

IMCA Safety Flash 11/20

March 2020

These flashes summarise key safety matters and incidents, allowing wider dissemination of lessons learnt from them. The information below has been provided in good faith by members and should be reviewed individually by recipients, who will determine its relevance to their own operations.

The effectiveness of the IMCA safety flash system depends on receiving reports from members in order to pass on information and avoid repeat incidents. Please consider adding the IMCA secretariat (imca@imca-int.com) to your internal distribution list for safety alerts and/or manually submitting information on specific incidents you consider may be relevant. All information will be anonymised or sanitised, as appropriate.

A number of other organisations issue safety flashes and similar documents which may be of interest to IMCA members. Where these are particularly relevant, these may be summarised or highlighted here. Links to known relevant websites are provided at www.imca-int.com/links Additional links should be submitted to info@imca-int.com

Any actions, lessons learnt, recommendations and suggestions in IMCA safety flashes are generated by the submitting organisation. IMCA safety flashes provide, in good faith, safety information for the benefit of members and do not necessarily constitute IMCA guidance, nor represent the official view of the Association or its members.

1 COVID-19 Update

For the latest information and advice on the COVID-19 outbreak, including an overview of countries with confirmed cases and current assessments of risk, please browse to the World Health Organisation’s Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak webpage <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) provides guidance [here](#) on *COVID-19 and the world of work*. An informative graphic from that page is reproduced here.

There follows firstly, an overview of some key issues and advice that may assist ship operators, masters and crews to stay alert, strengthen self-protection and prevent the spread of COVID-19; secondly, an anonymised example of a company fleet policy on COVID-19 prevention, and lastly, some useful links for further information.

What do we know about COVID-19?

- ◆ COVID-19 is a respiratory disease. The main symptoms are fever, aches and pains, a sore throat, a dry cough, and shortness of breath;
- ◆ The disease may appear to be relatively mild in many cases. However, the virus has the potential to cause severe illness and death. Persons with pre-existing medical conditions will be at higher risk;
- ◆ As with colds and influenza, transmission occurs via respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The disease can also be caught by persons touching objects or surfaces on which droplets have landed, and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth;
- ◆ We **do not know** how long the virus survives on surfaces. It can be killed with simple disinfectants;
- ◆ We **do not have** confirmed information about incubation time, but the best estimates are that it is generally between 1 to 14 days and most commonly around five days;

What can workers do?	What can employers do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient social dialogue at all levels is essential for quick and effective action. • Workers’ organizations can play an important role in participating in decision making and policies responses to the crisis on COVID-19. They can contribute to the prevention and protection of workers by giving reliable information. Workers’ organizations can promote solidarity and non-discrimination / stigmatisation of workers and sick persons. • Since COVID-19 spreads mainly through respiratory droplets good workplace hygiene practices are essential, e.g. regular hand-washing, using hand and surface sanitiser. • Avoid touching your face, cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing. If you feel unwell self-isolate and seek medical assistance. • Encourage responsible behaviour, cooperate with response measures and stay calm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate the workforce and communicate regularly with employees • Reinforce good hygiene practices and take related safety precautions • When feasible, appoint an emergency management team • Monitor developments on a daily basis • Actively encourage sick employees to stay home and send sick employees home • Be mindful of the many different laws and policies implicated that relate to the coronavirus and its impact on the workplace and prepare contingency plans • Suspend or limit business travel • Quarantine potentially exposed employees • Consider having non-essential employees work remotely

- ◆ There as yet is no vaccine for the disease. It is caused by a virus; antibiotics are not effective against it.

On-board preventive measures

- ◆ Raise awareness amongst crew members so that they are aware of the risks, how the virus can be spread, and precautions that should be taken;
- ◆ Practice good hygiene:
 - wash hands frequently and avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
 - practice good respiratory hygiene (cover coughs and sneezes)
 - maintain social distancing. Keep at least 2 metres (6 feet) distance between yourself and other people.

Onboard mitigating measures

If you have a suspected case of COVID-19 on-board the vessel, seek immediate expert medical opinion. Report the event as soon as possible to allow for an appropriate medical response.

The following measures may be helpful:

- ◆ Keep the patient's cabin doors closed, if not placed in a medical isolation room on-board;
- ◆ To contain respiratory secretions, a surgical mask should be provided to the patient and worn as much as possible;
- ◆ Provide information about the risk of disease transmission to persons who will take care of the patient or enter the isolation area and limit the number of such persons;
- ◆ Maintain a log listing everybody who enters the cabin;
- ◆ Anyone who enters the cabin to provide care to the person in isolation or to clean the cabin must wear appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE). A surgical mask and goggles or face shield is particularly important, as is the use of disposable gloves;
- ◆ Gloves, masks and other waste generated during health care of the patient should be placed in a waste bin with lid in the patient's room before disposal as 'infection waste';
- ◆ Limit the movement and transport of the patient from the cabin for essential purposes only. If transport is necessary, the patient should wear a surgical mask and any surfaces touched by the patient should be cleaned and disinfected;
- ◆ Start case investigation immediately. Wear appropriate PPE when interviewing the patient and keep a distance of at least 1 metre;
- ◆ Identify the patient's close contacts and ask them to do passive self-monitoring of any symptoms.

A fleet policy on COVID-19 prevention

Here is an example of one fleet policy to help prevent the COVID-19 virus from reaching vessels and worksites. This policy is based on the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines and its objective is to ensure first and foremost the health, safety and wellbeing of our people. Members may wish to use or adapt it for their own organisations.

“Effective immediately, no one is authorized to join or visit a vessel if they have travelled through or from any of the prohibited selected countries and areas, including airport transfers, in accordance with the latest COVID-19 updated information and guidance from the authorities.

In line with medical health professional advice, three set criteria will be used to identify if an individual may present a risk that should be mitigated:

- 1. Travelled to or through a prohibited risk area within timeline specified including airport transfers, regardless of symptoms;*
- 2. Displays COVID-19 symptoms; cough, difficulty breathing, fever;*
- 3. Had a direct exposure to a confirmed or suspect COVID-19 infected individual.*

Anyone who meets any of the three criteria above ought to self-isolate for 14 days before joining the vessel/ worksite.”

Additional measures to mitigate COVID-19 risks may be introduced by governments and clients as well as by companies in the supply chain. Members may wish to require that anyone accessing worksites – including quayside areas adjacent to vessels – should respect and follow these requirements.

Members may also refer to:

- ♦ World Health Organisation *Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships*;
- ♦ IMO Circular Letters as follows:
 - *Guidance relating to the certification of seafarers* (17 March)
 - *Guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers* (5 March)
 - *Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships* (2 March);
- ♦ ICS (International Chamber of Shipping) *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Ship Operators for the Protection of the Health of Seafarers*;
- ♦ US CDC (Center for Disease Control) *Interim Guidance for Ships on Managing Suspected Coronavirus Disease 2019*;
- ♦ UK MCA (Marine & Coastguard Agency) *CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) Contingency Plan and Guidelines for the services provided to Seafarers and Shipowners by the MCA*.

2 IMCA Diving Division Information Notes on COVID-19

Members may wish to refer to the following useful information published by the Diving Division Management Committee (DDMC):

- ♦ *IMCA D 06/20 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Guidance for Diving Contractors*;
- ♦ *IMCA D 05/20 Renewal of diver medic certification during the COVID-19 pandemic*.