
Passenger Operations (COVID19)

Notice to ship owners, managers, Masters, Approved Nautical Inspectors, Recognised Organisations and surveyors

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this Information Notice (IN) is to provide high level guidance on areas related to COVID19 to be considered for passenger operations.

2. Application

- 2.1. This IN applies to all passenger ships registered in the Bahamas, carrying passengers on voyages of 24 hours or more.

3. Introduction

- 3.1. This IN provides guidance intended to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading onboard the ship and to improve the Company's ability to manage cases if they occur.
- 3.2. There are numerous sources of additional information available, a selection of these is provided in the Annex to this Notice.
- 3.3. Relevant procedures should be incorporated into the Company's¹ safety management system.

4. Prevention

4.1. *Ship Interface Transmission*

- 4.1.1. The Company should implement effective measures to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 to the ship during operations. Such procedures should take into account any local requirements in the port or facility in which the ship is located.

¹ The "Company" is the entity responsible for the management of the ship in accordance with the ISM Code. For ships which the ISM Code is not applicable, the Company is the Managing Owner in accordance with Section 52 of the Bahamas Merchant Shipping Act.

- 4.1.2. Consideration should be given to the development of policies and procedures to restrict crew and/or passengers from boarding or disembarking the ship if they have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.
- 4.1.3. Areas which should be considered include:
- (a) Establishing the reason or necessity for boarding or disembarking;
 - (b) The individual and any risk factors (e.g. underlying health conditions);
 - (c) The facilities and risk level onboard the ship, ashore and the surrounding areas;
 - (d) Ability to detect when people have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 prior to boarding or disembarking;
 - (e) Availability and/or provision of testing kits;
 - (f) Quarantine prior to boarding or disembarking;
 - (g) Temperature scanning (this may be different for passengers and crew);
 - (h) Boarding and offloading goods and materials;
 - (i) Policy to specify what should be quarantined or sanitized or both.

4.2. ***Prevention of Onboard Transmission***

- 4.2.1. The Company should implement effective measures to prevent the transmission of disease between passengers and crew.
- 4.2.2. Consideration should be given to:
- (a) Social distancing and segregation;
 - (b) Social distancing policies;
 - (c) Management and segmentation of shared spaces (e.g. restaurants, bars, theatres, gyms, crew bars);
 - (d) Reduction in the passenger capacity;
 - (e) Segregating passengers into smaller groups (e.g. family bubbles or larger groups);
 - (f) Segregating crew into smaller work teams to minimise exposure and ensure safe manning personal are protected;
 - (g) Cleanliness and hygiene;
 - (h) Cleaning policy and materials. This should include cleaning intervals for shared spaces (e.g. restaurants, bars, theatres, gyms, crew bars);
 - (i) Ergonomic changes (e.g. screens at checkouts to protect the cashier);
 - (j) Appropriate PPE;
 - (k) Hand washing and sanitiser stations;
 - (l) Air management such as new air filters, air change cycle per hour;
 - (m) Management of localised or individual cases of disease;
 - (n) Ability to deliver treatment in a manner that does not increase the spread of the disease;
 - (o) Ability to quarantine crew and passengers who may have been exposed (i.e. contact tracing and self-isolation).

5. Communications

5.1. Crew

- 5.1.1. The Company should ensure that the crew receive appropriate information on COVID-19 and the Company's procedures.
- 5.1.2. The Company should ensure that the crew understand the evolving situation and how to respond accordingly. (e.g. by preparing additional medical facilities, enhancing the cleaning regime, etc.).
- 5.1.3. The Company should consider implementing specific training on COVID-19, (e.g. how to handle and transport someone to the hospital or contain an infected person).

5.2. Passengers

- 5.2.1. Passengers should be provided with information on COVID 19 and the Company's procedures prior to the passenger boarding the vessel. (e.g. recommendations to self-isolate before boarding the vessel, what to expect onboard, etc.).
- 5.2.2. Passengers should also be provided with information at the time of boarding (e.g. alternative onboard Covid-19 and safety familiarisation with social distancing).
- 5.2.3. Passengers should be kept updated with regular communication provided whilst onboard and if the threat level escalates (e.g. posters and announcements).

5.3. BMA, ports and local authorities

- 5.3.1. Any confirmed cases of COVID-19 should be communicated to the BMA by e-mail to health@bahamasmaritime.com. The notification should include the age and nationality of the persons affected and whether they are crew or passenger.
- 5.3.2. The Company should consider enhanced communications with ports and local authorities to maintain awareness of the local situation.
- 5.3.3. The ship should maintain records of COVID-19 cases onboard, along with any change of COVID-19 threat levels.

6. Management of cases

6.1. *Threat level and response*

6.1.1. The Company should develop and implement a COVID19 management plan to prevent and respond to cases of COVID-19 onboard the ship.

6.1.2. The management plan should consider the threat level and response depending on whether an outbreak is considered isolated or more widespread. Isolated cases may be dealt with by e.g. self-isolation, whereas more widespread outbreaks may necessitate return to a safe port where additional support can be provided.

6.2. *Management of an outbreak onboard*

6.2.1. The Company should implement effective policies and procedures and ensure that facilities and designated crew are available to manage any outbreak onboard the ship.

6.2.2. Consideration should be given to:

- (a) Enhanced cleaning and social distancing measures;
- (b) Triage policy and procedures to ensure care is given to those most in need;
- (c) Policy and procedures to convert areas into additional medical facilities (e.g. passenger cabins);
- (d) Ability to deliver care at scale without increasing the transmission of the disease;
- (e) Provision of sufficient supplies, equipment, and trained personnel for COVID-19; this should take into account the number of healthcare personnel required, beds, equipment and medications.

6.3. *Management of an outbreak that requires external support*

6.3.1. The Company should implement effective policies and procedures, and consider entering into agreements with external providers to ensure that support can be provided to the crew and passengers should an outbreak exceed the medical capacity of the ship.

6.3.2. Consideration should be given to:

- (a) Agreements with ports, medical facilities, and local authorities to provide medical support to the crew and passengers in case of a major outbreak;
- (b) Disembarkation of crew and passengers to receive additional medical care;
- (c) Agreements to manage the disembarkation and repatriation of crew and passengers who are able to do so;
- (d) Policies and procedure to ensure the safe operation of the ship with a number of crew members incapacitated. The BMA must be advised promptly if the ship is, or is likely to become, unable to comply with its minimum safe manning document

7. Musters and Drills

- 7.1. The BMA has received several requests for amendments to the mandatory drill requirements stated in Regulation 19.2.2 of Chapter III of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended (SOLAS) in order to maintain social distancing.
- 7.2. The BMA appreciates the difficulties encountered in conducting effective full-scale passenger mustering whilst maintaining COVID safeguards. Given the current situation, the BMA may accept alternative methods that provide an equivalent level of safety to the requirements stated in Regulations 8 and 19 of SOLAS Chapter III.
- 7.3. The Company should submit an application for acceptance of the proposed alternative mustering arrangements to tech@bahamasmaritime.com.
- 7.4. The application should address the following:
- (a) Procedures to ensure that each passenger has physically seen their assigned muster station;
 - (b) Procedures to ensure that each passenger has received all of the safety briefing including, but not limited to, donning of lifejackets;
 - (c) Procedures to ensure that training is maintained for both alternative and conventional mustering protocols;
 - (d) When electronic mustering device is in use, that a backup arrangement and respective training is provided;
 - (e) Follow-up procedure for passengers who may have failed to muster or complete the safety briefing;
 - (f) A regulatory gap analysis;
- 7.5. Notwithstanding any acceptance of alternative muster arrangements by the BMA, whenever new passengers embark, a passenger safety briefing shall be given immediately before departure, or immediately after departure by means of an announcement, in one or more languages likely to be understood by the passengers, in order to comply with Regulation 19.2.3 of SOLAS Chapter III.

8. Queries

- 8.1. Any queries on this Notice may be submitted to tech@bahamasmaritime.com or any BMA office.

Annex - References and further information

- https://www.healthygateways.eu/Portals/0/plcdocs/EU_HEALTHY_GATEWAYS_COVID-19_RESTARTING_CRUISES_2021_30_4_2021.pdf?ver=2021-05-31-164216-677
- https://www.carpha.org/Portals/0/Documents/Att_to_Sav_582%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Cruise%20Ships%20travelling%20to%20Caribbean%20CountriesCARICOMSept2.pdf
- https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/care-cleaning-disinfection-and-sterilization.pdf?sfvrsn=c2b0d672_1&download=true
- <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1403967/retrieve>
- https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/2021-12-23-global-technical-brief-and-priority-action-on-omicron.pdf?sfvrsn=d0e9fb6c_5&download=true
- <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1403813/retrieve>
- <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>
- <https://cruising.org/en-gb/about-the-industry/policy-priorities/cruise-industry-policies/health>