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# THE MONTHLY NEWS LETTER

## Adherence to Standards Key to Combating COVID-19

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# ADHERENCE TO STANDARDS KEY TO COMBATING COVID-19

By Lt. Col. (Rtd) Bernard Njiraini



It is now evident that countries that have managed to contain the spread of the corona virus have used Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and social distance as the first defence items to keep the virus at bay. PPEs are key to curbing widespread transmission of the virus through droplets when one sneezes or coughs.

To ensure the quality and safety of PPEs and other medical equipment, the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), working closely with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders, has developed Kenya standards for all the PPEs and other medical equipment which are being used in the fight against COVID -19 namely; specifications for instant hand sanitizers, critical care ventilators, nebulisers, sanitization booths, face shields, surgical face masks, reusable cloth masks, single-use medical examination gloves, single-use sterile rubber surgical gloves, protective clothing used by health workers, health care aprons and overall clothing among others.

To this end, a total of sixteen (16) Standards have been made available for free access to interested parties including manufacturers and the public, to guide them by ensuring that the PPEs they make or trade with are effective in protecting the consumers.

**Kenya Standards relating to face masks** include **KS 2636:2016** – Surgical masks specification: it specifies materials, composition, type, workmanship, design, size, test methods, labeling, and packaging of surgical masks. **KS 2409-6:2018** on health care wastes management commodities, specification-part 6: Filtering face masks to protect against particles, it

specifies the requirements for filtering half masks as respiratory protective devices to protect against particles except for escape purposes. Additionally, **KPAS 2917:2020** Publicly Available Specification (PAS) on reusable cloth masks that guides their design, manufacture and performance evaluation with a key requirement to have two layers of fabric.

**Other standards in the fight against Covid- 19 include KPAS 2918:2020** for Critical Care Ventilators gives the minimum requirements for a clinically acceptable ventilator; to be used in health care premises to provide temporary respiratory assistance to patients unable to breathe on their own. **KS ISO 13688:2013**, that specifies the general requirements such as size ranges and examples of size designation for protective clothing used by health workers. **KPAS 2920:2020** that provides the minimum specification for sanitization booths used in the sanitization of people by either walking round or through them. **KPAS 2919:2020** that gives the minimum specifications for face shields as protective gear used by healthcare service providers. It is an additional protection and should be used along with facemasks, goggles, hood, among other PPEs to confer protective benefit on the user while protecting the patient during emergency medical

services. **KS ISO 27427:2013** for the anaesthetic and respiratory equipment that specifies nebulizing systems and components. **KS ISO 23328-1:2003** for breathing system filters for anaesthetic and respiratory use — Part 1: Salt test method to assess filtration performance and **KS ISO 23328-2:2002** for breathing system filters for anaesthetic and respiratory use — Part 2: Non-filtration aspects.

As the custodian of standardization services, conformity assessments as well as a facilitator of fair and just trade, KEBS has allowed free access to Standards that will guide manufacturers in the production of PPEs and equipment. KEBS is also holding consultative meetings with local manufacturers including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, factories, universities and other entrepreneurs where guidance on the requirements including the materials, composition, type, workmanship, design, size, test methods, labeling, and packaging of surgical masks, other PPEs and equipment is provided.

It is expected that, verified and certified equipment will help control the spread of the coronavirus. Consumers are encouraged to ascertain the quality of the masks and instant hand sanitizers before purchasing.

Worth noting is that certified hand sanitizers should have at least 60% alcohol content and a legitimate KEBS Standardization mark. Unfortunately, unscrupulous manufacturers and traders have taken advantage of the situation to offer for sale substandard products which give unsuspecting buyers a false sense of protection while increasing the risk of exposure. This compromises the efforts to contain the virus not to mention other harmful effects that may arise from using substandard products.

KEBS is also continuously sensitizing Kenyans to use only certified sanitizers and masks. Additionally, market surveillance activities have been intensified to ensure that PPEs and sanitizers sold in the market meet the required standards.

Manufacturers are encouraged to consult KEBS for guidance on quality and certification of PPEs and make use of the free standards offered online through the KEBS website. Stern action as stipulated in the Standards Act Cap 496 including fine or imprisonment will also be taken against anyone who fails to provide samples for tests and inspection.

The public and traders are encouraged to check the validity of the Standardization Mark permit on products being sold or

purchased by sending the code (numbers) underneath the Standardization Mark logo to 20023 (i.e. type message **SM#Code** and SMS to **20023**) to get product manufacturing details and permit validity status or **ISM#UCR** code for imported products. If the details are different, retailers should not purchase, stock or offer for sale the products but report to KEBS Toll Free Number 1545 during official working hours.

We must all recognize that, the fight against coronavirus is our fight - the government, the manufacturers and the people of Kenya. Countries such as Singapore, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan have been cited as having successfully contained the spread of the virus. A key learning from these countries is that there is collaboration and cooperation between the government, the people and the manufacturers. The people are maintaining social distance, wearing masks and maintaining hygiene as the government test and isolate patients while manufacturers produce PPEs that meet applicable standards.

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# BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT, WHEN THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS



**By Eddy Njoroge**

The volcanic activity of Eyjafjallajökull, in Iceland in 2010 caught many businesses and governments unaware. The consequences of the volcanic ash cloud that spewed in the Icelandic and European air space was felt far and wide. The airline industry bore the brunt of it all. Planes could not fly and as a result, air travel and transport in various parts of world were cancelled due to the airspace restrictions.

Travelers were stranded in various airports across the world and many businesses that were heavily reliant on the air global supply chain processes found themselves without essential supplies. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the volcanic disruption affected almost a third of global flights, and as a result global airline lost approximately \$1.7billion in revenue while an estimated 1.2 million passengers a day were affected.

Wider impact was also felt in businesses that rely on trade from airlines and

airports. Global logistics firms were unable to transport goods by air. Closer home, producers of perishable goods, such as flowers, were hit hard due to the grounding of flights. It was estimated that the Kenyan economy was incurring a loss of \$3.8m each day of the disruption.

Such incidents can disrupt an organization or business enterprise any time. These disruptions can range from natural disasters like; forest fires, volcanic eruptions, flash floods among others as well as man-made disasters like; cyber-attacks, post-election violence, mutiny, terrorist attacks, among others.

Pandemics like SARS, H1N1 Virus, Ebola and now the COVID 19 are just some of the many unexpected yet possible threats to the smooth running of any organization or business.

In today's world, businesses operate in an increasingly uncertain environment. Businesses that rely on global supply

chains face even more complex business environment. The key concern for most managers is disruption of day to day operations and how to mitigate further inconveniences.

It calls for robust business continuity planning to mitigate major disruptions. In the recent past, there has been a growing recognition, of a business-led process encompassing preparations for many forms of disruption which is now referred to as Business Continuity Management (BCM).

Business continuity has evolved much more than just data retrieval as a result of power failure, fire incident or a computer crash as was the case in 80's and 90's. It takes a wholistic approach – all functions within an organization or business are prepared for – considered crucial now more than ever before as new risks and disruptions emerge.

It is important to clarify the convergence



between Business Continuity Management and Risk Management. BCM is about actions required when the disruption occurs in order to keep the business or organization running while risk management is about the possibility of an adverse event happening and the mitigating actions an organization undertakes. BCM is less concerned with the cause of disruption. The possibility of Risk management and BCM to be on collision course instead of complementing each other is higher if an integration of the two management systems is being practiced. Incorporating Risk management and BCM into wider organizational governance framework, not only gives a better view of totality of risk an organization faces but also places it on a pedestal to understand overall exposure to business interruption and fully prepare for any eventuality. Any organization keen on good governance may consider incorporating business continuity in their overall strategic risk framework.

The interplay between international Standards and management systems like BCM and risk management will be of great importance. In the recent years, International Standards like those developed by International Organization for Standardization (ISO) have become central to BCM and Risk management.

ISO 22301; Societal security – Business continuity management systems – Requirements standard was developed by ISO technical committee on security and resilience, in 2012 and updated in 2019 under the leadership of Swedish Standards Institute, provides a framework to plan, establish, implement, operate, monitor, review, maintain and continually improve a business continuity management system (BCMS). This Standard can assist organizations prepare for, protect against, respond to, and recover when disruptive

incidents arise.

ISO 31000; Risk management Standard developed by the Risk Management technical committee of ISO, was previously published in 2009 updated in 2018, under the leadership of British Standards Institute, on the other hand, provides direction on how companies can integrate risk-based decision making into an organization's governance, planning, management, reporting, policies, values and culture. By implementing ISO 31000 organizations can be able see both the positive opportunities and negative consequences associated with risk, and allows for more informed, and thus more effective, decision making, namely in the allocation of resources.

These Standards are becoming widely adopted. They represent global unanimity and represent globally agreed best practices. For example, ISO 22301 borrows best practices from previous national Standards of Britain, Australia, Singapore and the USA; ISO Standards are developed by a diverse range of specialists from all over the world, from all areas where the standards have an impact, such as industry, government, academia, standardization. Standards also provide an assessment platform if the business is ready for any interruption. Implementing BCM standard, does not necessarily offer competitive advantage but helps achieve organizational resilience when the real disruption happens. In addition, certification to BCM standard gives clients or trading partners an assurance that an organization or a business takes continuity very seriously.

BCM Standards (ISO 22301) and risk management Standards (ISO 31000, ISO/TR 31004:2013, IEC 31010) don't just benefit businesses and organizations alone. They can support key government public policies. In Kenya, adoption of



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BCM and Risk Management Standards can support key policies such as National Policy for disaster management in Kenya. They can offer significant contribution to county governments on how well to prepare and manage risks in their operations.

Investing in BCM and Risk management is important to organizations due to unexpected shifts and new unforeseen challenges in the world today. The ability to recover, resume operations after a disruption, and steadying the ship should be an immediate concern and a key focus area for businesses in Kenya - now more than ever before. Implementation of BCM and Risk management standards is one area that will have high rate of return. Businesses then can rest and be assured that their frameworks of handling risks and business continuity is robust.

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# KEBS warns against sale and use of substandard hand Sanitizers



The Ministry of Health recommends washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as one of the ways to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). In case soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least sixty percent (60%) alcohol content can be a substitute to sanitize your hands to help you avoid getting sick and spreading coronavirus to others.

However, unscrupulous manufacturers and traders have taken advantage of the situation to offer for sale substandard hand sanitizers which are not certified by KEBS. These sanitizers cannot therefore be vouched by KEBS to have complied to **KS EAS 789; Kenya standard specification for instant hand sanitizers** and may compromise efforts to the fight against the pandemic not to mention other harmful effects that may arise from using such products.

The use of substandard sanitisers gives a false sense of protection while increasing the risk of exposure to disease causing pathogens including the Coronavirus.

The public is therefore urged to be vigilant and avoid purchase of products that do not bear a valid KEBS Standardization Mark (SM), Diamond Mark of Quality or Unique Consignment Reference (UCR). The Standardization Mark (SM) or Diamond Mark of Quality are marks of quality that are issued under the KEBS

product certification scheme for locally manufactured products to demonstrate that the products comply with the relevant Kenya Standards. Imported products are also issued with a Unique Consignment Reference (UCR) number once they are confirmed to be compliant with Kenya Standards under the Pre Verification of Conformity (PVOC) programme.

To check the validity of the Standardization Mark permit on products sold or purchased one should send the code (numbers) underneath the Standardization Mark logo to 20023 (i.e. type message **SM#Code** and **SMS** to **20023**) to get product manufacturing details and permit validity status or **ISM#UCR** code for imported products. If the details are different, retailers should not purchase, stock or offer for sale the products but report to KEBS Toll Free Number 1545 during official working hours.

Lastly one can also download KEBS APP



Sale of products that do not comply with Kenya Standards is prohibited by the Laws of Kenya under the Standards Act Chapter 496 with penalties including prosecution.”

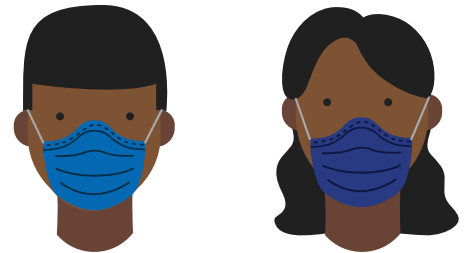
which can be used to verify the marks and other services offered by KEBS.

Sale of products that do not comply with Kenya Standards is prohibited by the Laws of Kenya under the Standards Act Chapter 496 with penalties including prosecution.



## KEBS warns against production, sale and use of substandard face masks

Face masks are designed to cover the mouth, nose and chin to provide a barrier that minimizes the direct transmission of infectious agents.



As such, wearing of masks will help in capturing virus-laden droplets projected during sneezing, coughing and talking that could be both from external environment and by the wearer of the mask thus to the environment preventing transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Currently, there are three types of masks available in the country namely: surgical masks, particle masks and reusable cloth mask. The surgical masks are certified under the Kenya Standard for Surgical masks (KS 2636:2016), that specifies materials, composition, type, workmanship, design, size, test methods, labeling, and packaging of surgical masks. KS 2409-6:2018 : Health care wastes management commodities, specification-part 6:

Filtering face masks to protect against particles, it specifies the requirements for filtering half masks as respiratory protective devices to protect against particles except for escape purposes. The reusable cloth masks are covered under the KPAS 2917:2020 Publicly Available Specification (PAS) that guides their design, manufacture and performance evaluation with a key requirement to have two layers of fabric.

Of importance is ascertaining the quality of a mask before

purchase for maximum protection. Using substandard face masks, or even misuse of the masks, is highly risky, because it gives a false sense of protection while increasing the risk of exposure to coronavirus. Traders and consumers are therefore advised to purchase only face masks that have been certified by KEBS and to verify the authenticity of the said marks

In addition to wearing masks, the general public is advised to take additional measures such as social distancing and hand washing with soap for at least twenty seconds several times a day to prevent the spread of corona virus. It is also advisable to wash the re-usable face masks with soap and water before use.

So far, KEBS is already assisting tailors to attain the required standards to be able to produce and supply quality masks to the public that meet the set Kenya Standards. To guide the manufactures, KEBS has made available FREE of charge the standards for Personnel Protective Equipment (PPEs) at [https://www.kebs.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=658:kenya-standards-for-personal-protective-equipment-ppes&catid=23&Itemid=180](https://www.kebs.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=658:kenya-standards-for-personal-protective-equipment-ppes&catid=23&Itemid=180).

KEBS also conducts FREE testing of the masks to ensure they are of good quality and safe for use.