

Updated Circular on Safe Management Measures Required for Backpackers' Hostels

1. On 20 November 2021, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce (MTF) announced the easing of community Safe Management Measures (SMMs) in a careful and calibrated manner and exiting the Stabilisation Phase into a Transition Phase. In line with this, the Singapore Tourism Board ("STB") has updated the SMMs applicable to hostels.
2. We strongly urge all backpackers' hostels to continue surveillance and monitoring of potential non-compliance within their premises. STB takes a serious view on establishments who do not comply with the SMMs and will continue to impose strict enforcement actions against all establishments who breach them.
3. The information in this circular (which includes its annexes) supersedes that in previous advisories or statements.

Key Updates to Safe Management Measures from 22 November 2021:

Increase in Social Gathering Group Size

1. The permissible social gathering group size will be increased from 2 to 5 individuals, regardless of whether the group members are from the same household.
2. Correspondingly, hostels will be allowed up to 5 individuals (including guests and visitors) to gather on any single day in each private ensuite room when these rooms are sold for leisure. There can be more than 5 individuals if they are all from the same household (i.e. same address). However, the number of individuals per room will still be subject to the maximum number of occupants for the room type, e.g. 2 individuals for a double room. Application to take in leisure guests must be submitted to STB prior and each private ensuite room can only permit one booking.

Dining-in at F&B Establishments

3. Up to 5 vaccinated¹ patrons will be allowed to dine-in together at F&B establishments, regardless of whether the group members are from the same household. Unvaccinated children aged 12 years and below (i.e. born in 2009 or later) may be included within the group of 5 as long as all these children are from the same household. Vaccination-Differentiated SMMs (VDS) concession for individuals who are medically ineligible for all COVID-19 vaccines under the National Vaccination Programme will take effect from **1 December 2021**. Medically ineligible² individuals may also be included within the group of 5 then.

¹ An individual is considered vaccinated if he/ she has been: a) fully vaccinated, i.e. has received the appropriate regimen of World Health Organisation Emergency Use Listing (WHO EUL) vaccines including their respective duration post-vaccination for the vaccine to be fully effective, and had their vaccination records ingested in MOH's national IT systems; b) recovered from COVID-19 i.e. less than 270 days of first positive Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test result obtained in Singapore; or c) has obtained a negative result from an MOH-approved COVID-19 Test Provider on a COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test (ART) or PCR test no earlier than 24 hours before the expected end of the stipulated event.

² To be certified as medically ineligible, individuals may, from 15 November 2021, visit a doctor familiar with their medical condition, or alternatively, any clinic or hospital to obtain a hardcopy doctor-certified memo. Visit go.gov.sg/vdsmminfo for more information.

4. F&B establishments that are not able to ensure that all dine-in patrons are vaccinated will only be allowed to operate take-away and delivery services. F&B establishments will be allowed to play soft pre-recorded music. Entertainment such as live performances, and videos/TV screening will continue to be prohibited. F&B establishments should also remind patrons to adhere to all safe management measures and keep their masks on at all times except when eating or drinking.

Removal of Vaccination-Differentiated SMMs (VDS) for voluntarily unvaccinated individuals

5. Under current rules, unvaccinated individuals can get a PET and show a negative test result prior to entering a VDS setting. **With effect from 1 January 2022, the concessions for unvaccinated individuals to perform PET in lieu of being fully vaccinated will be removed. Only fully vaccinated, recovered or medically ineligible individuals, or children aged 12 years and below will be allowed to enter settings where VDS is implemented (subject also to venue/event-specific caps).**

Hostels must comply with the prevailing Sector Specific Requirements as outlined in Annex A of the hostel circular and advisories of respective agencies.

4. The hostel industry plays a critical role in keeping Singapore safe, and it is imperative that the industry remains vigilant and disciplined in maintaining health and safety protocols.

Testing Regimes for Hostels

5. Fast and Easy Tests (FET) Rostered Routine Testing (RRT)

- a. Since 15 July 2021, regular Fast and Easy Test (FETs) are mandatory for all staff, whether frontline or back-of-house, in the following higher-risk settings:
- Dine-in F&B establishments and settings (e.g. restaurants, club lounge, function rooms, etc).
 - Personal care services (e.g. facial and nail services, spas/ saunas, massage establishments, hairdressing, and make-up services).
 - Gyms and fitness studios where clients are unmasked, and
 - Housekeeping (e.g. laundry, room and public area cleaning).
- b. Staff will not be required to conduct FETs if their business operations are suspended. For businesses that continue to remain open (including F&B outlets that stay open for delivery/takeaways), their staff must continue with the FET requirement.
- c. With effect from 13 September 2021, the mandatory FET RRT regime for staff has been increased to once every week. The Government will subsidise costs for the ART kits and supervisory training under the FET RRT regime until the end of 2021.
- d. For more information on FET, please refer to the [FET notice](#).

6. “Vaccinate or Regular Test” (VoRT) Regime

- a. **With effect from 1 January 2022**, Workforce Vaccination Measures (WVM) will be implemented. Only employees who are fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 within the past 270 days, will be allowed return to the workplace. Unvaccinated employees will not be allowed to return to the workplace unless they have tested negative for COVID-19 with an ART done via a PET at an MOH-approved provider before returning to the workplace. Employers are not obliged to bear the costs of PET for unvaccinated employees. Please refer to MOM's advisory³ for more details on workplace arrangements for unvaccinated employees.
 - b. As all employers transit to the implementation of WVM, **the VoRT regime will cease with effect from 1 January 2022. The testing subsidies for medically ineligible individuals will also cease on the same date.** For avoidance of doubt, those who are medically ineligible for mRNA COVID-19 vaccines will still continue to be eligible for the Government-funded ART kits until 31 December 2021.
7. Vaccination remains critical in our fight against the pandemic. Hostels should also strongly encourage any remaining un-vaccinated employees to get vaccinated and facilitate their vaccination.
 8. Hostels should review and reinforce current SMMs and remind employees to take all the prevailing measures seriously even if they have been vaccinated.

Implementation of Safe Management Measures

9. Hostels are reminded to comply with the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) (Control Order) Regulations 2020⁴ and **the current Safe Management Measures (SMMs), including ensuring that there are no gatherings in the hostel premises and to comply with bedding arrangement whereby single beds are placed 1m apart and bunk-beds are arranged in alternating manner.**
10. For backpackers' hostels who are accommodating long-term guests, any changing of rooms by guests should be disallowed, where practicable. Backpackers' hostels should keep real-time updated records of the guests in each room for expedient contact tracing purposes and ensure charted access to facilities within the hostel premises at all times. All other recreational facilities within the hostel premises, for e.g. TV/Games room, shall continue to be closed until further notice. In addition, all individuals who enter the hostel premises must check in using their TraceTogether app or token.
11. Backpackers' hostels must not allocate accommodation (e.g. accept bookings) to individuals for the purposes of leisure (i.e. provide leisure bookings) without the prior written permission of MTI. Backpackers' hostels with private ensuite rooms (i.e. rooms which have at least one private bathroom) may submit an application to STB for assessment on accepting guests for leisure purposes, such as staycations. Please note that all leisure guests will only be allowed to be accommodated in the private ensuite rooms.

³ <https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/advisory-on-covid-19-vaccination-in-employment-settings>

⁴ <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/COVID19TMA2020-S254-2020>



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Enforcement of Safe Management Measures

12. STB will conduct enforcement checks to ensure compliance with SMMs, including SMMs proposed in the hostel's application. Enforcement action will be taken against offenders who operate without MTI's approval to provide leisure accommodation and/or fail to comply with SMMs.
13. Under the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act passed in Parliament on 7 April 2020, first-time offenders may be fined up to \$10,000, imprisoned up to six months, or both. Repeat offenders may be fined up to \$20,000, imprisoned up to twelve months, or both. Also, under the Act, businesses that are not compliant may be ordered to cease business activities or close altogether. Businesses that do are not compliant may also be ineligible for government grants, loans, tax rebates and other assistance.

Applications to Provide Leisure Bookings in Private Ensuite Rooms

14. Backpackers' hostels that have private ensuite rooms and wish to resume accepting leisure bookings must abide by the following:
 - a. Comply with the Sector Specific Requirements for leisure bookings, which can be found within **Annex A**, and any additional safe management measures (SMMs) proposed by the hostel in its application, over and above compliance with the Control Order and all other applicable SMMs and the Sector Specific Requirements applicable to hostel facilities.
 - b. Submit the application found at **Annex B** to STB via go.gov.sg/localbookingapplication. STB and MTI will take up to 14 working days to assess each application.
 - c. Undergo an inspection scheduled and conducted by STB as part of the assessment process.
 - d. Resume the accommodation of guests for leisure purposes only after receiving approval from MTI. Backpackers' hostels whose applications have been rejected by MTI will not be allowed to resume leisure stays at its premise.
15. In addition, we would like to highlight the following arrangement which approved applicants are to follow (more details can be found in the annexes):
 - a. Each private ensuite room can only permit one booking and **can accommodate no more than 5 individuals in total (including guests and visitors) gathering on any single day in any guest room when these rooms are sold for leisure, except where the individuals are all from the same household (i.e. same address on NRIC), and even then up to the maximum number of occupants for the room type (as per the approved plans by URA and/or SCDF), whichever is the lower**. All hostel guests must be pre-registered prior to being allocated a room.
 - b. Visitors are allowed in the hostels subject to the prevailing social gathering cap or room cap, whichever is lower. Hostels should ensure that they have the means to detect entry of every individual into a guest room, such as through CCTV monitoring or having staff stationed at lift lobbies.
 - c. The bedding requirements of single beds placed 1 metre apart and bunk beds arranged in a top-down alternating fashion **will not** apply for private ensuite rooms

booked for leisure stays. For avoidance of doubt, if the hostel is not selling the private ensuite room for leisure, and the room is booked by a company for their workers, the current set of bedding requirements shall continue to apply.

- d. Guests staying for non-leisure purposes should not be allocated the same room as guests staying for leisure purposes.
- e. All other recreational facilities within the hostel premises shall remain closed until further notice, for example, TV/Games room. The pantry area may continue to be used by hostel guests; however, each guest should be seated individually and at 1 metre apart from all other guests at all times in the pantry and at common areas such as corridors/ lobbies. There should be no gatherings or inter-mingling within the hostel premises at all times.
- f. The hostel must implement staggered check-in for leisure guests.

Hostels must comply with the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) (Control Order) Regulations 2020; all prevailing Sector Specific Requirements as outlined in Annex A of the hostel circular; and advisories of respective agencies.

16. Hostel operators must also explain how they will address key outcomes in their application to STB, to reduce potential transmission risks and support contact tracing efforts. Risk factors for hostels to consider include proximity between guests, propensity for crowds to form, level of activity and number of high-touch surfaces. Each application must show how the hostel will achieve all the following key outcomes:

Outcomes
<p>Ability to meet density requirements</p> <p>Limit occupancy to no more than 1 person per 10sqm guest-accessible public space per person (excluding hostel staff) at any point in time, where practicable.</p> <p>Implement more stringent SMMs at areas where guests and staff spend more time, as opposed to areas which see more transient traffic.</p>
<p>Reduce face-to-face mingling among guests, between employees and between staff and guests</p> <p>Stagger timings for guests to be at hostel lobby and guest facilities, and employees at back-of-house work environment.</p>
<p>Ability to disperse crowds and prevent bunching</p>
<p>Mandatory implementation of Trace Together-only SafeEntry</p>
<p>Implement rigorous cleaning and disinfecting regimes, particularly for high touch elements</p>

17. The application must also detail plans addressing operational areas such as SMMs for workplaces, response plans (to handle unwell guests, suspected/confirmed cases), and marketing and communications plan for re-opening.



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18. Hostels whose applications have been approved must submit the following information:
- Submit a set of required data every Friday before 10am via go.gov.sg/covid19-hotelupdates. This information will be used only as internal reference for public policy purposes and will not be shared with other hostels.
 - Submit the number of staff who are working on-site within 2 weeks of the date of resumption of on-site operations for leisure bookings following approval from MTI via <https://covid.qobusiness.gov.sg>.

Inform STB immediately whenever there is a positive COVID-19 case at the hostel⁵, providing such particulars of the case as may be requested by STB.

Eligibility as a SingapoRediscovered Vouchers merchant

19. Backpacker's hostels with private ensuite rooms which have received MTI's approval to accept leisure bookings will be eligible to participate in the SingapoRediscovered Vouchers scheme if the hostel is licensed under the Hotels Act and SG-Clean certified. To be whitelisted as a merchant, you will need to abide by the Merchant Terms and Conditions. Please reach out to STB if you meet the eligibility criteria and would like to be whitelisted.

Thank you.

SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD

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⁵ Includes guests and visitors that have patronised or visited the hostel, and hostel staff.