



## BBE vs COVID19

Whilst the BBE Group is unified in operations, capabilities, and service delivery for our clients worldwide, the impact of COVID19 on our teams across the three continents could not have been more diverse.

Business related travel is an essential part of the BBE business and continuing to be productive whilst travelling and being remote was a key strategy the BBE already identified. In addition, it was identified that remote work will become an essential way of doing business in order to attract and retain professional staff. Employees are equipped with laptops and mobile phones that enable them to work seamlessly and uninterrupted. So when the call was to work from home, it was not as disruptive as there had been ad hoc situations where staff were doing this on a regular basis and systems were either already in place or being developed to accommodate this need.

Each of BBE's locations rose to the unprecedented challenges and adapted to the ever-changing restrictions and requirements ensuring our clients continued to receive seamless service for their designs and projects. Due to the differing requirements in the various regions, each office developed a unique set of mitigating controls.

Our Canadian office's philosophy since inception has been to empower employees to give their best on their terms and schedule. Therefore, when it was required to socially distance at home the impact was minimal. Controls implemented include biometric thermal screening of employees, audited symptomatic health screening on arrival for employees and visitors. Social distancing was facilitated through delineation by floor markers and measures like the use of masks, safety glasses, and hand sanitizer became common practice. Existing controls of visitor sign-in sheets were used for contact tracing. A few staff members were infected but showed mild symptoms and fully recovered.

In terms of the South African office the true risk was not truly appreciated until the government classified it a pandemic on 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 and a national disaster and imposed a three-week lockdown which was later extended through most of 2020 in various forms and levels of restrictions. A risk mitigation strategy was adopted by management prior to the lockdown announcements, and a decision that employees making use of public transport should remain at home. Mobile phone chat groups were established to facilitate instantaneous communication to staff as well as interact with each other on a more informal manner, share of information. A regular 'lock down survival tip email' saw the light and often included various light-hearted working from home tips. Unfortunately, the inevitable occurred and some staff members became infected sparking a lockdown and office sanitisation. Some staff members had to be hospitalised, but all have made a full recovery. South Africa is just emerging out of its 3rd wave with the last being the worst with a bi-modal distribution.

Our Australian office being in Western Australia means this business unit and its employees have been relatively spared any significant impact with all employees avoiding infection. This privileged situation is a testimony to the good work done by federal and state governments. Management has always proactively taken measures in sending staff home. A further mitigation strategy was to employ people in other states without the intention of relocating them to WA to work in our Perth office. As a result, resources are now available in Victoria (Melbourne), South Australia (Adelaide), Queensland (Brisbane) and New South Wales (Orange).

Vaccinations remain a contentious issue however BBE is supporting the initiative and allows employees to get their vaccinations during their worktime. This philosophy not only makes business sense but also protects our employees and their families and mitigates risk for our clients should our employees need to interact with them in person especially when on-site. BBE anticipates that it may be a requirement to be vaccinated to enter client premises.

COVID19 has certainly impacted how we do things at BBE worldwide, but we believe it has also shaped the way we will do business in future in which embracing a flexible work environment and technology that is a win-win for clients, employees, and our teams alike.