly following social distancing norms shall be organised. Staggering of visitors be done.
14. Shoes / footwear to be preferably taken off inside own vehicle. If needed they should be kept in separate slots for each individuals / family by the persons themselves with adequate hygiene arrangement.
15. Proper crowd management in the parking lots and outside the premises - duly following social distancing norms shall be organized.

16. **Any shops, stalls, cafeteria etc., outside and within the premises shall follow social distancing norms at all times.**
17. Specific markings may be made with a sufficient distance to manage the queue and ensure social distancing in the premises.
18. Preferably separate entry and exits for visitors shall be organized.
19. **People should wash their hands and feet with soap and water before entering the premises. Necessary facilities shall be provided for this purpose.**
20. Touching of statues / idols / holy books, etc., not to be allowed.
21. Large gatherings / congregation of more than 5 persons continue to remain prohibited.
22. In view of potential threat of spread of infection, as far as feasible recorded devotional music/songs may be played and choir or singing in groups should not be allowed.
23. 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.
24. No physical offerings like prasad / distribution or sprinkling of holy water, etc., to be allowed inside the religious place.
25. **Annadanam /Community kitchens/langar etc., at religious places should follow physical distancing norms while preparing food.**
26. Effective sanitation within the premises shall be maintained with particular focus on lavatories, hand and food washing stations / areas.
27. Frequent cleaning and disinfection to be maintained by the management of the religious place. The floors should particularly be cleaned multiple times in the premises.
28. Proper disposal of face covers / masks / gloves left over by visitors and / or employees should be ensured.
29. 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.
30. Cross ventilation shall be encouraged in all places. For air-conditioning / ventilation, the guidelines of CPWD shall be followed which inter alia emphasizes that the temperature setting of all air-conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30 °C, relative humidity should be in the range of 40-70%, in take of fresh air should be as much as possible and cross ventilation should be adequate.
31. CCTV should be installed, **as far as possible**.
32. Each religious place/place of worship is **advised** to form a Covid-19 Safety Committee to implement and monitor the guidelines issued by the Government.

Additional SOP – Religious Places /Places of Worship

In addition to the general preventive measures, the following additional SOP is suggested for various religious institutions as below :

B. Hindu Religious Places / Places for Worship

Temple :

- ❖ Not more than 20 persons are allowed in an area of 100 sq. meter or 1075 sq.ft.

- ❖ Offering such as coconut, fruits, flowers etc., shall not be allowed.
- ❖ During the pooja and abishekam, general public including donors shall not be allowed to sit inside and witness the event.
- ❖ **In view of the potential health issues, devotees may be discouraged to do prostration / angapradhachanam till normalcy returns.**
- ❖ **As only local pilgrims are expected, rooms/cottages, shall not be allotted for the time being.**
- ❖ **Festival gathering / mass gathering / idol processions of any religious nature shall not be allowed till the normalcy returns.**
- ❖ In and around the premises, 1% sodium hypochlorite solution shall be sprayed, every three hours.
- ❖ **Bhajan or singing shall not be done. Instead, recorded music alone may be played.**
- ❖ Devotees shall not be allowed to enter in the temple tank or pond, if any.
- ❖ **Annadhanam may be allowed in "carry home packets". Similarly Prasadam may be sold in stalls, duly following social distancing norms. But devotees shall not sit and eat prasadam in the temple.**
- ❖ **Whenever marriage takes place within temple premises, the total number of persons attending the event shall not exceed 50, duly following social distancing norms. Marriages will be performed as per Time Slots allocated and only one marriage shall be allowed at a time.**

C. Islamic Religious places / Places for worship

i) Mosque :

- ❖ Ablutions, if any, shall be preferably done at home instead of mosque.
- ❖ The individuals who come to offer prayer to mosque shall bring his own prayer mat and take it back. Common mat shall not be kept or used. Common towels, napkins and caps inside the mosque shall be strictly avoided.

- ❖ Prayers should not be offered by sitting shoulder to shoulder. Two meter (six feet) physical distance shall be maintained while offering prayer and not more than 20 persons can be accommodated in 100 Sq. mtr or 1075 Sq.ft which shall be marked with paint in circle/row/boxes.
- ❖ Staggering of persons should be done to avoid crowd and follow social distancing particularly on Friday for Jumma prayers.
- ❖ Congregational Salath shall be held in convenient number of batches under different Imams as and when necessary.
- ❖ Makhtab, Madarsa or Religious class inside the mosque premises shall not be allowed till normalcy restored.
- ❖ Formation of Halqah, recitation of religious books and any group discussion shall not be allowed in the mosque.
- ❖ Whenever Nikah ceremony takes place in mosque premises, the total number of persons attending the event shall not exceed 50, duly following social distancing norms only one marriage shall be allowed at a time, as per allocated Time Slots.
- ❖ Musallies shall not be allowed to perform sunnath and nawafilis in the mosque.
- ❖ Musallies shall not be allowed to shake hands (Musahifa) or hugging with fellow Musallies.
- ❖ Longer zikr or duwa is restrained for allowing the next Jamath to offer Salath in mosque.
- ❖ Salath timings are to be fixed carefully in order to finish the Farz Salath in one or more batches of Jamath in the permissible time.
- ❖ Farz Salath shall be started only when Musallies have positioned themselves on the marked slots in rows.
- ❖ Fajr and Maghrib Salath need to be commenced and finished in permissible time.
- ❖ Jumma Qutba shall be precise and informative Qutba – Awwal, Saani and Namaz shall be completed in short duration.
- ❖ Mosque shall be opened 15 minutes earlier to Azan.

- ❖ The doors of Masjid shall be closed after completion of Farz Salath.
- ❖ In and around the premises, 1% sodium hypochlorite solution shall be sprayed, every three hours.

ii) Dargha :

- ❖ The doors and windows of the Dargah sanctorum shall be opened and a ribbon shall be circled at 2 meter distance, preventing the devotees to enter the sanctorum of Dargah.
- ❖ Offering such as cloth, flowers etc., shall not be allowed.
- ❖ Devotees shall not physically touch chadar or any other things inside the premises.
- ❖ No offering shall be given to the devotees.
- ❖ In a row of 100 Sq.mtr or 1075 Sq.ft., not more than 20 persons be allowed.
- ❖ Hundi, Golak shall be installed outside the ribbon.
- ❖ Zhande Katta and flag post shall not be allowed to use.
- ❖ In and around the premises, 1% sodium hypochlorite solution shall be sprayed, every three hours.

D. Christian Religious Places / Places for Worship

Church :

- ❖ Ablutions, if any, shall be preferably done at home instead church.
- ❖ Physical distancing norms of 2 meters (six feet) on all sides be scrupulously followed.
- ❖ In a space of 100 Sq. Mtr or 1075 Sq.ft. not more than 20 persons be allowed. Staggering of persons may be done accordingly.
- ❖ No offerings such as flowers etc., be given to visitors.
- ❖ Bell and other objects in the churches shall not be touched by the devotees.

- ❖ The use of liturgical booklets and hymnals shall be suspended.
- ❖ Activities such as Choir and singing shall not be done, instead recorded music alone may be played.
- ❖ All religious practices which include physical contact including eucharist, sprinkling of holy water shall be avoided.
- ❖ **Wherever marriages take place within Church premises, the total number of persons attending the event shall not exceed 50, duly following social distancing norms. Only one Marriage shall be allowed at a time at designated Time Slots.**
- ❖ The offering shall be taken up after the services, with one or several donation boxes placed at designated places.
- ❖ The Government guidelines shall be followed scrupulously for funerals.
- ❖ Church authorities may ensure that the Church goes to avoid socializing before or after the service at the premises in groups and may be asked to leave the premises as the Mass ends.
- ❖ In and around the premises, 1% sodium hypochlorite solution shall be sprayed, every three hours.

E. Sikh Religious Places / Places for Worship

Gurudhwara :

- ❖ The Gurudhwara will display the maximum number of devotees that can be accommodated in the Gurudwara and shall close the gates once devotees occupy the slots.
- ❖ Additional devotees shall not be allowed inside when the space becomes full in Gurudwara.
- ❖ Ablutions, if any, shall be preferably done at home instead of Gurudhwara.
- ❖ Physical distancing norms of 2 meter scrupulously followed.

- ❖ In a space of 100 Sq. mtr or 1075 Sq.ft. not more than 20 persons be allowed. Staggering of devotees may be done accordingly.
- ❖ No offerings such as flowers / candle / incense sticks etc., shall be made.
- ❖ All religious practices which include physical contacting shall be avoided.
- ❖ Shall avoid shaking hands or hugging with fellow devotees.
- ❖ In and around the premises, 1% sodium hypochlorite solution shall be sprayed, every three hours.
- ❖ **Langer may be operated by observing strict social distancing norms, preferably in food pockets.**

F. BUDDHIST VIHAR

- ❖ The Buddhist Vihar will display the maximum number of devotees that can attend pooja in Viharas at a time and shall close the gates once the pooja is completed.
- ❖ There shall not be any distribution of goutham prasadi.
- ❖ Pooja beads shall be disinfected as per guidelines.
- ❖ Individuals can carry hand held prayer wheels, pooja beads etc.,
- ❖ Pooja wheels attached to stupas outer walls shall not be used till normalcy return.
- ❖ During meditation devotees to use their own cloth / prayer mat.
- ❖ In and around the premises, 1% sodium hypochlorite solution shall be sprayed, every three hours.

G. Jains/Parsi Religious places / Other religious groups

- ❖ The organisers will display the maximum number of devotees that can attend the pooja in Basadi at a time and close the gates after pooja.
- ❖ Not more than 20 persons are allowed in an area of 100 sq. meter or 1075 sq.ft. Staggering of devotees shall be done accordingly.

- ❖ Touching of idols, etc., not to be allowed.
- ❖ Offering of flowers, and distribution of prasadam etc., are not allowed.
- ❖ As only local pilgrims are expected, rooms/cottages, shall not be allotted for the time being.
- ❖ **Festival gathering / mass gathering of any religious nature shall not be allowed till the normalcy returns.**
- ❖ Large congregation and singing, dancing, religious discussions before a crowd is prohibited.
- ❖ Meditation hall, if any, should be well ventilated, and maintained with adequate social distancing.
- ❖ In and around the premises, 1% sodium hypochlorite solution shall be sprayed, every three hours.

**K.SHANMUGAM
CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT.**

/True copy/


SECTION OFFICER

