

SAFETY MEASURES FOR MEDIA COVERING THE COVID-19

Overview

1. The World Health Organisation declared the COVID-19 a global pandemic and urged governments around the world to act swiftly in putting in place prevention and management measures.
2. In Kenya, the President, following detection of three positive cases announced measures aimed at containing the situation and mitigating the effects, including imposing a curfew between 7 pm and 5 am.
3. The Ministry of Health continues to issue factual and authoritative information on the same including contacts in case of emergencies. It gives regular updates and briefings on the same (0800721316-toll free/0729471414/0732353535).
4. It's a developing story that's likely to be with us for the long haul, thus requiring media coverage for some time, therefore we must be prepared.



Factual Reporting

1. Focus should be on the individual protection of those exposed, affected and infected. Societal safety and related coping mechanisms and factual reporting of the science of the outbreak in a way that minimizes harm to the society



2. Remember as journalists to:

- Seek and report the truth on the Corona virus outbreak
- Minimise harm to individuals, the society and the scientific community
- Be transparent and accountable to yourself, the community, Kenyans and the nation
- Be independent and professional in your reporting of the Coronavirus

Risk Analysis

1. Journalists and media practitioners assigned to cover the Coronavirus stories must do a risk analysis to ensure not only their safety, but the safety of their families, colleagues and the community.
2. Do risk analysis to assess your safety, level of exposure (visiting health facilities, interviews with suspects or those with high exposure to the virus) and discuss with your immediate supervisor.
3. No Forced assignments. Your life matters!

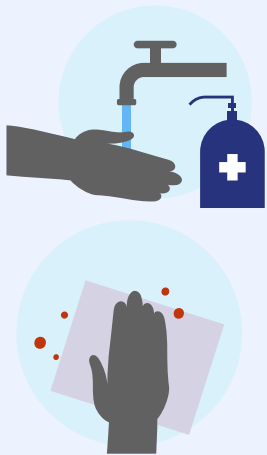


Live Interviews and Programmes



1. Minimise live interviews and those that require sharing of microphones. Limit yourselves to interviews done via phone when possible.
 - Where face to face interviews must be done, keep at a distance of one to two meters between yourself and the interviewee
 - Provide an extra microphone, which must be disinfected immediately after use.
2. Don't place your equipment on the ground or on surfaces when in an infected zone or highly exposed environments including isolated health facilities.
3. Equipment such as cameras, recorders and microphones which are widely shared amongst staff must be disinfected using fast acting microbial wipes, before and after every use and their operators required to wear gloves.
4. Programmes that require studio audience presence should be stopped.
 - Where audience must appear, guests must be seated at least one meter from each other.
 - This protocol also applies to the distance between the anchor/host and the nearest guest.
 - Anchors/Radio hosts must wash their hands before and after their show and avoid touching their faces at any time.

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Media Managers

1. Sanitisers must be put at all entrances to the media houses with special consideration being given to studio entrances.
 - Guests and anchors must clean their hands before entering the studio.
 - Crews must wash hands with water and soap before and after each production and where necessary put on masks and gloves.
2. Editing benches, computers, mixers in the gallery and other equipment must be disinfected before and after every production or editing session.
3. As a golden rule, treat the victims of the coronavirus with dignity and respect their right to privacy. Minimize interviews with them, photos of victims should be avoided and their names excluded from stories to minimize unnecessary exposure.

Self-Care

1. Journalists who have reported from active outbreak zones are required to stay away from the office or interacting with news sources, family members and others for a period of 14 days. Alert relevant offices immediately you feel unwell.
2. The Ministry of Health has advised on the use of masks. Please adhere to the guidelines to minimise exposure levels.
3. Ensure you track your stress levels and seek for assistance should you feel the trauma is taking a toll on you. MCK is on standby to assist.



Practical Steps for Journalists to, Reduce Threats and Risks



These tips have been adopted from several internal editorial and safety guidelines from media houses in Kenya, MCK safety guidelines and international best practices.