



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NEWS EDITORS

I currently head the department's Occupational Health and Safety workstream providing inputs on the health and safety of workers in general and health workers in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I acknowledge the professional job your channels are doing in informing and educating the public about the pandemic and on the need for taking preventive measures whenever in contact with other colleagues or people.

I would like to raise one point that I've observed in viewing some TV broadcasts. I've noticed that there are occasions when TV journalists who are out in the streets, and sometimes elsewhere, carrying out interviews are not always observing the health protocols, like wearing masks, and gloves and are standing too close to interviewees who are themselves without masks and who are speaking directly into microphones.

I acknowledge that I don't fully understand your technology, and what I am talking about could well have an impact on sound and picture quality. However, the nature of the situation suggests to me that health protocols need to be observed for the safety of those directly involved and as example to viewers. I am also aware that some of you have instructed or encouraged journalists to adhere to these standards and have issued them with personal protective equipment, but in some instances, they are not observing these rules.

May I request that you re-emphasise to your reporting staff the urgency of adhering to these protocols. This is important both for their protection and for the protection of the interviewees, and the interviewees' families and communities. From a public policy perspective, with your pictures in the living rooms of so many South African families, the simple demonstration of your journalists being seen observing these protocols is itself a great public education. Failure of them to do so on screen has, however, something of a negative impact on public consciousness and behaviour change.

Once again, I thank you for the invaluable work your channels are doing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kistnasamy'.

DR BARRY KISTNASAMY
HEAD: CCOD & OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
DATE: 16 APRIL 2020