



BERMUDA MERCHANT SHIPPING GUIDANCE NOTICE

Prevention and Management of COVID-19 on Board

This Notice is intended for: Ship Owners, Managers, Masters and Officers

Ref:

WHO Interim Guidance “Operational Considerations for Managing COVID-19 Cases or Outbreaks on Board Ships”

Summary: This notice is to provide guidance on the steps to be taken to prevent, and if necessary prepare for a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 on Board a Bermuda Registered cargo ship

This Notice was issued on 3rd April 2020

1. Introduction

- (1) This guidance is to provide 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 falls ill with COVID-19.
- (2) Many different approaches are being adopted by Coastal States and local port authorities when dealing with seafarers infected by COVID-19. Some authorities are not allowing ill crew members off the vessel and may require such ships to proceed to anchorage for an extended period, until declared free from COVID-19.

Due to this BSMA strongly urge all Bermuda registered ships to enact strict protocols aimed at reducing the possibility of crew members becoming infected.

- (3) It is recommended to use this Guidance Notice in conjunction with the published World Health Organization (WHO) Handbook for management of public health events on board ships.
- (4) Attention is also drawn to the joint statement published by the Special Tripartite Committee of the MLC 2006, reproduced in part, at the end of this Guidance Notice.

2. Measures to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

- (1) To reduce the risk of exposure to crewmembers serving on ships entering Coronavirus affected areas BSMA recommends that the following measures be enacted:

- a. Seafarers wear masks and practice frequent hand washing with soap and water at all times that the ship is in port.
- b. While the vessel is in port seafarers are to stay on board the ship and disembark only when it is strictly necessary.
- c. Serious consideration should be made to cancelling shore leave for all seafarers.
- d. Strictly enforce ISPS requirements and limit the personnel coming aboard to the absolute minimum.
- e. Visits to the ship by essential personnel are to be limited to the shortest possible time and social distancing protocols put in place throughout.
- f. Prior to boarding, all personnel are recommended to complete a brief health questionnaire to ensure that no one with signs of respiratory illness such as coughing or fever is allowed on board. An example questionnaire is included at Appendix 1.

3. Management Plan for Outbreak of COVID-19

- (1) BSMA recommends that shipping and management companies develop an outbreak management plan for the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 on board their vessel.
- (2) The outbreak management plan should include descriptions of the following:
 - a. The location or locations where suspected cases will be isolated individually until disembarkation and transfer to a health care facility;
 - b. Provisions to allow for potential extended isolation of crew members on board;
 - c. The clinical management of suspected cases while they remain on board;
 - d. Cleaning and disinfection procedures for potentially contaminated areas, including the isolation cabins or areas;
 - e. Measures for how management of other crew members that may have been a contact of the suspected case will be managed;
 - f. Measures for management of food service and utensils, waste management services and laundry to be provided to crew members’
 - g. Measures to ensure social distancing among healthy crew members to minimize the potential for spread on board.
- (3) All crew are to be aware of the outbreak management plan and familiar with its contents.
- (4) Pre-boarding procedures for crew members should be developed and take account of the pre-boarding questionnaire provided in Appendix 1. Travel to join the ship should be deferred or rescheduled depending upon the answers given.

- (5) WHO defines 'a contact' as a person who experienced any one of the following exposures during the 2 days before and the 14 days after the onset of symptoms of a probable or confirmed case:
 - a. Face-to-face contact with a probable or confirmed case within 1 meter and for more than 15 minutes;
 - b. Direct physical contact with a probable or confirmed case;
 - c. Direct care for a patient with probable or confirmed COVID-19 disease without using proper personal protective equipment;
- (6) WHO recommends that all contacts of COVID-19 patients be quarantined for 14 days from the last time they were exposed to the probable or confirmed case.
- (7) If a contact develops symptoms, the contact should wear a medical mask, be considered as a suspect case, and treated as such. Any surfaces that become soiled with respiratory secretions or other body fluids during transport should be cleaned with soap or detergent and then disinfected with a regular household product containing a 0.5% diluted bleach solution.

4. Education

- (1) Ship owners should provide guidance to the crew about how to recognize the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- (2) 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.
- (3) Country-specific guidance for crew members about prevention measures may be available.

5. Activation of the Outbreak Management Plan

- (1) If it is determined that there is a suspect case of COVID-19 on board, the outbreak management plan should be activated.
- (2) The suspected case should be immediately instructed to wear a medical mask, follow cough etiquette, and practice hand hygiene; the suspected case should be isolated in a predefined isolation ward, cabin, room or quarters, with the door closed.

6. Obligations of ship owners

- (1) The master of the ship must immediately inform the port health authority at the next port of call about any suspected case of COVID-19.
- (2) For ships on an international voyage, the Maritime Declaration of Health should be completed and sent to the port authority in accordance with local requirements at the port of call.
- (3) Ship owners must facilitate the use of health measures and provide all public health information requested by the health authority at the port. Ship operators shall provide to the port health authorities all essential information (that is, PLFs, the crew list, and the passenger

list) to conduct contact tracing when a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been identified on board.

7. Disembarkation of suspected cases

- (1) The disembarkation and transfer of the suspected case to an onshore health care facility for further assessment and laboratory testing should be arranged as soon as possible in cooperation with the health authorities at the port.
- (2) During the disembarkation of suspected cases, every effort should be made to minimize the exposure of other persons and environmental contamination. Suspect cases should be provided with a surgical mask to minimize the risk of transmission.
- (3) There is the possibility that disembarkation of sick crew members may not be possible in all jurisdictions and the outbreak management plan should account for this eventuality.

8. Follow-up of contacts

- (1) If a crew member is suspected of, or confirmed to have a case of COVID-19 all other crew members should be assessed to determine whether they were exposed to the suspected or confirmed case. If it is difficult to identify the contacts and if widespread transmission is identified, then all people on board could be considered contacts.

9. Measures on board the ship

- (1) Infectious waste should be disposed of in accordance with the port authority's procedures.

10. Cleaning and disinfection

- (1) In accordance with WHO's 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.
- (2) Cleaning and disinfection should be carried out after they have disembarked.
- (3) The remainder of the ship should also be cleaned and disinfected.

**Chief Surveyor
Bermuda Shipping and Maritime Authority**

Courier: 4th Floor, Mintflower Place, 8 Par-la-Ville Road, Hamilton HM 08, Bermuda
Telephone: 1(441) 295-7251 **Fax:** 1(441) 295-3718
e-mail: survey@bermudashipping.bm www.bermudashipping.bm

Appendix 1

Example Pre-Boarding Health Questionnaire

Within the last 14 days:

Have you, or has any person listed above, had close contact with anyone diagnosed as having coronavirus COVID-19?

Have you, or has any person listed above, provided care for someone with COVID-19 or worked with a health care worker infected with COVID-19?

Have you, or has any person listed above, visited or stayed in close proximity to anyone with COVID-19?

Have you, or has any person listed above, worked in close proximity to or shared the same classroom environment with someone with COVID-19?

Have you, or has any person listed above, travelled with a patient with COVID-19 in any kind of conveyance?

Have you, or has any person listed above, lived in the same household as a patient with COVID-19?

Appendix 2

Joint statement issued by the Officers of the Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention (Excerpted)

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/statement/wcms_740130.pdf

The Officers of the Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended, representing Seafarers, Shipowners and Governments, urge the International Labour Office to raise awareness among governments, including labour supplying States and port and flag State authorities, that the goods on which we all rely in our everyday lives are transported by seafarers and that these seafarers are just as worthy as everyone else and should be treated with dignity and respect to ensure that they can continue to provide their vital services to the world.

In these unprecedented circumstances, it is imperative that Member States ensure that the flow of essential goods, energy, food, medicines and many other products is not disrupted by measures that impede the safe and efficient movement of ships and the seafarers who operate them. In this respect, the Officers of the STC would like to raise the following important points that need to be urgently addressed by Member States:

► Seafarers should be officially recognized as key workers, and be granted exemptions from any travel restrictions and special considerations to enable them to join and leave their ships and return home without impediment, while complying with good practice in infection control.

It is important that Member States recognize the need for a highly globalized industry like shipping, with its multinational workforce, to be able to smoothly undertake crew changes and repatriation around the world. It has been disturbing to see reports that many port States have imposed local regulations and travel and quarantine restrictions on international seafarers. Clear directions should be given to port authorities and local health authorities to enable ships to continue trading, and to enable the swift disembarkation and repatriation of crew members.

► It is imperative that Member States do all that they can to facilitate the delivery of essential medical supplies, fuel, water, spare parts and provisions to ships. It is disturbing that ports in some parts of the world have refused to allow some ships to enter because they had previously called at ports in areas affected by the coronavirus, which has prevented vessels from obtaining such essential supplies. It is also extremely alarming to hear reports that suppliers have been prevented from boarding ships in some parts of the world and from supplying masks, overalls and other personal protective equipment to crews. It is essential that seafarers have access to plentiful supplies and equipment, in line with the International Medical Guide for Ships, third edition, and the guidance provided by the International Maritime Health Association, the International Chamber of Shipping and the World Health Organization.

► It is crucial that port States allow ships into their ports to unload goods for the community, and that they allow seafarers to access port State medical facilities and receive medical attention on an equal basis as nationals and in accordance with national circumstances. Steps should also be taken to ensure that visitors to ships are strictly monitored and are provided with all necessary personal protective equipment to limit the risk of contagion