

Business Continuity and Ensuring Employee Safety: NASSCOM Advisory

COVID-19 has been an unprecedented crisis unlike any other. Central and state governments are putting in phenomenal efforts to ensure the safety of citizens and provide support to the impacted.

It has been well articulated that social distancing is the only way for India and other countries to flatten the curve and hence there have been advisories on work from home, staying indoors and isolate yourself to the extent possible.

Post the PM address and the PIB advisory on private sector employees to work from home except for essential / emergency services, NASSCOM has been working with different state governments and central ministries to communicate that the IT-ITeS industry in India is an engine enabling many of the essential and critical function in India and globally, Hence, it is important to ensure that these services can continue to function, as many of them cannot be done in a Work from Home environment.

The state governments have been very supportive to the industry and have for the moment issued advisories in Karnataka, Maharashtra and in other cities previous orders have not been rescinded. However, the intent is to encourage Work From Home on a large scale with focus on health and safety of employees while running the business. Please do check the latest advisory applicable in your city.

While, the government has been extremely supportive, they have also emphasized that the trust they have reposed in the industry should be followed in letter and spirit. Hence, NASSCOM is advising its members on the following:

1. The OSP work from home guidelines were announced on 13 March and since then companies have been preparing their infrastructure to enable work from home. We recommend that in the next 2-3 days, please shift all equipment (desktops etc) from your offices as necessary to enable your employees to work from home. Test all the networks and preparedness to ensure business continuity. Do keep your clients updated on all the steps you are taking to ensure confidentiality as per the terms of your contract.
2. Since a small percentage of the staff will still need to come to work, please ensure that only mission critical functions that cannot be enabled from home due to issues of high sensitivity, network latency are operational from office. Each company should put in place a matrix to define what these services are, and senior leadership / ops team should approve such requests.
3. Employees being asked to come to work should be clearly communicated why they need to be at office, why their contribution is important and how the organization is looking after their safety and health. Escalation contact details should be published in such communication and relevant teams should be in constant touch with these employees to assuage their concerns or issues if any.

4. All workplace areas should be deep cleaned, sanitizers and masks be provided to employees that are coming to office and public transportation be avoided to the extent possible. Medical facilities should be available as needed and employee seating should be managed with social distancing norms. Cafeterias, gyms and common areas should be closed.
5. This situation being a potentially extended one with possibility of complete lockdown, companies are advised to consult their legal experts and examine all contractual clauses including force majeure applicability to their customers.

It is important to reiterate that we need responsible leadership at times of a global crisis like this and each of the NASSCOM members must respect the trust that the government has on our sector and go all out to use the permissions only for work that is mission critical.

NASSCOM teams across regions are in constant touch with members and will try their best to support all legitimate requests. A list of NASSCOM leaders across regions is provided below for quick reference.

We look forward to your support. Together as an industry and leaders, we will emerge stronger from this crisis.

For queries, please get in touch with the NASSCOM POCs for different regions mentioned below.

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NASSCOM's previous advisories on the CORONAVIRUS Issue:

1. CORONAVIRUS – ADVISORY UPDATED
20th March, 2020
https://www.nasscom.in/sites/default/files/uploads/corona/Advisory_Coronavirus_20032020.pdf
2. CORONAVIRUS Advisory
05th March, 2020
https://www.nasscom.in/sites/default/files/uploads/corona/Advisory_Coronavirus_05032020.pdf