DRAFT EMPLOYEE COMMUNIQUE – COVID-19 SHUTDOWN

Dear [Employee],

The global pandemic caused by the coronavirus Covid-19 has already disrupted how we live, interact with one another and now, how we work. In an attempt to slow down – and ultimately stop – the spread of the virus, the South Africa President announced that the country would be placed in lockdown for a period of 21 days beginning midnight on Thursday 26 March 2020 and anticipated to end at midnight on 16 April 2020.

This means that majority of citizens are required to stay at home and that businesses, including ours, will have to [suspend normal/shutdown] operations to comply. This creates challenges for our business in terms of continuity and sustainability as the closure will have serious negative impacts on our ability to generate revenue.

In the interest of transparency, and to provide clear guidance to all employees, please note the following impacts of the lockdown:

**Work Requirements**

For some employees – largely those involved in [production] - this means that work will be suspended totally for the period of the shutdown. For others, remote working will be required to ensure that, as far as possible disruption to clients is minimised. Employees who are expected to work from home will be notified individually and will be required to work in accordance with [company name] Work from Home guidelines.

Employees will be notified by their [Line Manager] of their work requirements, during this period.

**Pay & Benefits**

During this period the company [is/is not] in a position to continue to pay our employees as normal. We appreciate the stress that this places on employees and will do all that we can to alleviate financial pressure using the following mechanisms:

[*Utilisation of Annual Leave*]

[Insert details as applicable including any planned requirements for “work back” upon return for leave advanced by the company. Reference any agreements that would be required to be acknowledged]

[*Application for Covid-19 Temporary Relief Scheme via UIF*]

The company will apply on behalf of all employees who are subject to “no work, no pay” during this time, for the Covid-19 Temporary Relief Scheme from UIF. The scheme will enable companies to apply, on behalf of all affected employees, to qualify for income replacement during the shutdown due to lockdown. The payment value will be calculated on the UI sliding scale (38 – 60%) of normal salary with a minimum payment of R3500 in line with National Minimum Wage. This replacement will be available for the period of lockdown, up to a maximum of three (3) months.

Our company has opted to choose Payment Mode [1/2/3/4] and this means that your Covid-19 temporary relief payment will be paid into your normal bank account as follows:

[Directly by the Employer (utilising funding from UI) / Directly by the Bargaining Council / Directly by UIF]

**Communication**

We will continue to communicate with all employees during the lockdown period, providing updates on the situation and how this affects [company name] operations and planned return to normalcy. Communication will be done primarily via [insert method, presumably text?]. We therefore urge all employees to ensure that their personal information, specifically cellphone numbers, are updated with [HR/Line Management].

We further request employees to maintain contact with the company to advise of any developments on your side, most especially if you, or anyone in your immediate circle, tests positive for Covid-19. You are reminded that the virus has been declared a “notifiable disease” and you are obligated to report to both the authorities and your employer. Your contact person in this regard is [insert name & contact details]. Rest assured that information will be treated confidentiality but is critical for the safe management of the virus and mitigation of its spread.

**Managing Your Health**

We find ourselves in strange times as we face the Covid-19 pandemic and must all do our parts to stop the spread of the virus. In this regard we ask you to:

* Act responsibly and ensure that you fully comply with the prescriptions of the lockdown period.
* If you must leave home (for essential services as prescribed) maintain social distancing, don’t touch people, avoid crowds and take the necessary hygiene precautions.
* Phone a doctor for further guidance if you show symptoms of Covid-19 (high fever, aching muscles, sore throat, respiratory illness, coughing) OR
* Contact the Public Hotline (0800 029 999) or Dept of Health WhatsApp number – 0600 123 456 (type “hi” to connect)
* Most importantly! Self-quarantine while ill or symptomatic (i.e. keep distance from people you live with until all symptoms have disappeared. You are likely to only get a very mild case if you do get it and may even question whether you have it – but do everything in your power not to pass it on, as the elderly and immune compromised may not be so lucky. Ask others to go to the pharmacy or shop for you).
* Advise your Operations Manager immediately and apply for sick leave in the ordinary manner when ill.

**Return to Work**

Whilst we will monitor the situation as it develops and communicate any changes accordingly, the anticipated completion of the lockdown period is on 16 April 2020 meaning that operations will return to [normal] from [insert date and time].

We wish you and your loved ones well during these unusual times, trusting that you will take all the required precautions including fully observing the lockdown, and want to assure you of our best efforts to safeguard the health and wellbeing of all our employees.