

With a number of jurisdictions around the world initiating plans for post coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) lockdown re-opening, the Dubai and Abu Dhabi governments have issued initial guidelines as at 22 April 2020 as to the preparatory steps to be followed by businesses in anticipation of re-opening. The following provides a brief overview of such guidelines.

Dubai

Businesses falling within certain sectors in Dubai have been instructed by the Dubai Economy to take certain measures in preparation for re-opening – the partial implementation of which has been announced with effect from today, 24 April 2020. The first set of guidelines address the precautionary measures to be taken by the businesses falling within the following sectors:

- Wholesale and Retail Trade
- Transport and Logistics
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Social Welfare Services
- Offices and Office Buildings

The guidelines also include precautionary measures for social and cultural activity in the context of the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan (starting 24 April 2020).

In addition to the precautionary measures, the guidelines set forth the activities excluded from the announcement for each sector, as well as the operating hours, consumer visiting hours and permissible capacity levels affecting businesses (as applicable).



Wholesale and Retail Trade

This includes shopping malls, high street stores, souqs and wholesale markets. The closure restrictions will continue to apply to family entertainment, changing rooms, prayer rooms and cinemas, as they will be excluded from the reopening announcement.

Wholesale and retail trade establishments will be allowed to operate for 10 hours per day, with the capacity limited to 30%. Consumer visiting hours will be limited to three hours per visitor.

The precautionary measures are extensive and include 24-hour sanitisation, conducting health checks at mall entrances, including thermal scanning to monitor temperatures, and prohibition on sales and promotional activities. Food and beverages outlets will be obliged to reduce seating arrangements to 30% of their capacity and tables must be at least two meters apart.

With regard to rental, mall owners are encouraged to make retailers pay rental for lease areas in the mall based on a *pro rata* charge for number of hours the mall is operating rather than full day rentals.

Further, the guidelines include an age restriction on mall entry, as individuals above 60 years old and children between three and 12 years will not be permitted to enter shopping malls.

Transport and Logistics

This includes metro, buses and taxis, and excludes water transport, car sharing services (U-drive and E-kar), trams and limo services.

Transport and logistics will be allowed to operate 12 hours per day – the red and green lines on the Dubai Metro will operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

The protocols include the development of permanent crowd management procedures on entrances of public transportation stations, making it mandatory for all staff and passengers to wear masks, limiting the usage of elevators to one or two persons as maximum and continuation of sterilisation practices and activities.

Roads and Transport Authority will issue further guidelines and circulars regarding the operation of the transport and logistics sector once the reopening announcement is declared.

Construction

This includes all construction activities such as construction of buildings, civil engineering and specialised engineering services.

The capacity level for staffing (and transportation used by construction workers) is limited to 50%.

The protocols for construction sites include restrictions on workers movement outside the site, wearing protective personal equipment (including for site visitors) and protocols relating to delivery of materials and removal of waste material.

Dubai Municipality will issue further guidelines and circulars regarding the operation of the construction sector once the reopening announcement is declared.

Manufacturing

This includes all manufacturing activities in the Emirate of Dubai with no exceptions.

As most operations work on 24-hour shifts, the guidelines state that the shifts should be split between day and night. Managerial staff are to work for one shift only and head office and support functions are limited to 30% capacity.

Factories are required to sanitise as often as every two to three hours in all common areas, and labour accommodation is to be disinfected regularly by third party companies. The government will support small- to medium-sized companies and factories that need support to afford the sanitisation measures.

The protocols include quarantine measures for supplies and storage of goods and increasing transportation for workers to and from factories to ensure one passenger per row to maintain the social distancing requirement of two meters.

Factory operators are asked to prepare secondary accommodation to isolate infected employees. The government will be supporting through the provision of government-funded facilities (upon availability) for factories to rent to accommodate quarantined, infected workers for 14 days.

Dubai Municipality will issue further guidelines and circulars regarding the operation of manufacturing facilities once the reopening announcement is declared.

Social Welfare Services

This includes elderly and people with determination care homes, rehabilitation and autism centres, women and children shelters, day care centres and juvenile centres, and elderly clubs, people with determination clubs and counselling and social services (as these could be conducted remotely).

Social welfare services entities will be allowed to operate for nine hours per day with a maximum capacity of 30% in respect of staffing. Remote working will be prioritised for working parents.

The protocols include 24-hour sanitisation for all common areas, health screening at entrances of all social welfare facilities, conducting COVID-19 tests on all new admissions and quarantining them for 14 days, and ensuring two metres' social distancing is maintained in all common areas, including elevators and service desks.

Offices and Office Buildings

The announcement will include all types of offices and office buildings.

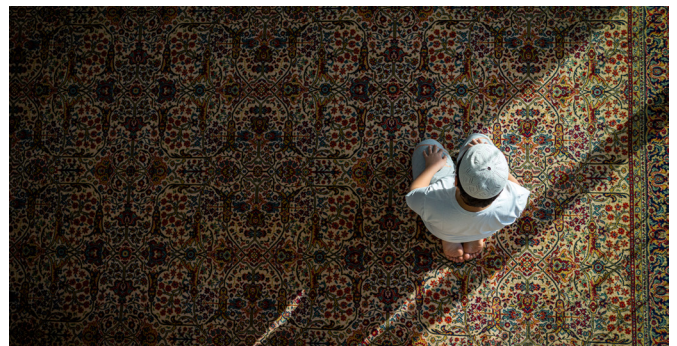
Offices will be allowed to operate for eight hours daily with a maximum capacity of 30% of employees. Employers must ensure that no high-risk individuals are present at work.

The protocols include regular sanitisation of all common areas, conducting health screening on all individuals entering the office buildings, mandating all employees and visitors to wear masks and a limiting physical attendance in meetings to five people with two metres at least between each.

Dubai Municipality will issue further guidelines and circulars regarding the operation of offices and office buildings once the reopening announcement is declared.

Social and Cultural Values

The guidelines also include protocols to be followed during the Holy Month of Ramadan to curb COVID-19 spread. The protocols include limiting Ramadan gatherings to a maximum of 10 people, restriction on food donation activities (these can only take place through authorised charity bodies) and restrictions on gatherings for prayers.





Abu Dhabi

While Abu Dhabi has been under slightly less strict lockdown rules than Dubai, the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development has nevertheless issued circular no. 26/2020 on 22 April 2020 regarding the proposed re-opening of shopping malls in Abu Dhabi.

Shopping malls in Abu Dhabi will be allowed to re-open from noon to 9 p.m. daily (with the exception of supermarkets, pharmacies and foreign exchange, which will be allowed to operate from 9 a.m. to midnight). Restrictions will continue to apply to cinemas, gyms and entertainment venues.

Pursuant to the circular, mall capacity should not exceed 30% and individuals above the age of 60 years old will not be allowed entry into shopping malls. Food and beverage outlets will operate at 30% capacity and are limited to a maximum of four people per table with a minimum of two-and-half metres' distance between the tables.

All mall staff and visitors will be required to wear masks and gloves. Health screening will take place at mall entrances, and all retailers must carry out COVID-19 tests for their staff prior to resuming work at the mall.

Contacts



Campbell Steedman
Managing Partner, Dubai
T +971 4 447 8760
E campbell.steedman@squirepb.com



Sarah Lawrence
Partner, Dubai
T +971 4 447 8718
E sarah.lawrence@squirepb.com



Marwa Al-Siyabi
Associate, Dubai
T +971 4 447 8756
E marwa.al-siyabi@squirepb.com