

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

For law practices during the period of elevated safe distancing measures, including the suspension of business activities, from 7 April 2020 to 1 June 2020 and the resumption of business activities from 2 June 2020.

- 1) If our law practice is providing legal services in one or more of the four categories of legal activities identified as essential services (see Ministry of Law's [advisory](#) of 5 April 2020), does that mean we can continue to operate from our workplace as usual without applying for an exemption?**

If your law practice is providing legal services in one or more of the four categories of legal activities identified as essential legal services, and any personnel need to be physically present at your office during the relevant period, you will still need to apply for a one-time General Exemption at <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>. When submitting your application, please ensure you provide the relevant details of your operations for review including justifications for why your activities are essential.

You may wish to refer to the guidelines and FAQs on <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg> for more information on the safe distancing measures that businesses providing essential services must adhere to when operating at your office during this period.

- 2) If the legal services that our law practice provides does not fall within one of the four categories of legal activities identified as essential services, can we continue to operate?**

If the services that your law practice provides are not one of the four categories of legal activities identified as [essential legal services](#), you must suspend all in-person activities at your office. You may continue to operate if the services can be performed by telecommuting from home. For short-term entry into your office, you will need to apply for a Time-Limited Exemption at <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

- 3) Our law practice did not apply for a General Exemption as we do not have to be at the office most days. Can we drop into the office just for a while to receive documents, collect mail or to perform maintenance of the facility? Do we need to apply for an exemption? What if we need to go into the office to settle some work matters?**

If you are the owner of the law practice and need to return to your office premises even for short-term entry, to attend to work matters (except for brief entry for the limited situations illustrated above), you must still apply for a Time-Limited Exemption. Your employees are not permitted to go to your place of business. If you need to activate your employees to

work on-site for short periods of time (i.e. less than a day), you need to apply for a time-limited exemption. You may submit a Time-Limited Exemption application one day in advance at <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>, and the exemption will be valid for the period requested. Where either an employee or the business owner/employer will be the only person working at your workplace, you may indicate “1” staff.

Where granted such a Time-Limited Exemption, you must ensure that safe distancing measures are strictly adhere to while at the office. Please refer to <https://www.covid.gobusiness.gov.sg> for guidance on safe distancing at the office.

4) If our law practice provides more than one of the legal activities identified as essential services, do we need to submit separate applications for each activity?

Your law practice will only need to submit one application.

5) How should our law practice fill in the application form? Is there a step-by-step guide?

- Your law practice will need a CorpPass account to access the form.
- Provide general information about your law practice and select “Legal Services (Limited)” under “Sector”.

For General Exemption applications

- Under “Key basis for application”, select “A1. Essential services and/or related supply chains for basic functioning of Singapore” if you are applying for a General Exemption. Note – you should only apply for a general exemption for legal activities identified as essential services.
- You will need to provide details of the legal services activities that you are providing during the Circuit Breaker period that fall within the legal activities identified as essential activities. Please be prepared to furnish supporting documents, if requested.
- You will be required to state your law practice’s total number of manpower and the number of individuals you are applying to have at the office premises. In terms of manpower numbers to be reported, the “employees” field for your application should capture the total number of personnel in your office. This includes owners/ partners/ directors, lawyers, support staff and all other personnel engaged by the firm. You are advised to keep to a skeletal team and adhere to safe distancing measures.

For Time-Limited Exemption applications

- You will only be allowed to apply for the exemption **one day before** the day you require access your office premises.

- You will be required to provide details of the reason(s) for accessing your office premises and the number of individuals activated.

6) Can our law practice continue to operate while waiting for the outcome of our application?

For law practices that are providing legal services identified as essential services, you must ensure that you submit an application for General Exemption and retain proof of having done so. You may continue to operate while waiting for a reply from the General Exemption application in respect of the provision of such essential legal services. However, you are required to continue to strictly comply with the Safe Distancing advisory and other guidance available to providers of essential services on <https://www.covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

If the services that your law practice provides are not one of the four categories of legal activities identified as [essential legal services](#), you must suspend all in-person activities at your office premises during the Circuit Breaker period. You may continue to operate if the services can be performed by telecommuting from home. For short-term entry into your office, you will need to apply for a Time-Limited Exemption at <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

7) Our law practice submitted an exemption application before 5 April, do we need to resubmit?

You do not need to resubmit your application if the information is accurate and adequate, and in the right category (General / Time-Limited). Your application will be assessed, and you will be informed of the outcome.

8) Where can we find the status of our law practice's application for a General Exemption?

You may check the status of your General Exemption application at the "Status of Application" section in <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg> . You will need to login with your CorpPass.

9) What do we do if our law practice's application for a General Exemption has been rejected and we have urgent matters to attend to in the office?

If your application for a General Exemption has been rejected, and you have urgent matters to attend to in the office, you may wish to consider applying for a Time-Limited Exemption,

which will be valid for the specific period requested. You may wish to note that there is a limit to the number of times an applicant may apply for Time-Limited Exemptions over the Circuit Breaker period. For more information on Time-Limited Exemptions, please refer to <https://www.covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

10) Why was our law practice’s application for a General Exemption rejected? Can we appeal?

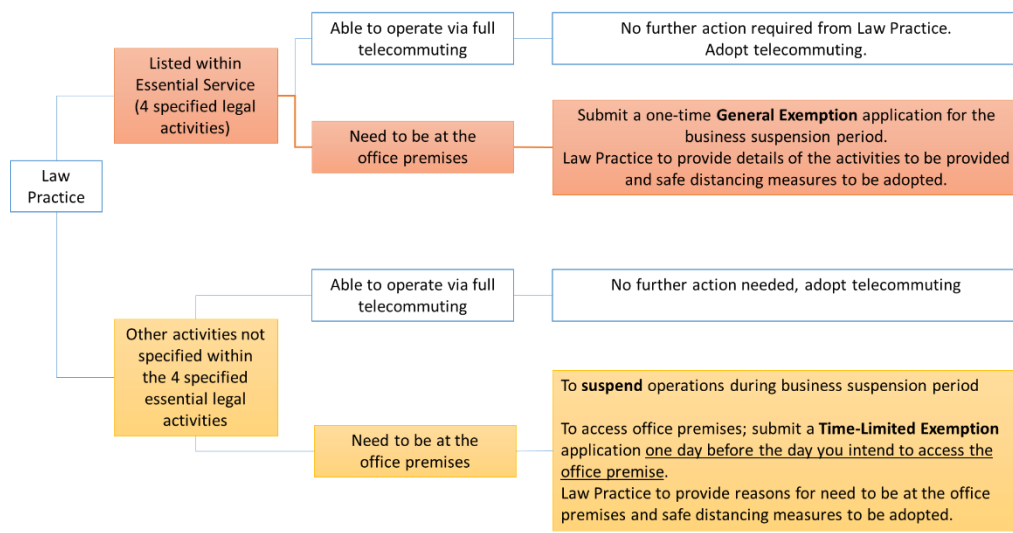
Your application for a General Exemption may have been rejected for several possible reasons, e.g. incomplete or insufficient details provided to justify that the legal activities you need to perform in the office during the Circuit Breaker period fall within the four categories of legal activities set out in the Advisory for Law Practices on Elevated Safe Distancing Measures.

If you believe that your earlier submission may have been incomplete or did not provide sufficient information, e.g. the specific hearing dates or transaction deadlines/completions that need to take place over the Circuit Breaker period, please write to MLAW_LI_ESERVICES@MLAW.GOV.SG setting out these details, together with a copy of the rejection notice and rejected application.

11) How many times can our law practice apply for a Time-Limited Exemption?

You may wish to note that there is a limit to the number of times an applicant may apply for Time-Limited Exemptions over the Circuit Breaker period. For more information on Time-Limited Exemption, please refer to <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

Exemption request during Circuit Breaker period



12) Our law practice has obtained approval for a General Exemption and recently received an email notification informing us that we need to register the essential manpower we intend to deploy at our office premises. Why do we need to submit this and what do we need to do?

Only businesses with an approved General Exemption are allowed to operate from their office premises during the Circuit Breaker period.

As the Covid-19 situation evolves, stricter measures to control the manpower strength in the workplace have been introduced. Law practices that had earlier received an approval for a General Exemption will receive a notification requiring them to register their essential manpower at <https://www.gobusiness.gov.sg/exemptions/login> by providing the NRIC / FIN number of the personnel that will be working onsite at the office premises. You should register the details of your on-site personnel within 2 days of receiving the notification. For more information, please refer to FAQs on Registration of Essential Manpower at <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

13) Is the manpower registration for law practices applicable only for General Exemptions or is this also required for Time-Limited Exemptions?

The requirement to register essential manpower is not required for previously approved Time-Limited Exemptions as these can only be applied for a day in advance. However, for new Time-Limited Exemption applications, you will also be required to provide the details of the manpower to be deployed at your office premises within the application form.

14) Our law practice had earlier submitted a General Exemption application, but we have yet to receive a reply. Do we need to submit an amendment to provide the details of our essential manpower?

You will have to wait for the results of the General Exemption application that you had filed earlier. If your application for a General Exemption is approved, you will receive an email notification requiring you to provide the details of the essential personnel you intend to deploy at your office premises (refer to Question 13 for further details). You may check the status of your General Exemption application at the “Status of Application” section at <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>. You will need to login with your CorpPass.

15) The system reflects our law practice’s manpower quota as “X”, why is there a need for a quota?

Each law practice with an approved General Exemption is allotted a specific manpower quota. The quota on the manpower that you are allowed to have on-site is necessary to minimise the movement of workers to and from work and reduce the risks for personnel required to be at the office. For more information, please refer to FAQs on Registration of Essential Manpower on <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

16) Our law practice needs to deploy more than the allotted number of staff reflected in the system to return to office during the Circuit Breaker period. What should we do?

The quota on the essential manpower that your law practice is allowed to have on-site is necessary to minimise the movement of workers to and from work and reduce the risks for personnel required to be at the office. We are aware that this may cause inconvenience to your law practice but the on-site manpower limits are necessary given the evolving Covid-19 situation and the urgent need to stem its spread.

If you would still like to request for a review of your manpower quota, click on “Submission of Additional Manpower” to submit your request. This is subject to review and approval, taking into consideration the justifications and reasons submitted by your law practice. For more information, please refer to FAQ on Registration of Essential Manpower on <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

17) While the system reflects our law practice’s manpower quota as “X”, as we are planning to have split-team arrangements, can we provide more than “X” identities?

When you first log into the system using your CorpPass to provide the details of your essential manpower, you will notice a numerical limit on the total number of personnel that you are able to deploy at your office premises during the Circuit Breaker period. You will only be able to provide up to the same number of unique NRIC / FIN numbers of your on-site personnel in the system.

If you are planning to have split-team or part-time arrangements such that the on-site manpower you propose to register exceeds the limit allocated to your law practice, you may submit an appeal for additional manpower, explaining the reasons and justifications for the request. Such requests will be subject to review and approval, taking into consideration the specific circumstances and reasons submitted by your law practice. If you are successful in your appeal for additional manpower, please resubmit all the NRIC

/ FIN numbers of your essential workers. For more information, please refer to FAQs on Registration of Essential Manpower on <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

18) Does our law practice need to provide the details of the essential manpower we will have at my office premises on a daily basis?

The online submission mentioned in Question 13 is a one-off submission. You do not need to submit the details of your essential manpower on a daily basis. The details of the on-site personnel accounted for in your submission should apply for the entire duration of the Circuit Breaker period. Personnel not named on the list submitted by your law practice are not permitted to be on-site at the office. Please see Question 20 below if you have queries on how to update the list you had submitted.

19) Can our law practice change the details of the essential manpower that will be accessing the office premises during this period?

You can amend and resubmit the details of your on-site manpower. For more information, please refer to FAQ on Registration of Essential Manpower on <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.

20) What happens after our law practice submits the details of our essential manpower?

An acknowledgement email will be sent to the email address you provided in the application form to inform you that a record of the details of your on-site manpower has been received.

21) It was announced on 2 May that some of the tighter circuit breaker measures will be progressively eased in the coming weeks, does this mean law practices can resume regular business activities?

Following the announcement on 2 May 2020, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce announced on 19 May 2020 that Circuit Breaker measures will be gradually eased from 2 June 2020, and businesses will be allowed to resume activities in a phased manner. Legal services are included in the list of businesses (accurate as of 19 May 2020) that may operate from 2 June 2020.

Apart from MinLaw's "[Advisory for Law Practices on Elevated Safe Distancing Measures – Gradual Resumption of Business Activities](#)" issued on 20 May 2020, you may refer to

MTI's advisory on the gradual resumption of business activities in phases at [Resumption of activities from 2 June 2020](#). The list of business and facilities that are allowed to resume operations can be found at <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/permittedlist/>. This list will be updated as more activities and services resume.

22) Is it necessary for my law practice to apply for an exemption to be able to operate from 2 June onwards?

Law practices do not need to apply for an exemption before resuming operations. MTI will grant law practices a class exemption to resume business, subject to your law practice's implementation of Safe Management Measures.

Law practices must submit your manpower details via the GoBusiness portal (<https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>) within two weeks of the date of resumption of operations. Law practices may submit your manpower details using the "Permissions and Manpower Declaration" button on GoBusiness from 26 May onwards. Law practices are reminded to adopt telecommuting to the maximum extent and employees should only come into the office when demonstratively needed, eg, to access specialised systems.

23) Will my law practice be receiving a notification to confirm that my practice is able to resume operations at our office premises on 2 June 2020?

There will not be any additional notification from MTI to inform law practices that you are able to resume business activities at your office premises from 2 June 2020. Business entities that are unsure if they can operate can check their SSIC against the list of permitted services that can resume operations on 2 June 2020 at <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/guides/permittedserviceslist.pdf>

24) Is it necessary to adopt Safe Management Measures for our law practice?

Since 12 May 2020, all businesses allowed to operate during the Circuit Breaker period have been required to implement Safe Management Measures. This includes law practices operating during the Circuit Breaker period under General Exemptions.

Law practices resuming business activities at your office premises from 2 June 2020, must comply with the requirements for Safe Management Measures before resuming workplace activities, in order to provide a safe working environment for your employees and prevent transmission at the workplace. These measures must be implemented in a sustainable manner for as long as necessary. Strict checks will be conducted, and law

practices that do not provide a safe workplace for your employees will have your operations suspended until you are able to do so.

Law practices may refer to the guidelines on implementation of Safe Management Measures on "[Requirements for Safe Management Measures at the workplace after Circuit Breaker period](#)"

25) Is the resumption of business activities for legal services limited to only the four categories of legal activities identified as essential services in the Ministry of Law's advisory of 5 April 2020 or are other legal services now permitted as well?

The resumption of business activities for legal services extends beyond the four essential legal services outlined during the Circuit Breaker period. Law practices that did not previously apply for General or Time-Limited Exemptions will be able to resume business activities from 2 June 2020, subject to implementation of Safe Management Measures.

Law practices may refer to the guidelines on implementation of Safe Management Measures on "[Requirements for Safe Management Measures at the workplace after Circuit Breaker period](#)"

26) Is there a minimum percentage or number of employees that law practices must place on work from home arrangements with the resumption of business activities from 2 June 2020?

The reduction of physical interaction, together with other Safe Management Measures at the workplace, is necessary to ensure a safe working environment and minimise the spread of COVID-19. Employers should adopt telecommuting to the maximum as far as reasonably practicable. The proportion of employees that are able to telecommute will vary in different workplaces and sectors due to differing operational requirements. The onus is on the employers to show that they have made reasonable effort to facilitate working from home.

27) Are my employees and visitors required to wear a mask at all times at the workplace?

For general office workplaces, employers must ensure that employees and visitors wear a mask at all times at the workplace, except during activities that require masks to be removed such as when eating or drinking. Supplementary personal protective equipment is encouraged, whenever relevant. This is in addition to the other Safe Management Measures that must be in place at the workplace.

When attending remote court hearings via video or teleconferencing, lawyers may remove their masks only to the extent necessary to speak, while observing other Safe Management Measures.

28) Pertaining to service of court process and documents, will the court process servers of law practices be able to carry out service of process on parties including individuals at their residences or offices?

The service of court processes and documents is permissible, including delivery by hand where necessary, as process servers will be providing an essential service of the law practice, which is a permitted business. The process servers should observe safe distancing and take all other necessary precautions required under the Control Order at all times.

29) Will clients of law practices be able to be physically present at the offices of law practices for the purpose of meetings, notarization, signing of wills, contracts, mortgages, instruments of conveyancing and other legal documents?

Physical attendance at the office by clients of law practices is permitted only where their physical presence is necessary, such as to complete a contract or transaction that is legally required to be completed in person. Employees of the law practice and clients are required to observe Safe Management Measures requirements at all times.