



Merchant Marine **Notice**

Panama Maritime Authority
General Directorate of Merchant Marine
Control and Compliance Department

F-34
(DCCM)
V.04

GUIDANCE FOR PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 ON BOARD

No: **MMN-02/2020**

1. The purpose of this Merchant Marine Notice is to provide all vessels owners/operators and local interested parties an update of the situation on the outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the information on the steps that may be taken to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 to, or among crew members, as well as the steps that may be taken in the event that a seafarer get infected.
2. Through the Novel Coronavirus (**COVID-19**) Situation Report – 11 dated 31st, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO), has declared the outbreak to be a public health emergency of international concern.
3. It is still possible to interrupt the virus spread, with the proper implementation of measures to control this outbreak. That is why our Administration recommends monitoring the situation by continuously consulting advisors and situation reports issued by the WHO.
4. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) based on the recommendations developed by the WHO, on the precautions to be taken to minimize the risk crews, seafarers, passengers and other persons onboard ships from the novel coronavirus, has issued Guidance Notice in Handbook for management of public health events on board vessels as per MMC-339 (Medicine Chest and Medical Equipment): <https://panamashipregistry.com/circulars/medicine-chest-and-medical-equipment/>
5. The latest IMO Circular Letter No. 4204, provides the WHO advices, reminding people of the basic principles to reduce the general risk of transmission of acute respiratory infection and urge all interested parties (companies, ship managers, crewing agents, shipping agencies, etc.) to publish the information and ensure that crews, seafarers, passengers and others onboard ships are provided with accurate and relevant information on the coronavirus outbreak and on the measures to reduce the risk of exposure if they are likely to be engaged on ships trading to and from ports in coronavirus affected areas.

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6. It is good to know what Coastal States and local port authorities are requiring when dealing with seafarers infected by COVID-19. Some authorities are not allowing ill crew members off the vessel and may require such vessel to proceed to anchorage for an extended period, until declared free from COVID-19. For such reason vessels owners/operators, must prepare vessels in case face such difficulties.
7. **In view of the above mentioned, the Panama Maritime Authority recommends to implement the following measures on board ships:**
 - 7.1. Seafarers calling at worldwide ports are advised to wear masks and take precautionary measures to avoid getting infected with a new coronavirus and prevent its potential spreading.
 - 7.2. Frequent hand washing with soap and water at all times that the vessels are in port and use of portable alcohol/sanitizer gel for individual use.
 - 7.3. When entering worldwide ports, seafarers are expected to remain onboard their ships and disembark their vessels only when it is absolutely necessary.
 - 7.4. In case of any suspected case of coronavirus is found onboard, the ship it should reported to the local authorities and owners immediately and arranges to seek professional medical assistance from ashore for the affected crewmember /s as early as possible.
 - 7.5. At the same time, proper prevention and separation measures should be taken to avoid contact with other crewmembers to reduce the possibility of any virus being spread.
 - 7.6. Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing onboard or ashore.
 - 7.7. Nebulization and cleaning system on board when receiving articles, supplies (including deck supply, engine supply or galley).
 - 7.8. Implement the mandatory submission of negative covid-19 test for all Authorities, external providers, additional personnel (cargo personnel, unloading personnel, managers, agents) and crew changes before boarding the vessel, taken within 72 hours before if it is PCR or 24 hours before if it is antigen.
 - 7.9. Strictly enforce the ISPS requirements on ensuring that unauthorized personnel do not board the ship throughout the ships port calls.
 - 7.10. In those cases where an ISPS verification (interim, initial, intermediate, renewal and additional audits cannot be performed due to the situation of COVID-19 worldwide the operator company/owner/ or Recognized Security Organization may request an authorization, to postpone the ISPS verification, according to the MMC-359 (item 10) through the following website link:
<http://certificates.amp.gob.pa/certificates>.

- 7.11.** Shipping agencies in Panama, must inform the Ministry of Health (MINSA) and Harbor Master (captaincy of ports) if any crew member or passenger is reported with any of the symptoms of the coronavirus and must coordinate with local health authorities.
- 7.12.** It is very important that the vessel owners should provide guidance to the crew about how to recognize the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Crew should be reminded of the procedures to be followed when a passenger or a crew member on board displays signs and symptoms indicative of acute respiratory disease.
- 7.13.** This Administration recommends to Vessels Owners/Operators, at the time to make the crew change, follow the instructions and Guidance by IMO MSC.1/Circ.1636/Rev.1 from April 22, 2021:
<https://www.wcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/MSC%201636%20protocols/MSC.1-Circ.1636%20-%20Industry%20Recommended%20Framework%20Of%20Protocols%20For%20Ensuring%20Safe%20Ship%20Crew%20Changes%20And%20Travel.pdf>
- 7.14.** In accordance with WHO guidance about infection prevention and control during health care when COVID-19 is suspected medical facilities, cabins and quarters occupied by patients and close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case should be cleaned and disinfected daily. Cleaning and disinfection should be carried out after they have disembarked.
- 7.15.** This Administration recommends that vessels Owners/Operators develop a risk assessment and a Guidance to the vessels for the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 on board their vessel.
- 7.16.** The following Documents of Reference can provide assistance and guidance, to vessels Owners/Operators, to avoid/prevent/avoid the spread of COVID-19 on board vessels:
- 7.16.1.** International medical guide for ships: including the ship's medicine chest, 3rd Edition. World Health Organization:
<http://www.who.int/iris/handle/10665/43814>
- 7.16.2.** Merchant Marine Notice MMN-06/2020 Press Release - Security Level 2:
<https://panamashipregistry.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-Mayo-2020.pdf>
- 7.16.3.** Guidance for Ship Operators for the Protection of the Health of Seafarers:
https://www.ics-shipping.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Guidance-for-Ship-Operators-for-the-Protection-of-the-Health-of-Seafarers_Fourth-Edition_Final.pdf

- 7.17. With the recently changes of the Regulations in some Countries as well in some Port Facilities, of the non-mandatory use of mask or protecting equipment to avoid the spread of the corona virus, this Administration encourages to Ship Owners/Operators to reinforce the COVID-19 preventing measures, providing enough quantity of masks as well personal protective devices to the crew members and to implement, that at the time of ashore personnel go on board the vessels, they shall use the necessary protective equipment including face masks in view to avoid the spreading of the virus on board the vessels. Any personnel that visit the vessel shall follow the Company and Vessel internal procedures described in the risk assessment.
8. This Administration encourages all the operator companies; implement the security measures on board in accordance with the provisions of the Ship Security Plan (SSP).
9. We recommend monitoring the situation by consulting webpages maintained by the WHO and other public health authorities and evaluate the risks present in the next port of call.
10. WHO-website: <https://www.who.int/ith/2020-27-01-outbreak-of-Pneumonia-caused-by-new-coronavirus/en/>

September, 2022 - Inclusion of paragraph 7.17.

November, 2021 - Modification of title, modification of paragraphs 1, 2, 4 and 7, inclusion of paragraphs 6, 7.2, 7.7, 7.8, 7.10, 7.12, 7.13, 7.14, 7.15, 7.16, 7.16.1, 7.16.2 and 7.16.3.

May, 2020 – Modification of paragraph 9 and deleted paragraph 10.

March, 2020 - Modification paragraphs 1, 2, 9 and inclusion of paragraph 10.

February, 2020.

Inquiries concerning the subject of this Merchant Marine Notice or any other request should be forward to:

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