

CEA Ref: N24-20

Date: 26 May 2020

By Email

To: Key Executive Officers and Salespersons

Dear Sir / Madam,

[NOTICE 24-20] ADVISORY ON PHASE ONE RESUMPTION OF PROPERTY TRANSACTION ACTIVITIES BY ESTATE AGENTS AND REAL ESTATE SALESPERSONS AFTER THE CIRCUIT BREAKER PERIOD

1. This notice informs Key Executive Officers (KEOs) and real estate salespersons (RESs) on the measures to observe in the first phase of resumption of property transaction activities after the circuit breaker period ends on 1 June 2020.

Resumption of property transaction activities

2. On 19 May 2020, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce (MTF) announced that with the end of the COVID-19 circuit breaker period on 1 June 2020, more economic activities will be allowed to resume in a safe and controlled manner from 2 June 2020 onwards. This will be implemented progressively in three phases in order to reduce the risk of a second wave of infections.

3. In Phase One (Safe Re-opening), Estate Agents (EAs) with the Singapore Standard Industrial Classification (SSIC) 68 code or other permitted SSIC codes will be permitted to operate, subject to certain restrictions, from 2 June 2020.

4. Singapore's transition into Phase Two (Safe Transition) and Phase Three (Safe Nation) will depend on the COVID-19 situation. The MTF has cautioned that there could be a rise in new community cases as more activities resume. Therefore, it is important that the real estate agency industry continues to play its part to safeguard the safety of your clients, partners and the community.

5. You are advised to observe this notice as outlined in the ensuing paragraphs.

General principles

6. **The resumption of property transaction activities in Phase One does not mean a return to the pre-COVID-19 practices that you are used to.** The following general principles apply to the measures that EAs and RESs are to observe as you resume your operations at your office and your property transaction activities:

- a. **Fighting COVID-19 is our collective responsibility:** The Ministry of Health (MOH) has highlighted in its [press release](#) on 19 May 2020 that the risk of a resurgence in community transmission remains high, and we must exercise caution as we progressively lift the circuit breaker measures. The real estate agency industry shares the responsibility of protecting yourselves and the community you serve to minimise the risk of community transmission. To support Singapore's transition into the subsequent two phases of our re-opening plans, we must remain vigilant; adopt a cautious and gradual approach in Phase One; and develop socially responsible practices.

- b. **Embrace a “new normal”:** The adoption of safe management measures and technology must intensify so that we can carry out property transaction activities safely. You should continue to work from home to the maximum extent possible and adopt information technology (IT) tools in place of face-to-face interaction, and to conduct property transaction activities online.
- c. **Avoid activities which involve direct, face-to-face interactions with other persons when carrying out property transaction activities:** The real estate agency industry may face a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 as the nature of your work may require you to be in different enclosed spaces and in close proximity with different persons and clients. To minimise risk of community transmission and to protect the health of EAs and RESs, you should continue to avoid activities involving direct, face-to-face interactions with any other persons in Phase One. For instance, activities such as physical viewings, door-to-door solicitation, or marketing activities in public spaces, and EAs’ events (e.g. conferences, seminars, and exhibitions) which involve close contact amongst participants should be deferred until further notice.
7. Where mandatory requirements and guidance by other government ministries and agencies have been issued, you are to adhere to them and advise your clients accordingly. These authorities include the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Housing & Development Board, Urban Redevelopment Authority, and Singapore Land Authority.

Conclusion

8. To assist you in resuming your activities when the circuit breaker period ends on 1 June 2020, CEA has prepared a Guide on the safe resumption of property transaction activities by EAs and RESs under Phase One of the post-circuit breaker period at Annex for your information and compliance.

9. We urge you to continue to digitalise and rethink your business models past the pandemic. As we enter Phase One, we seek your continued support and cooperation to safeguard your safety, and that of your colleagues, partners, clients, and the community. We would likely see less restrictive measures in the subsequent phases to ensure a safe and gradual re-opening after the circuit breaker period.

Yours sincerely,

GAVIN NG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (POLICY & PLANNING)
COUNCIL FOR ESTATE AGENCIES

[Annex – CEA Guide on Safe Resumption of Property Transaction Activities by EAs and RESs under Phase One of the Post-Circuit Breaker Period.](#)

As at 26 May 2020

Annex to
CEA Notice 24-20

CEA GUIDE ON SAFE RESUMPTION OF PROPERTY TRANSACTION ACTIVITIES BY ESTATE AGENTS AND REAL ESTATE SALESPERSONS UNDER PHASE ONE OF THE POST-CIRCUIT BREAKER PERIOD

1. This Guide sets out how Estate Agents (EAs) and real estate salespersons (RESs) can conduct your operations at your office and your property transaction activities in a safe and controlled manner, in line with Singapore's plans to selectively resume economic activities from 2 June 2020 under Phase One (Safe Re-opening) when the circuit breaker period ends on 1 June 2020.

2. In addition to this Guide, you must follow all mandatory requirements and guidance issued by other government ministries and agencies (click [here](#) for the list of government ministries and agencies).

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

3. **The resumption of property transaction activities in Phase One does not mean a return to the pre-COVID-19 practices that you are used to.** The following general principles apply to EAs and RESs as you resume your operations at your office and your property transaction activities:

- a. **Fighting COVID-19 is our collective responsibility:** The real estate agency industry shares the responsibility of protecting yourselves and the community you serve to minimise the risk of community transmission. To support Singapore's transition into the subsequent two phases of our re-opening plans, we must remain

vigilant; adopt a cautious and gradual approach in Phase One; and develop socially responsible practices.

- b. **Embrace a “new normal”:** The adoption of safe management measures and technology must intensify so that we can carry out property transaction activities safely. You should continue to work from home to the maximum extent possible and adopt information technology (IT) tools in place of face-to-face interaction and to conduct property transaction activities online.
- c. **Avoid activities which involve direct, face-to-face interactions with other persons when carrying out property transaction activities:** The real estate agency industry may face a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 as the nature of your work may require you to be in different enclosed spaces and in close proximity with different persons and clients. To minimise risk of community transmission and to protect the health of EAs and RESs, you should continue to avoid activities involving direct, face-to-face interactions with any other persons in Phase One.

CORPORATE FUNCTIONS

General requirements

4. All EAs with Singapore Standard Industrial Classification (SSIC) 68 or other permitted SSIC codes will be permitted to operate from 2 June 2020. **You must submit your manpower details via the GoBusiness portal (<https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>) within two weeks of the resumption of operations¹.**

¹ EAs can login to [BizFile+](#) using your CorpPass credentials to retrieve and verify that the SSIC code of your primary business activity aligns with SSIC 68 or other permitted codes. EAs whose

5. When re-opening your EA office, you should take note of the following:
- a. **Tele-commute to the maximum extent possible.** Your employees and RESs should continue to work from home and only go to the office where it is demonstrably necessary, such as to access specialised systems that cannot be accessed from home or to fulfil legal requirements (e.g. to complete contracts or transactions).
 - b. **Put in place safe management practices at the office.** You are to comply with the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) requirements for safe management measures at your office (click [here](#)), including the following:
 - i. Establish a system to implement safe management measures which include implementing a detailed monitoring plan and appointing safe management officer(s) to assist in the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the system of safe management measures.
 - ii. Reduce physical interaction and ensure safe distancing. These include conducting internal and external meetings virtually, where possible, ensuring clear physical spacing of at least 1 metre between persons at all times, and adopting queue management measures for customer-facing operations.
 - iii. Support contact tracing requirements by controlling access at the office through use of the SafeEntry visitor management system

SSIC codes are not aligned will have to apply for an exemption from the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI).

and encourage your employees and RESs to download and activate the TraceTogether mobile application.

- iv. Require your employees and RESs to wear masks at the office and observe good personal hygiene.
 - v. Ensure cleanliness of your office premises by cleaning areas with high human contact and providing disinfecting agents such as hand sanitisers at human traffic stoppage points.
 - vi. Implement health checks and protocols to manage potential COVID-19 cases which include regular temperature screening and declarations for your employees and visitors at the office, develop an evacuation plan for unwell or suspected cases, as well as a follow-up plan in the event of a confirmed case.
- c. **Consider implementing additional measures at the office** such as:
- i. Implement an appointment management system to reduce movement, interactions and clustering of people at your office.
 - ii. Set up deposit or drop boxes so that documents or cheques can be deposited without entering the office.
 - iii. Disallow the use of workspaces or cubicles as such work should be done remotely (e.g. making calls to clients).
 - iv. Promote electronic delivery of documents or make use of courier services.

- v. Encourage clients to make electronic payment for commissions rather than handing cash or cheque in person to you.

Group or mass activities

6. There should not be events organised by EAs and RESs which involve close and prolonged contact amongst participants (e.g. conferences, seminars, and exhibitions).

PROPERTY TRANSACTION ACTIVITIES

7. While you may resume limited on-site property transaction activities in Phase One, you should continue to **avoid direct, face-to-face, or prolonged contact with any other person**. This means continuing to work from home to the maximum extent possible and adopting information technology (IT) tools to conduct property transaction activities online.

Listing and marketing properties

8. Your marketing activities must be done in a safe and responsible manner. This means that:
 - a. There should not be activities that lead to direct, face-to-face interactions with any other person. Physical viewings, door-to-door solicitation, and marketing activities in public spaces should be deferred until further notice.
 - b. You should continue to market properties using non-physical means (e.g. digital or telephone marketing).

9. If the property is unoccupied, you may enter the property on your own to photograph or film the property in order to conduct online viewings thereafter. You should not enter occupied properties, even if it is temporarily vacated, to photograph or film the property.

Meeting your client

10. You should not have direct, face-to-face meetings with your client. You should adopt IT tools in place of face-to-face interaction, such as video or virtual conferencing platforms, to meet with your client.

Conducting viewings

11. You should arrange for virtual viewings as physical viewings are not permitted in Phase One.

12. Similarly, you should advise your client to defer all physical and in-person viewings until such time that the measures have been removed. If the client's situation is urgent (e.g. the client will be homeless and needs a place to stay), you should advise your client to do the viewings virtually.

Signing and delivering estate agency agreement and property transaction documents

13. Electronic signatures may be used in place of wet signatures for signing the estate agency agreement and property transaction documents (such as tenancy agreement, sale & purchase agreement, and option to purchase). Therefore, you could:

- a. Use electronic means to deliver and receive the documents from your client.

- b. Arrange for a phone, video, or virtual meeting to go through and explain the clauses in the documents to your client. You must give your client sufficient time to read and understand the meaning and consequences of the provisions in the documents.
 - c. Should you have any doubt in relation to the documents, you should advise your client to seek advice from appropriate professionals such as lawyers. This includes facilitating the contracting parties' decision on whether to use electronic signatures, as there are risks in using electronic signatures for property transactions.
14. Please note that HDB does not allow the exercise of option to be done remotely or electronically. Forms prescribed by HDB, such as its Option to Purchase form, require "wet ink" signatures.
15. You can deliver and receive the estate agency agreement and property transaction documents if there is no direct, face-to-face contact with any person (e.g. clients, the other party, other RESs) when receiving or delivering them. Alternatively, you can use courier services to deliver and receive the estate agency agreement and property transaction documents from your client.
16. If your client's physical presence is legally required to complete the transaction, your client may complete the transaction at the lawyer's or HDB's office. However, if this is not possible, you should arrange a meeting in your office with safe management measures as required by MOM.

Handing or taking over rental properties

17. You may assist to facilitate the handover or takeover of rental properties. However, you should adhere to the following:

- a. No direct, face-to-face interactions between any other person including the vendor and incoming or outgoing tenants. If there are physical items such as keys or documents which need to be delivered or received, it should be done in a manner that avoids any direct, face-to-face contact between you and any other person.
- b. Appropriate documentation (e.g. end-of-tenancy checklist, inventory list or property condition report) should be provided to the incoming tenants for them to fill in on their own. Should any guidance be needed, you could contact them through phone or video call.
- c. Any documentation which you need to complete for outgoing tenants should be done when the property is empty to avoid any direct, face-to-face interactions between you and any person, including the outgoing tenants.

Visits by other professionals and tradesmen for emergency work

18. If emergency work is required to restore the property to a safe condition, you should advise your client to attend to the matter on his own.

19. If your client is unable to physically attend to the emergency work (e.g. he is overseas), you may be physically present to facilitate the activity by the professional or tradesman but must adhere to the following:

- a. You must follow the guidelines and regulations laid out by the relevant government ministries or agencies regarding such works.
- b. You must not bring any other person to accompany you to facilitate the emergency work.
- c. You must record the contact particulars of the professional or tradesman to facilitate contact tracing. You are also encouraged to download and activate the TraceTogether mobile application, and to advise the professional or tradesman to do the same.




CONCLUSION

20. Where mandatory requirements and guidance by other government ministries and agencies have been issued, you should adhere to them and advise your client accordingly. These authorities include the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Housing & Development Board, Urban Redevelopment Authority, and Singapore Land Authority. You may refer to the resource reference at the end of this Guide.

21. The Multi-Ministry Taskforce has cautioned that there could be a rise in new community cases as more activities resume. Hence, it is important that the real estate agency industry proceeds with caution as certain restrictions would continue to apply in property transaction activities in Phase One. In this regard, do play your part to safeguard your safety, and that of your colleagues, partners, clients, and the community.

**LIST OF KEY GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES WITH
GUIDANCE AND ADVISORIES RELEVANT TO THE REAL ESTATE
AGENCY INDUSTRY**

<p>[CEA] COVID-19: Measures and guidance to the real estate agency industry and information for consumers</p>  <p>http://www.cea.gov.sg/covid19</p>	
<p>[MOH] End of circuit breaker phased approach to resuming healthcare services</p>  <p>https://www.moh.gov.sg/news-highlights/details/end-of-circuit-breaker-phased-approach-to-resuming-healthcare-services</p>	<p>[MTI] GoBusiness</p>  <p>https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/</p>

<p>[MOM] Requirements for safe management measures at the workplace after circuit breaker period</p>  <p>https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/requirements-for-safe-management-measures</p>	<p>[HDB] Latest COVID-19 Measures – Update on HDB Operations</p>  <p>https://www.hdb.gov.sg/cs/infoweb/hdb-message</p>
<p>[URA]</p>  <p>https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate</p>	<p>[SLA]</p>  <p>https://www.sla.gov.sg/</p>