

COVID-19 Response Guidelines

For Convention Bureaus and MICE Business Operators

To Promote the Organization of Safe MICE Events during COVID-19

(Version 3)

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Japan Congress & Convention Bureau
(JCCB)

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1. Background and Basic Concepts of the Guidelines

These COVID-19 Response Guidelines have been developed by the Japan Congress & Convention Bureau (JCCB), based on the “Basic Policies for Novel Coronavirus Disease Control” published by the Government of Japan on May 4, 2020, and the “Analysis of the Response to the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)” and “Recommendations” compiled by the Expert Meeting on Novel Coronavirus Diseases Control on the same day. This includes documents such as “Examples of Practicing a New Lifestyle”, and other relevant documents that specifically define the basic principles for JCCB members, mainly convention bureaus and MICE business operators (including venue operators) to follow and share with MICE organizers, especially when attracting and supporting MICE events.

MICE events involve a wide range of operations, including attracting events, providing support during the planning stages, and receiving the participants. Because these settings require different infection control measures, separate guidelines have been developed for individual operations by relevant associations, such as venue management, hotel management, travel arrangements, and event planning and management.

Therefore, the “COVID-19 Response Guidelines” mainly focus on measures for the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), regional and municipal convention bureaus (hereinafter “Bureaus”), and MICE business operators, in collaboration with MICE organizers and other relevant parties, to ensure safe and infection-free events.

Since the promotion and organization of business events involve diverse stakeholders and participants from around the world, a summary of the COVID-19 Response Guidelines shall be translated into English and published and disseminated globally, in cooperation with JNTO and other relevant organizations, to present the fundamental health and safety standards incorporated into Japan’s efforts to promote MICE events.

These Guidelines were revised to Version 3 on December 16, 2021, to reflect the mass event restrictions imposed by the national government.

These Guidelines are subject to periodic updates based on the future infection control policies of national authorities, developments of the pandemic, and recommendations from experts.

Reference: Relevant guidelines published by other MICE associations (not in order) *TBA

- Japan Convention Management Association (JCMA)
- Japan Exhibition Association (JEXA)
- Japan Hotel Association (JHA)
- Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA) and All Nippon Travel Agents Association (ANTA)
- National Kominkan Association

2. Basic Concepts of the Guidelines

Convention Bureaus and MICE business operators, in collaboration with MICE organizers and other relevant organizations, should take necessary and sufficient measures to prevent COVID-19 infections, collect and provide necessary information on the health and safety conditions of host cities, and take all possible steps to add value to MICE events organized in Japan.

(1) Collaborate with relevant organizations

When attracting and hosting a MICE event, the convention bureau and MICE business operators, in close collaboration with the event host and other relevant business operators, should take all possible steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, organize the event in a safe and contagion-free way, and make the event a success.

(2) Adhere to infection control principles

Considering the spread of mutant strains such as Delta strains, all those involved should always be aware of infection risks, or the Three Cs (*), and should avoid every one of the 3Cs throughout the MICE operation process, including setting up a venue and organizing programs.

* Three Cs (3Cs)

- 1) Closed spaces with poor ventilation
- 2) Crowded places with many people nearby
- 3) Close-contact settings such as close-range conversations

(3) Collect information required to prevent the spread of infection, routinely adjust preventive measures, and provide information as soon as possible

All those involved should remain attentive to COVID-19 information provided by governmental agencies and other relevant organizations inside and outside Japan, update and modify preventive measures as needed, and play an active role in disseminating information on the latest COVID-19 measures and recommendations put in place by domestic authorities, with support from and in cooperation with JCCB and JNTO.

3. Infection Risk Assessments

Bureaus, MICE business operators, and MICE hosts should assess infection risks in advance by examining the three main transmission routes of COVID-19, (1) respiratory droplets, (2) inhaling aerosol, and (3) close contact, taking into account the flow and contact of MICE business operators and participants, and develop risk management measures for their individual operations.

Moreover, it should be noted that because some programs and activities require a large number of people to travel, stay overnight, eat and drink together, and hold meetings, it is essential to assess risks associated with the use of large commercial facilities, such as hotels and conference halls, as well as potential hazards to the entire community surrounding the venue.

(1) Avoid the risk of droplet transmission

Ensure that people always wear face masks and practice physical distancing in order to prevent droplet transmission while interacting with other.

It is important to prevent gaps in order to obtain a sufficient effect of wearing a mask, and wear an appropriate mask according to the risk of infection (wear a non-woven fabric with certain quality, if possible). For information on how to wear a mask, see, for example, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare website “To the People (New Coronavirus Infection)”.

In particular, it is important to consider taking physical distancing measures when needed, such as placing physical distancing footprints and floor markers, posting guides around the venue, and making reminder announcements. It is necessary to prevent people from gathering close together, not only in meeting rooms, party halls, exhibition spaces, and other public areas but also in areas prone to crowding, such as lobbies, cloakrooms, reception areas, restrooms, and smoking areas.

Considering the expected number of participants and the capacity of the venue, it is necessary to remind participants to keep a sufficient physical distance (at least 1 meter, preferably 2 meters). In particular, be careful not to eat or drink in densely populated areas or areas where infectious disease control is not thoroughly implemented.

(2) Avoid the risk of aerosol transmission

The venue will be constantly ventilated by air-conditioning equipment that complies with laws and regulations, or diligent ventilation with windows and doors open (ensure a ventilation volume of 30 m³ or more per person per hour), and when it is dry, the humidity should be 40% or more.

In addition to ventilation, it is recommended to install a CO₂ measuring device and use a constant monitor (1000ppm or less). (* In the case of mechanical ventilation. In the case of the window opening ventilation, it is a guide.) When installing a CO₂ measuring device, measure it at multiple points in the room and install it in a place where ventilation is particularly likely to be insufficient. Auxiliary use of HEPA filter type air purifier and circulator is also possible. At the time of the event, refrain from the act of generating aerosols (micro-splashes) (loud conversation during the playing of some musical instruments, singing, etc.). Even if

you are wearing a mask indoors at work, make sure that you should take measures such as shortening the conversation.

(3) Avoid contact transmission

Since the basics of contact infection prevention are regular hand washing and hand disinfection, alcohol disinfectants (ethanol, etc. with a concentration of 70% or more and 95% or less) are placed at various locations including the entrance and exit of the venue for use of participants and organizers. Allow management personnel to disinfect their hands at any time, and encourage them to wash and disinfect their hands regularly. Identify surfaces and objects through which people directly or indirectly come into contact with others while traveling to and staying in the venue, such as doors, shared facilities (e.g. restrooms), fixtures and fittings (e.g. chairs and tables), and distributed items (e.g. registration cards, stationery, and handouts), and sanitize them regularly. Review their use and explore alternative means.

4. Scope of Application of the Guidelines

These Guidelines apply only to (1) activities conducted by Bureaus and MICE business operators when communicating or collaborating with MICE hosts and other relevant entities (sales and promotion activities) and (2) operations involved in the organization of MICE events (MICE preparatory/support operations), except for infection control measures at work.

(1) Activities conducted by Bureaus and MICE business operators (sales and promotion activities)

- Use of virtual means to communicate with MICE hosts and other relevant entities
- Sales and promotion activities and visits to domestic host organizations
- Invitation of and discussions with domestic and overseas host organizations
- Overseas sales and promotion activities (e.g. attending business fairs)

(2) Operations involved in the organization of MICE events (MICE preparatory/support operations)

- Preliminary preparations and checks (including developing risk management manuals)
- Consultation and collaboration with local stakeholders

5. Specific Infection Control Measures

(1) Activities conducted by Bureaus and MICE business operators

1) Sales and promotion activities to attract domestic MICE hosts (including invitation tours)

- Carefully read the guidelines published by relevant associations as listed above and offer appropriate advice on the organization of MICE events. Give special publicity to the guidelines developed by the Japan Convention Management Association (JCMA) and the Japan Exhibition Association (JEXA).
- Regularly use a health observation app to know your daily health status.
- We will make full use of “five situations” and “new lifestyles” that increase the risk of infection, and make sure that infection prevention measures are well known.
- Frequent washing of uniforms and clothes.
- Those with symptoms such as fever or cold should refrain from going to work and consult with health center or family doctor appropriately.
- Even after going to work, contact a doctor / health center for consultation. However, if it is difficult to receive a medical examination immediately and the antigen sample kit can be used, the antigen test kit will be used according to the following procedure. If the antigen sample kit is positive, PCR tests, etc. will be promptly performed on the “contact person” with the consent of the health center. Please refer to the following URL for these specific procedures and a list of application destinations for purchasing kits.
 - ◇ <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000798697.pdf>
(June 25, 2021, “Procedures for conducting active inspections in the workplace” (2nd edition))
 - ◇ <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000819118.pdf>
(August 13, 2021, “Promotion of active inspection in the workplace”)

- Ensure that all those involved download the COVID-19 Contact-Confirming Application (COCOA), or scanning QR code developed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and other local notification apps on their smartphones turned on always with Bluetooth and silent mode on.
- Follow the recommendations put in place by the national and prefectural governments on domestic traveling, eating and drinking, and social gatherings.
- Conduct operations remotely, as much as possible, via phone, email, and online communication channels. Organize meetings and share presentations online.
- Take special care when traveling to and from cities and regions with many infected people.
- Refrain from non-essential visits to domestic host organizations. When visiting a host organization, visit in a small group, wear face masks, avoid the 3Cs, and remember to sanitize hands before and after the visit.
- Take the temperatures of employees and other staff regularly and ensure that those with a temperature of 37.5°C or higher do not come to work or visit clients but stay home and refrain from contact with others. In addition, make sure that those who have symptoms, such as fever, cough, fatigue, and loss of taste, within a few days before the planned visit refrain from the visit, regardless of whether their temperature exceeds 37.5°C.
- When visiting and meeting clients in person, avoid sitting right in front of them, always wear a face mask, and practice safe physical distancing (at least 1 meter and ideally 2 meters) to minimize infection risks. If possible, avoid gathering at night, during meals, or any other time when infection risk awareness is likely to decline.
- Minimize the number of people engaged in operations that involve travelling, making presentations, and dining with clients and set up an environment where you can avoid the 3Cs.
- Ensure that staff remain alert during break time by reminding everyone to wash and sanitize hands before taking a break, limiting the number of people in each lounge depending on its size, letting employees take breaks in shifts, installing acrylic partitions and screens, arranging seats to keep anyone from sitting right in front of any other person and ensure physical distancing (at least 1 meter and ideally 2 meters), reminding everyone to refrain from talking while eating and drinking, and properly ventilating rooms to avoid the 3Cs.
- When it is necessary to invite visitors, narrow down those in charge of meeting them to minimize the number of people involved. Ensure that the visitors follow infection control measures, such as wearing face masks and sanitizing and washing hands.
- When inviting visitors from abroad, proceed with the plan while keeping pace with the easing of entry restrictions to Japan. Satisfy the entry conditions set by the Government of Japan for each country/region and develop effective infection control measures in advance.
- Ask visitors from abroad to have travel insurance. If possible, ask them to present health certificates (COVID-19 negative certificates issued by competent authorities) and other relevant medical records. Confirm that they can receive necessary tests and treatments, when needed, in the city or region where they stay.
- Before inviting visitors define the scope of responsibility of each party, in case problems arise, such as one of the visitors being diagnosed with COVID-19 during or after the visit.

2) Overseas sales and promotion activities

- When participating in an overseas business fair, decide whether to travel to the site by collecting local information, carefully checking the Overseas Travel Safety Information and travel restrictions published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and consulting with JNTO. Follow the infection control recommendations put in place by national authorities when returning to Japan and after returned to Japan.
- When participating in a business fair, carefully decide whether to attend in person by checking the infection control measures and precautions taken by the host organization in advance.
- Collect necessary information on buyers and other people you have contact with and properly manage the information in case you are infected.
- When accompanying a MICE host in their promotion activities, proceed after carefully analyzing the health and safety conditions of the destination country and checking whether the health and safety standards put in place there are adequate.
- Carefully check the travel restrictions, take out overseas travel insurance, and collect information on local medical services before traveling abroad.

- Give publicity to the substance of the guidelines developed by JCCB and other relevant associations and increase understanding of the safety precautions taken for each host city and each MICE event.

(2) MICE preparatory and support activities

When preparing for and supporting a MICE event, the Bureau and MICE business operators should encourage the event's host and other relevant entities (including venue operators and MICE operators) to take sufficient measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to develop risk management manuals in case infection occurs, as specified below.

In order to develop specific, thorough safety measures, the guidelines for MICE organizers and other relevant entities should be updated periodically based on the Guidelines on Hosting MICE Events in the COVID-19 Pandemic by the Japan Convention Management Association (JCMA) and other relevant guidelines.

Bureaus should take the following infection control measures for MICE events organized in their cities and regions and provide support to ensure that necessary and sufficient measures are taken based on the general precautions to prevent infection when organizing MICE events listed below.

1) Activities conducted by Bureaus and other promotion organizations

- Bureaus should ask for the understanding and cooperation of MICE hosts, either by themselves or through their members, to take infection control measures and make these measures widely known to participants in advance. Moreover, Bureaus should encourage MICE hosts to develop risk management manuals, including those for medical service systems, in case infection occurs.
- Bureaus should make these Guidelines and relevant associations' guidelines widely known to their members and local stakeholders and promote infection control measures.
- Bureaus should require sufficient measures to be taken, including wearing face masks properly, washing and sanitizing hands, providing proper ventilation by law, and practicing physical distancing, to protect participants from the droplets, aerosol and contact transmission while gathering and dining indoors or traveling.
- Bureaus should strongly encourage their members and MICE hosts to use the COVID-19 Contact-Confirming Application (COCOA) developed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and other local notification apps. (Turn on the Smartphone and Bluetooth when using COCOA in a silent mode.)

2) General precautions to prevent infection when organizing MICE events

i) Before events:

- Ensure compliance with precautions and collect itineraries from participants
 - Make the safety precautions, including those related to health management, fully known to participants in advance and encourage them to take preventive measures by themselves. Ask participants to confirm whether any symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, phlegm, fatigue, and loss of taste) have developed, especially within a week before departure, and refrain from attending if any symptoms develop.
 - Record participants' lodgings, participating programs, and contact information, and collect itineraries from participants in advance.
- Take precautions for VIPs and overseas participants
 - Take preventive measures to minimize infection risks for guests, keynote speakers, and other VIPs while traveling, staying at hotels, and dining at restaurants near the venue.
 - Provide information in advance about the new measures to strengthen border enforcement imposed by the national government and other necessary infection control measures to overseas participants, who are expected to increase in number as restrictions on entry to Japan are being eased. Ask them to take out travel insurance in case they are infected, and translate the physical distancing signs placed in the venue.

ii) During events

- Post infection control staff (ideally medical professionals) around the venue and set up a health system to take participants' temperatures, check for symptoms, and respond to any emergencies.
- Arrange seats and manage queues to ensure physical distancing (at least 1 meter and ideally 2 meters) between participants. Take the same precautions for areas prone to crowding, including traveling routes and outdoor spaces.

- Install physical distancing partitions and practice necessary physical distancing between performers during their performance as well as between performers and participants.
- Ensure that everyone washes and sanitizes hands when entering and leaving the venue and put hand sanitizer dispensers at the entrance and other spots in the venue during the event.
- Using non-contact paying system and use the coin tray when paying.
- Ask participants to wear face masks properly indoors. MICE hosts should have unused face masks in stock to provide to those who do not have their own.
- Open doors or use ventilation systems all the time to sufficiently freshen the air inside the venue on a regular basis. Clean and sanitize every corner and collect waste, in cooperation with contract maintenance service providers, to keep the venue sanitary.
- Avoid loud back ground music that causes loud talking.
- Gather the waste contaminated with bodily fluids, such as saliva and nasal discharge, into plastic bags and seal them tightly. Ensure that waste collectors wear face masks and gloves while working and wash hands with soap and running water after taking off their masks and gloves. Then, discard those masks and gloves and not use them again.
- Ensure that interactive sessions where participants talk and eat together (avoid buffet-style meals as much as possible) are held in an infection-proof place. Prevent the place from being crowded, arrange seats so that no one sits right in front of any other person, install physical distancing partitions, practice necessary physical distancing, and make announcements or have guides to remind participants not to speak loudly.
- Set an area where food and drink can be served after implementing infection control measures. Thoroughly wear a mask except during meals, refrain from drinking alcohol depending on the infection situation, or avoid excessive drinking. Arrange seats with sufficient space between people, such as thinning out chairs. Avoid placement in front of your face, including ensuring a minimum distance of 1m, with a guideline of 2m from the front of your face. Install a partition (acrylic board, etc.) on the table. We will also limit the number of people and shift the usage time.
- Sanitize surfaces and objects that are frequently touched by participants, such as microphones, mobile terminals and devices, door handles, chairs, tables, and restrooms, on a regular basis. (For disinfection methods, see “Disinfection and sterilization methods for new coronaviruses” on the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare website.) Avoid directly handing documents and gifts to participants and convert paper documents into electronic form as much as possible.
- In the toilet, thoroughly wash your hands, install paper towels, check contracts for maintenance and cleaning, confirm that they are regularly cleaned by alcohol disinfection and other appropriate cleaning methods, and then install hand dryer equipment.

iii) After events:

- Collaborate with the event’s host and other relevant entities and monitor whether any of the participants are infected for about two weeks after the event. If any such case is reported, provide necessary information to local stakeholders, participants, and other people involved, in collaboration with the local public health center, in order to prevent the spread of infection.
- Remind participants not to gather and to avoid the crowds when taking public transport and dining at restaurants on their way home.

6. Others (Public Relations Activities for Safe MICE Events)

Provide publicity about the safe MICE events organized in Japan by conducting active public relations through online and other channels, in cooperation with JNTO, to raise awareness about these Guidelines and the health and safety measures taken by national and municipal authorities and venue operators when organizing MICE events. Collaborate and share information with other relevant associations. In particular, any notable facilities and efforts should be given wide publicity inside and outside Japan to enhance understanding of Japan’s health and safety mechanisms.

The important health and safety features of Japanese society should be presented, including the following:

- Japan has high-quality medical services and diverse health and safety systems not only for MICE facilities but also for restaurants, hotels, and retail stores.

- Japanese people have learned the importance of sanitary practices through school education. Most people have developed the habit of washing hands and gargling and wear face masks on a daily basis.
- The number of cases and deaths from COVID-19 is extremely low compared to other developed countries, and these cases are confined to limited areas.
- Pandemic data are collected and published on a daily basis by national and local authorities, and risks are calculated at the community and facility levels.
