Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Protocol for Cruise Operations in Irish Waters
Version 2 April 2023

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PURPOSE

This document puts in place a long-term framework that can be utilized by all cruise stakeholders for any future public health emergencies which may arise. This protocol has been compiled through collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including the cruise sector, port authorities, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health. The aim is to ensure a broadly consistent approach by cruise lines and operators to health protection issues; in accordance with Marine Notice 02 of 2022 it is up to each organisation to arrive at a suitable risk control strategy to inform their disease mitigation plans which should be appropriate to the types of vessels used and voyages undertaken. Disease mitigation plans should be tailored to local guidance and regulations in jurisdictions travelled to. Within the Irish context, a high degree of self-sufficiency in the management of infectious events on the part of cruise vessels/operators is expected, with public health advice being available and provided when required.

This protocol is without prejudice to the role and responsibility of the state where the ship is flagged (the "Flag State"), and other relevant guidance issued by other states of embarkation and disembarkation. In all cases, the requirements of the Flag State must be followed and the overall layout and arrangements of the ship including the operation must not be changed without the prior approval of the Flag State and port state authorities. However, at all times cruise operators should be mindful of any extant guidance in place by Irish public health authorities on journeys to or from Ireland.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that this protocol and the advice within does not affect the responsibility of cruise lines and operators to ensure compliance with their obligations under the relevant international conventions and codes and that they also remain subject to Port State Control.

Flag State surveys and inspections are the responsibility of the ship's Flag State. Port State Control inspections are carried out in Ireland by Port State Control Officers on foreign ships in accordance with the Port State Control regulatory regime—which include, inter alia, matters relating to living and working conditions of those onboard the vessels and policies and procedures relevant to the operator's International Safety Management (ISM) Code.

The vessel's safety officer, or other person with appropriate training commensurate to their work activities, will be assigned responsibility by the operating company for conducting regular audits of health measures and forwarding the outcomes to the vessel's ISM managers. This is in line with existing ISM procedures. The health measures will also be included in the ISM managers' internal audit process, and it is expected that external ISM auditors acting for the flag state will also verify processes during their audits. Nothing in this document alters or detracts from Public Health Guidelines and Government restrictions in operation at any given time.

Note that this guidance contains some suggestion around potential strategies to mitigate the risk of covid-19 amongst travellers and crews and may be used as an aid to the implementation of the operator's Outbreak Management Plan. Unless specified, these suggestions are not mandated. Many of the recommendations within this document are included to provide some context around disease control norms. However, it will broadly be up to each operator to implement their own strategies to reduce the risk of infections and outbreaks as applied to their particular environment and risk profile. Every effort has been made to refer to the most up to date guidance. However, the infectious diseases environment can change rapidly, and new guidance may be developed during the lifetime of this document, which may supersede advice given.

General Health Protection Principles

Health protection measures for cruise operations into Ireland requires cooperation and adherence to the following, three-part, combined approach, which is consistent with international best practice.

i. The ship has a formulated infectious disease Outbreak Management Plan and carries out comprehensive tailored risk assessments, with external verification, and containing measures for mitigation.
ii. The port, in conjunction with port health authorities develops a management plan containing measures for mitigation.
iii. A coordinated agreement for outbreaks/significant health protection incident management is put in place between ship and port authorities prior to any operation commencing.

Communication, planning and preparedness—between the HSE, port authorities and the cruise industry—is vital. Interoperability of the port public health emergency contingency plan and the cruise ship contingency plan/outbreak management plan should be ensured. Adherence to the HSE/HPSC document on the "Management of a Port Public Health Event at a Seaport" document dated February 2022 is expected to be followed at all times by all stakeholders.

Definitions

Home port: is the port where cruise ship passengers embark to start the cruise and disembark the cruise ship at the end of the cruise. The home port should fulfil the criteria of a contingency port. Each ship should have at least one contingency port as part of a 7-night itinerary. The home port should always be the contingency port, but additional contingency ports could be defined.

Contingency port: is the port for which interoperability of the ship's contingency plan and the port's contingency plan has been ensured and agreed that any potential serious event/outbreak on board this cruise ship will be managed at this port, including complete evacuation of the cruise ship if needed and isolation/quarantine of cases/contacts.

Transit port: is the port of call which is an intermediate stop for a cruise ship on its sailing itinerary, where passengers will get on or off ship for excursions.

1. Prerequisites/Minimum standards

1.1 Risk Assessment
Operators should endeavour to protect their employees and passengers from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect their employees and passengers from any disease of an infectious nature. Cruise companies should assess all identified risks to their ships, crew, passengers, and other persons in relation to any disease of an infectious nature and to establish appropriate safeguards. This should take the form of a formal Outbreak Management Plan.

The Outbreak Management Plan should include:
- Identifying the activities or situations that are most likely to be associated with transmission of infectious diseases
- A plan to manage individuals with infectious diseases
- A plan to mitigate risk and control spread in the event of a cluster or outbreak of an infectious disease.

1.2 Risk Mitigations
The following guidance should be considered:

- Healthy Gateways: TOOL FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT FOR PORTS (February 2021)

It is crucial that cruise ship operators implement and enforce strict infection prevention and control measures to mitigate risk throughout the voyage. When implementing mitigating measures in relation to the COVID-19, available codes, guidelines, and standards regarding COVID-19 should be taken into consideration. This includes in particular, relevant Flag State, International Maritime Organization (IMO), World Health Organization (WHO) and other EU COVID-19 related documents, in particular guidance from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and EU Healthy Gateways, as found relevant and applicable.

1.3 Management Plan
The following guidance should be considered:

- IMO: Circular Letter No.4204/Add.3 (2 March 2020) – Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on-board ships
- IMO: Circular Letter No.4204/Add.4/Rev.1 (28 May 2020) – ICS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers
- Management of a Port Public Health Event at a Seaport (February 2022)
- Marine Notice 02 of 2022: COVID-19 –Change of requirements for Maritime Declarations of Health
- Disinfection of environments in healthcare and nonhealthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 March 2020
- PH Guidance Documents - Health Protection Surveillance Centre

For each cruise ship operating in the waters of an EU/EEA member state, a ship contingency plan/outbreak management plan for responding to an infectious disease event should be prepared by the operating cruise line and submitted to the competent authority of the home port, in order to be reviewed and to ensure interoperability with the port public health emergency plan. There should be substantial elements of self-sufficiency within this plan, where the cruise ship holds both the responsibility and the resources to manage most incidents independently.

Outbreak management plans should clearly lay out procedures for managing an infectious incident. The responsible person for each element of the response should also be explicitly laid out. The plan should describe procedures for ship to shore communication, transport of samples and transport of unwell patients.

1.4 Risk Mitigations to Consider

1.4.1 Reduced Capacity Onboard

The following guidance should be considered:

➢ EU Healthy Gateways: Guidelines for cruise ship operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
➢ EU Healthy Gateways: Advice for cruise ship operators for preparedness and response to an outbreak of COVID-19

1.4.2 Other potential risk mitigations

The following guidance should be considered:

➢ HSE: Protect yourself and others from COVID-19

1.4.3 Passenger Etiquette

The following guidance should be considered:

➢ HSE: How to clean your hands

Increased personal hand hygiene is an effective way to stop the spread of many infections including COVID-19. Easy access to hand washing facilities or alcohol-based hand rub solutions, and health promotion material (e.g., posters, videos, etc.) that promote the importance of hand hygiene and explain how to perform effective hand hygiene should be available in different areas of the ship.

Examples of Risk Alleviation:
- Washing hands frequently
- Use soap and water
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol)
- Discourage hand shaking
- Practicing respiratory hygiene by sneezing or coughing into a tissue or a flexed elbow, and throwing away any used tissue into a waste bin

*The most important action passengers and crew can take is to ensure that they self-isolate in their room and report their illness to appropriate medical team at the first sign of an infectious illness. *

1.4.4 Environmental Sanitation
The following guidance should be considered:

- EU SHIPSAN ACT joint action: European Manual for Hygiene Standards and Communicable Disease Surveillance on Passenger Ships
- HPSC: Cleaning Guidance for use in non-healthcare settings: General cleaning principles, and cleaning guidance when a person with COVID-19 has been in the setting
- EU Healthy Gateways: Suggested procedures for cleaning and disinfection of ships during the COVID-19 pandemic

1.4.5 Face Coverings
Face coverings are not classified as PPE (personal protective equipment). Face coverings are largely intended to protect others against the spread of infection because they cover the nose and mouth, which help stop transmission via droplets.

The following guidance continues to be in place in Ireland (March 2023) and should be considered:

- Department of Health: When to wear face masks and how to make them
- HSE: Face masks: types and how to wear one

1.4.6 Passenger Communications
A communication strategy should be designed and implemented to educate passengers on the changes made to the cruise ship environment to protect passengers from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. This should be communicated from the time of booking to when they cruise and should form part of messaging during their time on-board. Due to the international nature of cruising this information should be available in various languages.

This messaging could include:
- Key information
  - Hand hygiene
  - Sneezing and coughing etiquette
  - Correct use of face coverings
- Changes to service facilities made onboard
- Country specific requirements at away ports
- Procedures that will be implemented in the event of an outbreak of Covid-19 or any other infectious disease
- Advice on who to contact for advice in the event of illness

1.5 Seafarers
The following guidance should be considered:

➢ International Chamber of Shipping: Coronavirus (COVID-19); Guidance for Ship Operators for the Protection of the Health of Seafarers

Prior to embarkation, seafarers joining the ship must comply with the health precautions and requirements provided by the IMO, Flag State, Port State and national authorities. It is recommended that seafarers arriving to Ireland to join a ship have in their possession evidence such as joining instructions from their employer or crewing agency as well as an Annex 3 Certificate.

1.6 Review of Shipboard Operations
The following guidance should be considered:

➢ EU Healthy Gateways: Guidelines for cruise ship operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
➢ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment: Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

The specific shipboard operations related to infectious diseases should be assessed by cruise operators. This should include an updated review of procedures, plans, instructional guidance, and checklists for all shipboard operations that may bear a risk or be impacted by COVID-19 or other infectious agents. The review of these operations should be done in a way to verify risk mitigations are in place.

Some of the measures to be reviewed and updated include:
- Updated information and increased communications with passengers at all stages of journey, from booking to disembarkation
- Enhanced hand hygiene
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when managing unwell passengers or crew
- Cleaning and disinfection protocols

- Food safety
- Isolation wards and cabins for suspected or confirmed cases of infectious diseases
- Emergency procedures for care onboard
- Disembarkation plan and arrangements with local facilities
- Waste management
- Ventilation systems

In addition to reviewing shipboard operations, operators should determine how to address and rectify any deficiencies identified.

1.7 External Verification
The following guidance should be considered:

➢ WHO Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships

Cruise operators should identify where appropriate that the implementation of their Outbreak Management Plan is verified by an appropriate, qualified, independent third party to demonstrate implementation of policy. This should be done in a way which will demonstrate to both the Flag State and the Port State that appropriate steps have been taken to prevent outbreaks or infectious disease and to manage outbreaks or clusters when they do occur.

1.8 Voyage Planning

1.8.1   Voyage Plan and Contingency Plans
The following guidance should be considered:

➢ World Health Organisation: International Health Regulations
➢ EU Healthy Gateways Tool for contingency plan development and assessment for ports
➢ EU Healthy Gateways: Guidelines for cruise ship operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
➢ Guidelines for inter-country communication & information flow in outbreak investigations on ships & public health event management
➢ Management of a Port Public Health Event at a Seaport (February 2022)
➢ PH guidance documents - Health Protection Surveillance Centre

Prior to the commencement of any cruise, appropriate levels of voyage planning should take place to confirm the ability to achieve both the operational voyage plan and any contingency plans. It is imperative that each operational voyage plan outlines clear communication channels and sets out the accepted responsibilities to inform health authorities in Ireland appropriately of any relevant issues.

To ensure local port facilities are not overwhelmed, each port should define their maximum capacity for ships and travellers as described in the "Tool for contingency plan development and assessment for ports" produced by EU Healthy Gateways.

Areas of cooperation may include:
- Embarkation
- Disembarkation
- Use of passenger terminal
- Re-embarkation after shore excursions
- Crew changes
- Stores
- Contingency planning
  - Repatriation
  - Implementation of the Outbreak Management Plan
  - COVID testing arrangements

Before starting any journey, cruise ship operators should ensure that arrangements can be made for passengers and crew members to receive medical treatment ashore (including possible air evacuation if needed). This should be clearly described in both written contingency plans of cruise ships and at least the homeport, with the possibility of also using additional contingency ports during the voyage.

1.8.2   Voyage Planning: Isolation Facilities
The following guidance should be considered

- Management of a Port Public Health Event at a Seaport February 2022
- PH guidance documents - Health Protection Surveillance Centre

Cruise operators should have consistent advice that they can give passengers or crew suffering from a likely infectious disease, such as COVID-19. This will usually involve advice to isolate in the patient's own room or in a dedicated isolation bay on board, with medical attention. The importance of seeking care and reporting sickness early in the event of illness should be conveyed to both passengers and crew on a regular basis.

Testing capacity for COVID-19 and sampling capacity for other infectious diseases, and the associated processes should be addressed, including transport of samples. See Appendix 11 of Management of a Port Public Health Event at a Seaport.

1.9 Reporting Requirements
The following guidance should be considered:

- S.I. No. 166 of 2012
- PH guidance documents - Health Protection Surveillance Centre

- ➤ Directive 2010/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on reporting formalities for ships arriving in and/or departing from ports of the Member States and repealing Directive 2002/6/EC
- ➤ Marine Notice 02 of 2022: COVID19 - Change of requirements for Maritime Declarations of Health

The ship operator should facilitate the application of health measures and provide all relevant public health information requested by the port authority and the national public health authorities, as well as providing a completed Maritime Declaration of Health at least 24 hours prior to arrival when there is an incident to report.

This may include:
a. Anonymously aggregated data that operators have been asked to report
b. Specific Port-to-Port Communication form for any infectious disease events such as in use from Healthy Gateways (Ship Information System SIS)

1.10 Ship Cleaning and Disinfection
The following guidance should be considered:

- ➤ Disinfection of environments in healthcare and non-healthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 ECDC (March 2020)
- ➤ HPSC: Cleaning Guidance for use in non-healthcare settings: General cleaning principles, and cleaning guidance when a person with COVID-19 has been in the setting
- ➤ European Manual for Hygiene Standards and Communicable Disease Surveillance on Passenger Ships

Enhanced cleaning and disinfection using disinfectants with proven effectiveness against COVID-19 and other infectious agents should be implemented as part of the operator's updated shipboard policies and procedures, with an increased frequency in shared public areas and items which are frequently physically touched by passengers and seafarers.

At the time of turnaround within ports, when there is a reduced capacity of passengers onboard, a turnaround cleaning and disinfection plan should be used. All public areas and cabins should be properly cleaned and disinfected.

1.11 Cabins
The following guidance should be considered:
Between check-out and check-in, all cabins should be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and adequately ventilated.
All cabin surfaces and materials which may have been touched or contaminated should be cleaned and disinfected between occupancies. To allow for the cabin to be well ventilated, doors and windows should be opened daily to allow for fresh air to be circulated.

1.12 Ventilation Systems

The following guidance should be considered:

- ➢ ECDS Heating, ventilation and air-condition systems in the context of COVID-19
- ➢ EU Healthy Gateways: Guidelines for cruise ship operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- ➢ HSPC: Guidance on non-healthcare building ventilation during COVID-19

The importance of ventilation systems in the prevention of respiratory illness will be covered in the operator's COVID-19 management plans. Effective ventilation systems may help reduce the risk of COVID-19 and some other respiratory viruses. Operators should review and enhance as necessary the general ventilation operations onboard to maximise circulation of fresh air, in line with the system manufacturer's recommendations. Operators may also consider additional ways of maintaining the supply of fresh air, for example, by opening windows and doors. Enhanced ventilation systems may be considered for rooms and areas likely to house people with respiratory illnesses, such as isolation facilities.

2. Measures Taken Prior to Embarkation

2.1 Passenger Communication

The following guidance should be considered:

- ➢ EU Healthy Gateways: Guidelines for cruise ship operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Cruise operators should provide relevant pre-travel information about mitigating the risk of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases to their passengers and crew as part of their travel information. This should include information regarding the symptoms of a range of common infectious diseases, the associated health risks, vaccination considerations, and the importance of preventative measures in stopping the spread of these illnesses. Operators may wish to provide passengers and seafarers with a list of recommended personal hygiene items to carry during their travel from home and during their time onboard.

2.2 High Risk Groups

Some operators may wish to apply special protections to vulnerable categories of traveller, especially around Covid-19 risk mitigation. Some guidance and advice around identifying these passengers can be found at: HSE People at Higher Risk

These measures should be documented in the Outbreak Management Plan.

2.3 Screening

Passengers should be made aware that they may be screened prior to embarking on the cruise, and those identified as having been potentially infected with an infectious disease may be denied boarding. This is the responsibility of the cruise operator. Those who answer yes to any

of the questions in the health declaration questionnaire maybe referred for further assessment or review.

2.4 Travel insurance
The following guidance should be considered:

> ➢ Department of Foreign Affairs: General COVID-19 Travel Advisory in Operation

The Government strongly recommends all travellers take out appropriate travel insurance for overseas trips. Due to the current global situation, travellers are advised to check their COVID-19 related cover such as medical costs and travel disruptions. It is the responsibility of the passenger to have the appropriate travel insurance at the time of travel.

3. Measures Taken at Embarkation Port

3.1   Terminal Management

3.1.1   Port Management Plan for infectious diseases
The following guidance should be considered:

> ➢ WHO: International Health Regulation guide for public health emergency contingency planning at designated points of entry
> ➢ HSE: Management of a Port Public Health Event at a Seaport (February 2022)
> ➢ EMSA: Tool for contingency plan development and assessment for ports

Operators should engage with ports to ensure there is clarity on their infectious disease Port Management Plan. Terminal staff should practice frequent hand hygiene and wear appropriate PPE, depending on their specific work duties

The following terminal precautions may be considered:
- Signage
- Verbal announcements for travellers
- Optimizing terminal layouts to reduce the number of people congregating in one area
- Dedicated lanes or separation of different user flows
- Dividing of terminals into designated zones for arrival, screening, testing and document processing (before being cleared for boarding and embarkation)

These are all measures which are designed to assist in keeping both passengers and seafarers safe.

3.1.2   Terminal Flow
Port terminals should conduct a risk assessment to identify the areas where passengers and seafarers queue or normally gather in crowds. Consideration should be given to how customers and employees will move in congested areas, for example doorways between adjacent indoor spaces and outdoor spaces. There may need to be a review of how customers move through

and around the venue (indoors and outdoors) and consideration of any necessary adjustments to the flow of customers and employees to reduce congestion and contact.

There should be an increased number of stations with alcohol-based hand sanitiser. These should be available at entrances to the terminal and on gangways to the ship and check- in areas.

During embarkation, multiple gangways should be used, if possible, in order to help avoid crowding of passengers. Specific procedures for boarding should be considered to assist those who are less able or may be more vulnerable.

Enhanced baggage handling precautions should be considered, including hand hygiene of those who handle and transport luggage to the ship.

3.2 Guest Screening
The following guidance should be considered:

> ECDC considerations for travel-related measures to reduce spread of COVID-19 in the EU/EEA

Operators may require passengers fill out a health declaration questionnaire close to the day of departure but prior to arriving at port. If the passenger responds yes to any of the questions in the health declaration questionnaire, they may be told not to travel to the port.

Upon arrival at the port, pre-boarding screening, by the cruise operator, may assist in identifying people with previously undetected infectious illness. If conducted, pre-boarding screening measures should be organised into two phases, primary screening, and secondary screening.

Primary screening usually includes an initial assessment by non-medical cruise staff. This may include a health declaration questionnaire, assessing travellers for any signs of COVID-19 or other infectious disease. Operators may ask passengers to fill in their health declaration questionnaire prior to arrival at port to help avoid queueing and delays.

Passengers who have symptoms of infectious illness or may have been exposed to someone with an infectious disease should be referred for secondary screening. Secondary screening should be conducted by personnel with medical training. This may include an in-depth interview, a focused medical examination, a second temperature check and potentially a COVID-19 test or other testing as appropriate.
If secondary screening concludes the passenger may have an infectious disease, they may be denied boarding. Each operator should implement a standard policy for the denial of boarding. This process should include consideration of health support and advice.

3.3 Visitors

To mitigate risk of onboard infection, controls should be put in place to limit and control those who come onboard. Visitors with symptoms of an infectious disease should be discouraged from coming aboard.

3.4 Shore-based workers

The following guidance should be considered:

> The International Chamber of Shipping: Coronavirus (COVID-19); Guidance for Ensuring a Safe Interface between Ship and Shore-Based Personnel

Shore-based service providers to ships such as agents, inspectors, pilots, stevedores, surveyors, service engineers etc, should implement risk-based procedures in order to reduce the risk of introducing covid-19 or other infectious diseases onto the vessel. Operators should only engage with shore-based contractors from whom they have assurances that sufficient risk mitigations have been put in place. These should be based on the latest guidance from WHO, the International Maritime Health Association and the International Chamber of Shipping.

4. Onboard

4.1 Onboard Public Venues

Including food/beverage, entertainment, exercise, recreational water facilities, hair salons and shops

The following guidance should be considered:

> Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment: Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

It remains the case, that it is the responsibility of the cruise operating companies to assess all identified risks to their ships, crew, passengers and other persons in relation to the infectious disease risks and to establish appropriate safeguards. In establishing safeguards, or implementing mitigation measures, in relation to Covid-19 and other infectious diseases, available relevant codes, guidelines, and standards should be taken into consideration. In particular, relevant, national, IMO and EU COVID-19 related documents, and guidance from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), should be considered for implementation as found relevant and applicable.

While public health and Irish Government advice has changed, there remains a number of steps that have been consistently advised, as they are deemed to be particularly effective in helping to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and other infectious diseases. Maintaining these steps will also enable the sector to respond quickly should the public health advice change or should COVID-19 levels increase in the future.

Public health continues to advise that measures such as promotion of rapid self-isolation when a crew member/passenger is unwell with a potential infectious disease, appropriate use of face masks (outside of specific regulated sectors where face masks are required), physical distancing, hand and respiratory hygiene, ventilation and signage be considered. Therefore, operators in consultation with their employees and following consideration of their individual vessels, should continue to maintain the measures set out below.

Cruise operators should continue to implement the following for all onboard venues:
- Follow the EU Health Gateways advice for cleaning and disinfection of ships.
- Take a pro-active approach in undertaking cleaning and disinfection in terminals/waiting areas, in booking offices and onboard vessels.
- Ensure that appropriate hygiene facilities and materials are in place to accommodate employees and passengers adhering to hand hygiene measures.
- Display posters on how to wash hands in appropriate locations throughout the vessel and terminal.
- Provide hand sanitisers (alcohol or non-alcohol based) where washing facilities cannot be accessed. In choosing an alcohol-based sanitiser, a minimum of 60% alcohol is required.
- Areas for isolation of passengers should be available if necessary.
- Have PPE (face coverings, gloves, suits, etc.) ready in case of a positive or suspected positive person on-board.
- Promote ready access to fresh sea air on the open deck, weather permitting

5. Visiting Away Ports

5.1 Communications
Passengers who visit local areas at destination ports should be informed in a timely manner about any unique or different national or local preventive measures and laws provided by local or national public health authorities regarding COVID-19 or other common infectious diseases.

5.2 Screening
Passengers who go ashore at away ports may be screened before re-embarking on the ship by the operator. This is done to identify passengers with unknown COVID-19 infection or other infectious illnesses.

5.3 Tender Operations
The following guidance should be considered:

➢ GOV.ie: COVID-19

If tender boats are used to move passengers, to avoid congestion, limiting the number of passengers, should be maintained, where felt necessary. Cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces should be conducted between each use.

6. Disembarkation

6.1 Terminal Management
The following guidance should be considered:

  ➢ WHO: International Health Regulation guide for public health emergency contingency planning at designated points of entry

During disembarkation, several gangways should be used, if possible, to avoid queues and crowding of passengers.

Baggage will be handled with appropriate measures to avoid the spread of infectious diseases (for example hand hygiene precautions for baggage handlers) and in accordance with any local health requirements.

7. Outbreak of COVID-19
The following guidance should be considered:

  ➢ HSE: Management of a Port Public Health Event at a Seaport (February 2022)
  ➢ Medical Officer of Health (MOH) Response to A Communicable Disease Incident on A Ship

7.1 Contingency Planning
Cruise ship operators must have a written contingency plan in place for the prevention and control of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases onboard a ship. Each ship should have a coordinator of the contingency plan who will be able to execute the company's infection prevention and control measures. It is advised that the coordinator be an Environmental Health or Public Health Officer or an onboard medical officer. As stated in section 2.8.1, it is imperative that each contingency plan outlines clear communication channels and sets out the accepted responsibilities to inform health authorities in Ireland appropriately of any relevant issues.

Anyone who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, has been in close contact with a confirmed case or has been advised by a doctor to restrict their movements should not be travelling or working. Similarly, anyone with symptoms suggestive of any infectious disease should be assessed in terms of their suitability for travel. However, in instances where a passenger or crew member begins to display symptoms of COVID-19 or other infectious disease, without prejudice to any instructions issued by the Flag State, the contingency plan (outbreak management plan) should be activated, including the following steps

  • The master or the designated officer in the absence of a doctor onboard shall carry out a review of the patient in accordance with training received. It is important, therefore, that cruise ships have the ability to undertake their own risk assessment, with their own standing relevant medical expertise, and carry out simple actions where necessary

including testing and monitoring of symptoms. This also entails having adequate room for isolation onboard.

- If a ship arriving into a port has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases among its crew and/or passengers:
  - The ship's captain will submit the Maritime Declaration of Health to Port Authority/ Environmental Health. Upon receipt of MDOH, Environmental Health will alert Public Health.
  - Public Health expects that medical oversight of a ship should be provided—by prior arrangement between the shipping company and relevant medical expertise—by a medical officer on board or by a maritime medical agency or otherwise.
  - The ship's captain may seek further medical assistance when managing an acutely unwell patient, when in Irish Waters, from NAS (HSE National Ambulance Service) or from Medico Cork.
  - The clinician who has assessed the patient(s) will decide, in consultation with the regional public health authority, if they are well enough to remain on board or if they need to be brought ashore for further assessment and/or admission to hospital.
  - If an infectious agent is suspected, Public Health will offer advice and support as necessary. The role of Public Health is to prevent/control spread, and will advise on public health management of cases and contacts and infection prevention and control measures based on a Public Health risk assessment of the scenario. It is important to note that Public Health does not have a clinical review role with regard to the acute management of individual cases/contacts on board.

In the event of any clinical deterioration of ill persons on board, they should be re-assessed by the on-board medical officer or NAS or Medico Cork as appropriate.

- For events at sea in Irish waters:
  - Liaise with the National Maritime Telemedical Assistance Service (Medico Cork). Contact via the Irish Coast Guard on telephone 112 or VHF Radio. https://emed.ie/Administration/MedicoCork/MedicoCork_about.php

- For events in Irish ports:
  - Contact National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) on (01) 4631380 or (01) 4631384 or 999/112 and ask for HSE National Ambulance Service for case management and Public Health assessment
  - Notify the Port Authority of the suspected case as soon as possible
  - The immediate care of the ill person once in Port will be made under the instruction of Public Health; and
  - The decision about the onward movement of the ship will be made by Public Health following risk assessment.

If it is determined that there is a possible case of an infectious disease on board, the patient should be isolated in an isolation cabin or in a designated cabin, room or quarters and infection control measures should be continued until the patient is symptom-free or has left the ship, if hospital admissions are required on clinical grounds.

Advice for management of possible cases of Covid-19 can be found in the EU Healthy Gateways interim advice for restarting cruise ship operations after lifting restrictive measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Steps to be taken in the event of a suspected case of Covid-19 specifically:

- A senior member of the ship's crew should be appointed to oversee the management of a suspect case onboard, ensuring that all relevant protocols and guidance are adhered to. In the event of an outbreak where support from public health is required, this crew member should be responsible for liaising with Port and HSE Public Health Authorities; i.e. the Harbourmaster or their deputies, who will bring the matter to the attention of the HSE (the Environmental Health Service and Public Health)

- An area to allow for the isolation of the passenger or crew member should be designated and available at all times. This may be the passenger's own room

- Ensure employees onboard know what to do to manage the situation safely in order to minimise contact between passengers/crew and the ill person

- All staff coming into contact with the ill passenger in order to help should be provided with and wear PPE

- All used PPE should be disposed of safely

- The isolation area should be fully disinfected once the passenger/crew member has finished using it

- An updated Maritime Declaration of Health should be completed for all vessels arriving in Irish waters from a port outside the Island of Ireland with an ill person onboard along with an updated crew list and passenger list

- Whether the ill person is crew or passenger, contact details for crew are required—not just passengers.

- A passenger can leave the ship if COVID positive and are asked to stay 'at home'/ or in lodgings out of circulation for 7 days since tested positive or start of symptoms.

7.2 Use of PPE
The following guidance should be considered:

 ➢ Government of Ireland: Work Safely Protocol; COVID-19 National Protocol for
   Employers and Workers

Prior to sailing, operators should take steps to verify that the vessel has a sufficient stock of
PPE for an outbreak situation based on their risk assessment, duration of the voyage and
number of persons onboard.

A risk assessment approach should be used to identify seafarers who should wear PPE in the
performance of their duties. This should include at a minimum those who as part of their job
role are providing care to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients onboard or at port.

7.3 Repatriation
The following guidance should be considered:

 ➢ EU Healthy Gateways: Guidelines for cruise ship operations in response to the
   COVID-19 pandemic

Operators are responsible for leading in the management and implementation of repatriation of
passengers and seafarers in the event of illness. That is, arranging flights or other transport for
unwell passengers, to Ireland when required. As a part of the voyage planning risk assessment,
operators should have identified and agreed protocols in place with key ports geographically
appropriate to the planned itinerary. It is a requirement to provide timely notification of any
intended repatriation plans to appropriate seaports and the agencies associated with the
passenger's nationality or residency. Operators should check that where possible their home
port, and foreign key ports are located close to international airports from which operators can
facilitate the repatriation of people onboard, whether that be a partial or complete guest
repatriation.

Repatriation should be done in a timely manner, whilst still providing good medical care to the
patient. The arrangements may include facilitating the docking of the vessel, disembarking of
passengers, health screening, quarantining (depending on the nature of the illness) and potential
hospitalisation of passengers or seafarers. Within the repatriation plan, special consideration
should be paid to the needs of more vulnerable people.

The repatriation plans should facilitate crew changes to assure that the ship is able to maintain
the Minimum Safe Manning requirements. It is recommended that relevant national authorities
should do everything possible to make this feasible.

7.4 Port Requirements

The following guidance should be considered:

In the case of an outbreak of Covid-19 or other infectious disease onboard a cruise ship, operators are to have agreed designated key ports accessible during the voyage which are able to handle the disembarkation of passengers with infectious diseases, if required.

7.5 Ship Sanitation Plan

The following guidance should be considered:

> ➢ WHO: Infection prevention and control during health care when novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection is suspected

As well as management of the case and close contacts, appropriate enhanced cleaning and disinfection measures should be implemented on board as per the Outbreak Management Plan.

Medical facilities and isolation cabins occupied by suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases should be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the WHO guidance for Infection prevention and control during health care when COVID-19 infection is suspected.

All other areas should be cleaned and disinfected according to the procedures required in the ship's operational plan. Laundry, food service utensils and waste from cabins of suspect cases should be handled as infectious, in accordance with the Outbreak Management Plan.
Cleaning and disinfection staff should be trained to use the appropriate PPE and maintain good hand hygiene.

Where air filters need to be replaced, this should be by trained crew using appropriate PPE and the filters treated as infectious waste. The air handling units should also then be cleaned and disinfected.

7.6 Isolation Cabins

Persons with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases should be able to safely isolate away from the general population of the cruise ship. In case of an outbreak, ships should be able to designate appropriate number of cabins to be used solely for isolation purposes. These should be located away from the general population of the ship. It is usually appropriate for unwell people with infectious diseases to isolate in their own cabin if they are otherwise well.

8. Emergency Response Procedures

When a passenger initially joins the vessel, their cabin should have an updated information video to demonstrate instructional requirements of Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). Operators should consider the use of technology that will inform the ship which cabins have viewed the video for the purpose of verifying compliance.

Passenger musters must be performed as per international and Flag State requirements. Updated emergency response procedures will be introduced and verify that appropriate social distancing is maintained and prevent large gatherings of people.

Alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be made available to passengers at the entrance of the drill venues, with crew members monitoring compliance of hand hygiene. Passengers should also be wearing a face covering when they congregate for drills, if they do not have one, they will be given one.

Cruise ship operators should have an emergency response plan that covers the management of an infectious disease outbreak, the repatriation or evacuation of unwell passengers, communications with public health authorities and the ongoing monitor of an outbreak. This plan and its implementation are the responsibility of the cruise operator. However, public health teams in Ireland will provide expert advice and guidance if extra support is required.

9. Company Contacts

To facilitate appropriate support for the Infectious Disease Management Plan for each ship and the link to the shore operations organisation, a designated duty role should be established in the shore organisation to achieve this goal. The person or persons in this role will have access to highest level of authority in the organisation and direct contact with relevant government bodies. They have both the authority and responsibility to monitor the compliance to COVID-19 Management Plan ensuring adequate resources and shore-based support is provided. They should also have the authority and responsibility to provide any information or points of contact as requested by the emergency services or Public Health or Environmental Health.