

## Omicron – new COVID-19 variant of concern

Following the identification of a new variant by scientists in South Africa and its confirmation as the **Omicron** variant of concern by the World Health Organisation, President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation last night confirming that the country would **remain on alert level one** at this stage.

The President made a **powerful appeal** to the **unvaccinated to get vaccinated**. *“Vaccination is by far the most important way to protect yourself and those around you against the Omicron variant, to reduce the impact of the fourth wave and to help restore the social freedoms we all yearn for,”* he said.

He **indicated** that **vaccine mandates may be on the way**, following a process of consultation to garner support for the move. They would likely apply to **workplaces, public transport and leisure venues** open to the public.

In that theme, the National Automobile Dealers’ Association **strongly implores everyone to get vaccinated**. We recognise that certain individuals, for religious or other personal reasons, might not be able to get vaccinated, but to the vast majority, **please act responsibility**. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine gives you **an added layer of protection** against severe COVID-19 infection **and prevents the virus from mutating** further. Although it is a variant of concern, current scientific evidence (albeit very early) shows Omicron to be far more transmissible (virulent) than previous COVID-19 strains but milder.

This communication serves to remind all of you to please follow the various risk mitigation protocols that were previously communicated to you i.e.

- Wear a **mask** at all times. This includes all areas of the dealership as well as in public spaces (compulsory);
- Please ensure that you follow the **risk mitigation protocols** without fail for your own, your colleagues, customers’ and families’ safety;
- **Sanitise** your **hands** and **surfaces** on a **regular** basis;
- Ensure that you **maintain social distancing** at all times i.e. 1.5m to 2m apart, and, although not mandated and part of the protocols;
- Please get **vaccinated**.

We urge you to please comply with the OHS Workplace Directives at all times. If you believe that you have been exposed to the virus and / or have tested positive, please remember that you have a responsibility to advise your line manager who will advise you on what course of action to follow.

We all need to **remain vigilant** and **take all necessary** steps to **keep safe**. We urge you to continue to apply all Covid-19 mitigation protocols at your dealership to ensure the health and safety of yourself, your family, your employees, their families and your customers.

**Be vigilant and stay safe.**