

# Employers baffled by latest SOPs for workers

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**KUALA LUMPUR (Aug 26):** Employers are baffled by the latest standard operating procedures (SOPs) issued by the National Security Council for regions in Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the National Recovery Plan (NRP).

MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said the new SOPs for Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the NRP do not make sense as they contradict the government's policy to ease movement of vaccinated individuals and the critical need to address the priorities between saving lives and livelihoods.

He cited the quarantine period for staff to work off site as an example.

“During MCO 1.0 when vaccines were not fully rolled out, the quarantine period for staff to work off site was only three days. But based on the latest SOPs, the quarantine period is now extended to 14 days and this applies to fully vaccinated employees," he said.

“Employers in the manufacturing, construction, mining and quarrying sectors in the concerned regions are now required to test all employees once every fortnight including the fully vaccinated, and this is at the cost of the employers.

“Given the cost of RTK Antigen test kits at RM40 each, a manufacturer with 1,000 employees would have to pay RM80,000 to test all employees every two weeks. In a month, the cost would amount to RM160,000, just for test kits.

“Then there’s the loss of productivity due to the unreasonable disruptions, the stress to logistic operators, and not to mention rising anxiety levels among staff who are required to provide samples every two weeks," he said.

MEF members are also perplexed by the requirement to test all employees contrary to the policy to test symptomatic employees only, and to exclude asymptomatic individuals.

“Businesses are just opening up with no jobs yet in hand while having to deal with collection and cash flow issues. The latest SOP will just kill more businesses.

“Adding additional cost and stress to businesses at a time when businesses cannot even pay salaries and overheads is too much. This is not right,” said Syed Hussain.

“We urge the policy makers to place themselves in the business operation position before making additional cost decisions. Let’s all be practical and safe and not just introduce policies that don’t affect the policy makers, but harmful to business,” he added.

*Edited by Kang Siew Li*