

Dear Taxpayers

COVID-19

By now you have heard and assimilated the announcement by President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday 15 March, where he declared a national state of disaster following the outbreak of the COVID-19 which has also been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The President calls on all of us as South African's for an extra-ordinary response and as SARS we are taking this opportunity at all times to provide clarity and certainty to our taxpayers in how we move forward in terms of our service offerings.

As SARS, we have to balance the important work we do to collect revenue, facilitate service to taxpayers, travelers and traders, whilst at the same time taking reasonable measures to protect ourselves as SARS officials and yourselves as citizens of the Republic.

Following this, we will be adhering to strict general hygiene as well as social distancing to reduce the spread of the COVID-19.

Following this, we need to inform you of the following changes to our operations:

SOCIAL DISTANCING

We will be adhering to strict social distancing guidelines.

1. Taxpayers are discouraged to come into our branches and are advised to make use of on-line digital channels for all engagements
 - The majority of our business can be done on our eFiling platform: www.sarsefiling.co.za
 - Our mobiApp in addition to Personal Income Tax functionality provides additional information which we encourage you to download through your app store (Google Play or Apple Store)
 - Our SARS website (www.sars.gov.za) will be regularly updated with news and announcements
2. Should taxpayers still require contact with SARS please phone the SARS Contact Centre on 0800 00 7277, instead of visiting a branch
3. If you still required to visit a SARS Tax branch, strict adherence to social distancing and general hygiene practices will be applied

- Within the guidelines as set out by the President, a maximum of 100 taxpayers will be allowed in our branches at any one point in time and will be managed firmly
- We request that taxpayers watch branch visitor volumes and queue times on our website and the SARS mobiApp. This should help you to plan around needing to visit an alternate branch if really necessary
- All SARS branches as well as ports of entry have been equipped with hand sanitizers and we expect taxpayers to make use of these ahead of engaging our staff
- Additional SARS procedures have been put in place and will be utilized to ensure that work surfaces are regularly cleaned and sanitized
- Our staff have also been provided with additional protective gear such as gloves, and where required, additional protective equipment such as masks and suits.
- we request everyone to observe strict 1 meter distances and avoid person to person contact as far as possible.

SERVICE RELATED MATTERS

1. A large part of our daily visitors to our SARS Tax offices are individuals requesting a **tax reference number** for the purpose of employment.
 - Until further notice, SARS will no longer these tax reference numbers for this category of request and individuals are requested not to visit our branches for this purpose.
 - We will shortly provide a solution whereby our digital channels (eFiling, mobiApp) will cater for this requirement. We aim to have this solution operational in the next few weeks.
 - In the meantime, please request your employer to register you online with SARS. We have asked Employers to assist us in this regard.
 - There is no requirement to register with SARS ahead of looking for a job, and a prospective employer may register you as well.
2. If **supporting documentation** is required by SARS, you encouraged to follow these guidelines:
 - Upload via eFiling
 - Make use of the SARS mobiApp
 - Drop off documents at a branch drop-box
 - If all else fails, SARS will provide a drop box in our branch offices

3. If you have an **account related matter**, please use the following channels:
- As a first port of call, please contact the contact centre.
 - If you are unable to make a call to the contact centre, please use the following **dedicated channels**:
 - Account balances: Accounts@sars.gov.za
 - Third party appointment queries: TPA@sars.gov.za
 - Journals: Journals@sars.gov.za
 - Statement of accounts: SOA@sars.gov.za
 - AA88's – AA88@sars.gov.za

PORTS OF ENTRY

1. If you need to visit, or pass through a port of entry, SARS customs officials will also follow similar hygiene practices and in addition:
- Physical contact with travelers will be avoided as far as possible
 - Non-intrusive detecting devices such as baggage scanners will be deployed
 - Where required, SARS staff will be issued with additional protective clothing and gear

During these times, please be assured that we aim to provide continuity of the necessary engagement with taxpayers and traders whilst balancing the risk of the Corona virus from spreading through the various measures to protect our staff as well as yourselves. All our key stakeholders are being engaged and we are in collaboration to align and focus.

With all of these measures in place, we need to however take cognisance of the fact that your duties as taxpayer remain and all outstanding tax returns are still due before the 31st of March 2020.

As SARS we remain determined to safeguard the public's confidence in our tax administration system during these unprecedented times. Collectively, we will ensure that the tax administration system of our Republic remains operational.

Kind regards

Edward Kieswetter

Commissioner

17 March 2020