

Mannheim/Frankfurt/Munich, 23 April 2020

## **Covid-19 – New Occupational Health and Safety Standard published by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**

There is still uncertainty for employers as to which operational measures should or must be taken to protect the workforce from SARS-CoV-2 infection. The German Federal Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has now reacted and published a new occupational health and safety standard for the period of the CoV-2 pandemic.

On April 16, 2020, the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs published a "*Company Action Concept for Temporary Additional Measures to Protect Against Infection from SARS-CoV-2 (SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Health and Safety Standard)*" (Well, that is some very fine German legalese ...). This concept defines special temporary occupational safety measures in response to the CoV-2 pandemic, which is spreading particularly through contacts at the workplace and thus impairs economic life in a particular way.

The objectives to be achieved with these measures are formulated as follows:

- Protection of the population by interrupting the chains of infection;
- Securing the health of employees;
- Restoring economic activity and at the same time
- Establishing a medium-term lasting state of flat infection curves.

The described measures are specifically tailored to the challenges of the corona pandemic. This occupational health and safety standard provides companies with "guidance" to enable them to respond to the current challenges of the corona pandemic. The catalogue of measures is subdivided into

- special technical measures (e.g. workplace design, ventilation, special features for construction sites, agriculture, field and delivery services),
- special organisational measures (e.g. safety distances, handling of work equipment and clothing, access by external persons, instructions for action in suspected cases, minimisation of mental stress) and finally

- special personal measures (e.g. mouth-and-nose protection and personal protective equipment, communication, precautions and protection of particularly vulnerable persons).

The Federal Ministry is setting up an advisory group to make any necessary adjustments to the SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Health and Safety Standard (for more details, refer to: Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, SARS-CoV-2-Arbeitsschutzstandard, April 2020, available at: [https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/PDF-Schwerpunkte/sars-cov-2-arbeitsschutzstandard-en.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/PDF-Schwerpunkte/sars-cov-2-arbeitsschutzstandard-en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2))

The SARS-CoV-2 occupational safety standard is welcome and creates more legal security for companies. In a next step, companies must compare their (previous) operational health protection measures with the SARS-Cov-2 occupational health and safety standard and, if necessary, adapt them to the specific requirements of their industry and their establishment. We are prepared and pleased to support you in implementing your occupational health and safety concept.

If you have any questions or need advice, please contact lawyer [Nadja Hartmann](mailto:nadja.hartmann@rittershaus.net) (<mailto:nadja.hartmann@rittershaus.net>) and lawyer [Jörg Döhrer](mailto:joerg.doehrer@rittershaus.net) (<mailto:joerg.doehrer@rittershaus.net>).

## RITTERSHAUS

Rechtsanwälte Partnerschaftsgesellschaft

**Mannheim Office**  
Harrlachweg 4  
68163 Mannheim  
Tel.: +49 621 4256 0  
Fax: +49 621 4256 250

**Frankfurt Office**  
Bockenheimer Landstraße 77  
60325 Frankfurt/Main  
Tel.: +49 69 274040 0  
Fax: +49 69 274040 250

**Munich Office**  
Maximiliansplatz 10  
80333 München  
Tel.: +49 89 121405 0  
Fax: +49 89 121405 250

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