

1 OCTOBER 2020

GUIDELINES FOR NINE EMPEROR GODS PRAYERS AND ACTIVITIES

The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), in consultation with the Taoist Federation (TF), is providing additional guidance to religious organisations (ROs) on the safe management and conduct of this year's Nine Emperor Gods prayers and activities, which will take place from 16 to 25 October 2020.

2. ROs conducting activities for the Nine Emperor Gods prayers and activities must adhere to the guidelines outlined below. This is in addition to MCCY's prevailing advisory on the Resumption of More Religious Activities in Phase Two¹, which has been updated on 30 September 2020. Both congregational and non-congregational religious activities can be held concurrently, subject to prevailing safe management measures (SMMs).

3. ROs are allowed to conduct religious activities for the Nine Emperor Gods for **no more than 100 persons at a time** (excluding religious and supporting workers, which should be kept to a minimum) at places of worship.

- a. For congregational worship services (i.e. where individuals gather to pray in a group) exceeding 50 persons, **worshippers must be divided into zones holding no more than 50 persons each.**
- b. As there should be no mingling of individuals across zones, each zone must be completely separated from another by either a physical solid partition (at least 1.8m high if not floor-to-ceiling, from wall-to-wall); or at least 3m physical spacing demarcated by barriers (e.g. cones, ropes).
- c. There must either be a separate ingress / egress for each zone or staggered entrance / exit timings so that attendees from different zones do not mix with one another during entry / exit.
- d. ROs must also take reasonable steps to ensure people do not cross the physical barrier (where applicable).

¹ From 3 Oct 2020, places of worship may conduct congregational and other worship services, for up to 100 persons at a time. Non-congregational religious activities including religious rites are also permitted in places of worship for groups of up to 5 persons, not exceeding a total of 50 persons. Non-congregational religious activities, solemnizations, funerals and recording / broadcast sessions will be subject to a total premise cap of 100 persons.

4. ROs must also observe the following SMMs for religious activities for the Nine Emperor Gods:

- a. Prayer services should be kept to **as short a duration as possible** and worshippers should leave immediately after performing their prayers. There should be no mingling between worshippers before, during or after the prayer service.
- b. Worshippers are to observe **1 metre safe distance** between themselves and others if they are worshipping individually. Worshippers may also worship in groups of no more than 5 persons, with 1 metre safe distancing between groups.
- c. All persons present (except children below 6 years of age) must wear a **face mask at all times**.
- d. There should be **no sharing of prayer and other common items**. Worshippers should bring along their personal prayer items instead, where needed.
- e. **Worshippers can burn incense and joss paper** within the premises that the prayer services are held and should do so responsibly.
- f. Worshippers should **leave immediately** after performing their prayers.
- g. **Singing and other live performances** (e.g. Lion Dance, Chinese Opera) are **not permitted²**.
- h. **Dinners, in-person getais, and live auctioning are not permitted**. ROs can consider alternative forms such as digital recordings to allow their worshippers to safely participate in such activities.
- i. **No receptions or on-site meals are allowed** before, during and after the prayer service.
- j. The above measures are in addition to existing SMMs for religious activities in Phase Two.³

5. External Venues. ROs conducting prayers at venues outside of places of worship **must obtain permits and approvals** from the premise owners and relevant authorities. These prayers should be conducted by ROs that have a good track record of implementing SMMs [i.e. have submitted Safe Management Plans (SMPs) for Phase Two activities to MCCY], or by religious workers endorsed by these ROs. ROs

² ROs that have been approved by MCCY to participate in the live music pilot may conduct singing and live music during worship services on selected days with up to 10 musicians / singers, with maximum 5 persons unmasked.

³ Existing safe management measures include mandatory temperature taking and registration, and frequent cleaning of premises.

that do not have such a track record are advised to first seek the support of the TF before their applications to use external venues are considered by the relevant authorities/premise owners. ROs should adhere to the safe management measures stipulated in paragraphs 3 and 4, as well as any other conditions stipulated by the premise owner.

6. Vehicular processions. There should be **no vehicular processions**. All commuters on organised transport (e.g. buses, vans and lorries) are required to **wear a mask, and refrain from talking to each other or on their mobile phones**.

MANDATORY SUBMISSION OF SAFE MANAGEMENT PLANS

7. ROs must submit their Safe Management Plans (SMPs) for Phase Two **at least 3 days** before proceeding with any Phase Two activities, including prayers for the Nine Emperor Gods. ROs requesting deviations from the parameters set out in either MCCY's prevailing advisory on the Resumption of More Religious Activities in Phase Two, or the guidelines set out above in paragraphs 3 to 6, will require MCCY's approval before proceeding with their activities.

8. MCCY reserves the right to suspend a RO's activities if there are gaps in the SMP submitted and until the necessary rectifications are made. Should there be any confirmed COVID-19 cases linked to a RO's Nine Emperor Gods activities, the RO's operations and/or premises may be closed for a period of time as determined by the authorities.

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP SINGAPORE COVID-SAFE

9. MCCY will continue to work closely with our ROs to ensure a COVID-safe environment for all religious activities. We also seek the understanding and support of our religious communities to abide by the safe management measures.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH

For more information and FAQs on COVID-19 for the religious sector, please visit www.cpro.gov.sg or contact MCCY's Crisis Preparedness for Religious Organisations Programme Office at cpro@mccy.gov.sg.