VIC MEETING GUIDELINES: COVID-19

Guidance for organizers holding meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last updated 24 July 2020
For further advice, contact VIC Medical Service medical-admin.contact-point@iaea.org

BACKGROUND

Coronaviruses are a large family of respiratory viruses. Some cause less severe disease, such as the common cold, and others more severe disease, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The current coronavirus pandemic is still ongoing; it is passed from human to human primarily by asymptomatic and symptomatic (micro-)droplet spread. Whilst many cases will result in a mild illness, a small percentage progress to more severe illness and pneumonia. The current COVID-19 risk assessment for the IAEA Headquarters in Vienna is LOW. This is because the host country has implemented a range of screening, contact tracing and isolation measures that are likely to be very effective in limiting the spread.

PREVENTION AND GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

Influenza may present more risk to attendees in the autumn/winter season than COVID-19. The guidance for influenza or any of the respiratory viruses applies equally to COVID-19, as below.

1. Avoid being exposed to respiratory viruses
   - Avoid close contact with people who are ill with fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
   - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently — this is one of the most effective measures.

2. Avoid spreading respiratory viruses if you are unwell
   - Stay at home or in your accommodation if you become unwell, develop a fever or have other respiratory symptoms. Seek medical care but first call ahead.
   - Maintain your distance from others — at least 1m.
   - Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing and use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of the tissue after use. If you do not have a disposable tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
   - Wear a mask when required.
   - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently — especially after coughing, before preparing food or eating, after toilet use, after contact with ill persons, or during exposure to high traffic public areas.

HEALTHCARE FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

For respiratory illness: A participant who is unwell with fever, cough or other respiratory symptoms is most likely to have a more common illness (the common cold or even influenza) not COVID-19. They should be advised simply to seek care from a healthcare provider, of which there are many in the city. In the unlikely event that they have fever, cough, respiratory symptoms or loss of taste and
smell and had close contact to a confirmed case or cared for someone with COVID-19, they may be considered a suspected COVID-19 case. Organizers (but not individual participants) should call the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22224) during business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For participants with acute or severe symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, such as fever, weakness or respiratory symptoms, during a conference or in the meeting room: Organizers should call the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22222) or call the Security Emergency Operations Centre (ext. 99). Security Officers have been briefed on specific procedures, and the clinical staff of the VIC Medical Service clinic have the appropriate protective equipment, procedures and training to manage ill participants and suspected cases. They will also advise on any necessary clean-up in the meeting room.

For medical emergencies: Organizers should call the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22222) or the Security Emergency Operations Centre (ext. 99). The Security Emergency Operations Centre will then mobilize a VIC medical emergency team.

For all other medical issues: Organizers should advise participants who are unwell for any reason to either go to a local urgent care clinic or, for an emergency, call the Vienna emergency number on 144. The VIC Medical Service is located in the F tower, 7th floor, and is open on weekdays for consultations/appointments by telephone from 8 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. It provides first aid, urgent care and advice on seeking care from Vienna City healthcare providers, but does not provide prescriptions or replacements for prescriptions.

Contact: medical-admin.contact-point@iaea.org; Clinic reception — ext. 22224.

For assistance after hours: For respiratory symptoms related to COVID-19 call the Vienna Health telephone on 1450 (German and English). For emergencies, call the Vienna emergency number 144; for all other medical issues seek out a local urgent care clinic (example: Akutversorgung Privatklinik Döbling, Heiligenstädter Straße 55–63, 1190 Vienna: +43 1 360 66-5599) or go to an emergency department of any general Vienna hospital.

SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR MEETINGS AT HEADQUARTERS IN VIENNA

As of 1 July, indoor events with assigned and marked seats with up to 250 people (as of 1 August, up to 500 people) are permitted. Event organizers and administrative staff are not to be included in these maximum numbers.

Fundamental rules for meetings:

A distance of at least one metre must be maintained at meetings with assigned and marked seats. If this distance cannot be maintained due to seating arrangements, every second seat must remain vacant, unless the risk of infection can be minimized by other suitable protective measures (i.e. wearing masks).

When entering the VIC as well as whenever a minimum of one metre distance cannot be maintained when in the building (for example in the elevators) a mechanical protective device covering the mouth and nose area (either a face mask or a face shield) must be worn. Masks do not have to be worn by participants once they are sitting in their assigned seat, or by speakers. If the
distance to the next occupied seat is less than one metre, a mechanical protective device covering the mouth and nose area/mask must also be worn on the assigned seats.

BEFORE THE MEETING
Organizers should:

- For indoor meetings with 100 or more participants:
  o appoint a COVID-19 representative
  o develop and implement a COVID-19 prevention concept (see points above).
- For indoor meetings with fewer than 100 participants, prepare the attendance list and/or assigned seating plan (archived for 28 days; to be treated as confidential unless contact tracing is necessary).
- Distribute the document Guidance for participants of meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic and the flyer COVID-19 QUICK GUIDE: How do I avoid getting sick?
- Seek the most current guidance or specific issues from the VIC Medical Service.
- Communicate clearly to participants that no one who is ill should attend the meeting.
- Communicate that physical distancing and wearing a mask/nose-mouth cover will be key prevention measures. Face masks will not be provided. Note that participants will be asked to wear a face mask or nose-mouth cover when accessing the premises and whenever a physical distance of at least one metre cannot be maintained.
- Communicate a “no handshake” meeting policy.
- Organize a cleaning protocol and availability of hand sanitizers.
- Ensure that proper air conditioning/ventilation is available, checked and maintained.
- Ensure that there is an operational procedure to take care of any suspected COVID-19 case and for subsequent tracing of close contact participants (name, address, telephone, email).
- Consideration should also be given to providing videoconferencing capability for participants and presenters who are not able to attend in person.

DURING THE MEETING
Organizers should:

- Provide an introductory briefing (see below).
- Make available in the meeting room copies of the document Guidance for participants of meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic and the flyer COVID-19 QUICK GUIDE: How do I avoid getting sick?
- Remind participants of the information provided on risk and preventive measures (including handwashing and cough etiquette advice).
- Inform participants that hand sanitizers are located throughout the VIC and indicate the location of the hand sanitizer nearest the meeting room.
- Remind participants to wear face masks as required and to avoid group gatherings (e.g. coffee breaks, close contact risk scenarios).
- Monitor and check the attendance list or assigned seating plan and record any changes.
- Communicate the contact tracing procedure in case a participant becomes unwell, either in the meeting or afterwards.
- Be prepared to work closely with local health authorities in case of necessary contact tracing in association with a COVID-19 case, which will be assisted by the VIC Medical Service

AFTER THE MEETING
Organizers should:

- Archive the attendance list or assigned seating plan for 28 days (to be treated as confidential unless contact tracing is necessary).
Be prepared to work closely with local health authorities in case of necessary contact tracing in association with a COVID-19 case, which will be assisted by the VIC Medical Service.

**Introductory briefing by the Chair of the meeting to participants**
VIC Medical Service suggests something along these lines:

“As you are aware, the World Health Organization has declared the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. Whilst the emphasis is on global measures to control the pandemic, individuals can contribute by following the advice to ‘think global, act local’. I urge all attendees to follow the guidance provided by the Secretariat as hosts of this meeting, which includes:

- To strictly not attend the meeting if you are unwell, have a fever, cough or respiratory symptoms;
- To report to the event organizer if you are unwell and have been in an ‘at risk situation’ for coronavirus in the last 14 days. The event organizer (not the individual) will contact the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22222) here in the Headquarters by telephone;
- To undertake regular preventive measures as described in the document *Guidance for participants of meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic* available online and in the meeting room; and
- To wear masks as required.

These measures are for your safety, and to safeguard the wellbeing of us all.”

**FAQs FOR MEETING ORGANIZERS**

**A person with an important role or presenter is unwell. What should we do?**
The person should not attend the meeting and should be provided with support to receive medical advice.

**A participant is coughing and feeling unwell. What should we do?**
The first step is that all other participants should keep the appropriate distance. Encourage the person to wear a nose-mouth cover or medical mask and to seek advice from a healthcare provider.

**A participant is coughing and feeling unwell AND indicates that he had close contact with a confirmed positive COVID-19 case or has a loss of taste and smell. What should we do?**
Encourage the person to wear a nose-mouth cover and contact the VIC Medical Service (ext. 22224) for advice. They will conduct a risk assessment over the phone to determine the next steps.

**In the event someone should be ‘quarantined’, what does this mean?**
This means, the person should:
- Avoid any contacts (stay in their accommodation and at least 1m away from others).
- Minimize the spread of the virus by covering coughs, cleaning surfaces, and washing or sanitizing their hands regularly and wearing a mask if required.
- Seek health advice by phone first before seeing a healthcare provider in person.

**Will hand sanitizers be available?**
Generally, yes. Organizers should contact Facilities Management Services to ensure that hand sanitizers are available.

**Should participants bring and wear their own face masks?**
Yes. Face masks will not be provided. All visitors to the Vienna International Centre will be asked to wear a face mask or nose-mouth cover when accessing the premises and whenever physical distance of at least one metre cannot be maintained at the meeting/conference venue and when entering...
meeting rooms, walking around in meeting rooms and to assigned seats, or when changing seats. While sitting in their assigned seat, participants are not required to wear the nose-mouth cover/mask.

**Is there any other information available?**

For further information we suggest only reliable and up to date sources. We suggest reviewing the ‘Travel Advice’ and ‘Protect Yourself’ sections on the World Health Organization website, which is constantly updated to reflect the most recent guidance.


For local information, see the website of the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.