



### **Abstract**

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

#### **REVENUE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT [DM IV] DEPARTMENT**

**G.O.(Ms)No. 451**

**Dated: 31.08.2020**

சார்வரி, ஆலவணி 15  
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) G.O.Ms.No.245, Revenue & Disaster Management (DM-II) Dept, dated: 18.05.2020.
- 3) G.O.Ms.No.262, Revenue & Disaster Management (DM-II) Dated 31.05.2020.
- 4) GO.Ms.No.263, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dated 31.05.2020.
- 5) GO.Ms.No.324, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dt:30.06.2020.
- 6) GO.Ms.No.326, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dt.30.06.2020.
- 7) From the Principal Secretary/Commissioner of Revenue Administration, Letter No.OC1/563/2020 Dated 16.6.2020.
- 8) GO.Ms.No.396, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dt.31.07.2020.
- 9) GO.Ms.No.447, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-IV) Department, dt.31.08.2020

**XXXX**

#### **ORDER:**

In the reference 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> cited, the Government have issued orders with regard to the guidelines to be followed during the lock down period in adherence to the notifications issued by Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India from time to time. In the reference 9th cited Government have ordered that all religious places/ places of worship across the State shall be allowed for public worship.

2. The Principal Secretary and Commissioner of Revenue Administration has stated that in G.O.Ms.No.324, Revenue and Disaster Management (D.M.II) Department, dated 30.06.2020, 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. In continuation to this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for sample temple, mosques, dargahs, churches and other 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 has been released.

3. Now the Principal Secretary / Commissioner of Revenue Administration has sent a draft SOP for the big religious places / places for Worship.

4. The Government after careful examination, hereby issue **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for All Religious Places/ places of Worship**. 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 and Culture Department, Chennai-09

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 Minister for Revenue & Disaster Management and Information Technology, Chennai-9.

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

/Forwarded By Order/

*g. Shanmugam*  
21/5/20

**SECTION OFFICER**

**Annexure**  
**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for All places of Worship /**  
**Religious Places**

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.

2. Earlier, only small temples with annual income of less than Rs.10,000/-, small mosques, darghas, churches and other religious places in rural areas were 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, Chengalpattu and Madurai Districts vide G.O.Ms.No.324, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM-II) Department, dated 30.6.2020. Accordingly, necessary Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been released by Government vide G.O.Ms.No.326, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM II) Department, dated 30.6.2020 based on the SOP issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

3. Now, all Places of Worship / Religious Places across the State will be allowed for public worship from 1.9.2020. Hence, these places of worship should adhere to social distancing norms besides the following measures for the containment of the disease.

**4. The maximum number of devotees permitted for darshan/worship per day shall be fixed and limited number of persons only shall be allowed inside the religious places/ places of worship and Sanctum Sanctorum at a single point of time.**

**5. Public worship will be allowed in religious places/ places of worship only upto 8.00 PM.**

## I. 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 even when queuing up for entry. Individual shall avoid physical contact while greeting others.
4. Use of face covers / masks to be mandatory. All persons are 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 the 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 are 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. Any shops, stalls, cafeteria etc., outside and within the premises shall follow social distancing norms at all times.
16. Specific markings may be made with a sufficient distance to manage the queue and ensure social distancing in the premises.
17. Preferably separate entry and exits for visitors shall be organized.
18. People should wash their hands and feet with soap and water before entering the premises. Necessary facilities shall be provided for this purpose.
19. Touching of statues / idols / holy books, etc., not to be allowed.
20. Large gatherings / congregation of more than 5 persons continue to remain prohibited.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. No physical offerings like prasad / distribution or sprinkling of holy water, etc., to be allowed inside the religious place.
24. Annadanam /Community kitchens/langar etc., at religious places should follow physical distancing norms while preparing food.
25. Effective sanitation within the premises shall be maintained with particular focus on lavatories, hand and food washing stations / areas.
26. 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.
27. Proper disposal of face covers / masks / gloves left over by visitors and / or employees should be ensured.
28. 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.
29. 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. **Air circulation system should allow fresh /treated fresh air with fresh air level more than 50%.**
30. CCTV should be installed, as far as possible.
31. 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.

## **II. 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:

### **A. Hindu Religious Places / Places for Worship**

#### **Temple :**

- ❖ Not more than 20 persons should be allowed in an area of 100 sq. meter or 1075 sq.ft.
- ❖ In bigger temples virtual queue system using tokens shall be put in a place, wherever feasible preferably fixing time slot by way of app/sms by getting details of Aadhar or Identity card number and time slot etc.,
- ❖ Physical distancing of a minimum of 6 feet, should be maintained when queuing up for purchase of dharshan tickets, entry and inside the temple premises as far as feasible. Temple Management may make necessary arrangements for maintaining social distancing norms.

- ❖ 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 (with devotee participation) 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.
- ❖ While tonsuring head, standard precautions as applicable to salons shall be followed.

## **B. Islamic Religious places / Places for worship**

### **i) Mosque :**

- ❖ Ablutions, if any, shall be preferably done at home instead of mosque. Use of Tanks for ablutions should be strictly avoided.
- ❖ 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 standing 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.

- ❖ The Management Committees shall display the maximum number of Musallies who can occupy the slots.
- ❖ 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. The Management Committees shall display the maximum number of devotees who can visit at a time slot.
- ❖ 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.

**C. 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.

**D. 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.

**E. 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.

**F. 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/

*Shanmugam*  
*21/12/2020*  
**SECTION OFFICER**

