An Roinn Iompair
Department of Transport

Protocol for the management of air passengers in light of Covid-19

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Protocol for the Management of Air Passengers in light of COVID-19

Guidance for coordinated implementation of EASA/ECDC - "COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol - Operational Guidelines for the management of airline passengers in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic" (17 June 2021, Issue 3)

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Introduction

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The development of this protocol, to coordinate public health safety measures in air passenger transport, was in consultation with the National Air Transport Facilitation Committee (NATFaC), which includes representatives of the aviation industry, regulators, border control and public health authorities in Ireland. The Protocol has due regard to the latest EASA/ECDC COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol Guidelines (June 2021), WHO policy and technical considerations for implementing a risk-based approach to international travel and the national guidance in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Inputs were also considered from the National Civil Aviation Development Forum (NCADF) concerning operational implementation of measures by airports and air carriers, and the National Civil Aviation Security Committee (NCASC) concerning risk assessment for possible aviation security impacts.

This Protocol is developed having due regard to:

- The role of States under ICAO Annex 9 – Facilitation (2017, 15th Ed.), Article 8.19, for coordination of facilitation activities through the National Air Transport Facilitation Committee).

- Report of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) (Montreal, Canada).

- ECAC Policy Statement in the field of Civil Aviation Facilitation, ECAC DOC 30 Part 1 (2018, 12th Ed), concerning implementation of ICAO Annex – 9 standards and recommended practices.

- The principles for facilitation for return to normal operations, as set out in the ECAC 'Key Elements on Facilitation for Supporting the Aviation Sector Following the COVID-19 Crisis' (16/04/2021 Version 4).

- The Communication from the European Commission – COVID-19: Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity (Brussels 15/05/2020 2020/C 169/02), and

- Transitional Protocol: Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

- Ireland's National Civil Aviation Facilitation Programme.

The Department, in consultation with the National Air Transport Facilitation Committee, will keep under review the contents of this Protocol in response to changes as the epidemiological context for COVID-19 evolves and as further International and national guidance is developed and disseminated.

The implementation of the measures in this Protocol is primarily reliant upon the voluntary compliance and responsibility of passengers, staff and crew. Air Carriers and Airports should promote a culture of collective and individual responsibility for public health safety in aviation, among passengers, staff and crew.

Air Carriers, Airport Operators, and certain other service providers are responsible for ensuring implementation of the measures as set out in this Protocol, including monitoring implementation and providing feedback.

Aviation organisations, as part of the mandatory requirements for certification, already have in place safety management systems including risk management and compliance monitoring. As part of this system, the accountable manager ensures that robust processes are in place to identify and manage risk.

1. Context

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) issued a joint documents containing guidelines aimed at assuring the health safety of air travellers and aviation personnel. The EASA/ECDC - "COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol - Operational Guidelines for the management of airline passengers in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic") are available on the EASA website.

https://www.easa.europa.eu/document-library/general-publications/covid-19-aviation-health-safety-protocol

The EASA/ECDC Guidelines will be evaluated on a continuous basis by ECDC and EASA in conjunction with the Member State competent authorities. This will ensure that the Guidelines are proportionate and, to the greatest extent possible, there is a harmonised and consistent approach across Europe.

Nothing in this Protocol alters or detracts from Public Health Guidelines and Government restrictions concerning COVID-19 that are in operation at any given time.

The current Government guidance concerning COVID-19 is available on the Gov.ie website.

https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/

It is a mandatory requirement for passengers to complete a Covid-19 passenger locator form 72hrs prior to arrival in Ireland. The form may be used by health authorities to contact trace passengers, to provide you with public health advice on behalf of the Minister for Health. Where indicated that it is your intention to travel onwards to Northern Ireland your data will be shared with the Public Health Agency Northern Ireland for the purposes of contact tracing and the provision of relevant public health advice and information. Ireland is also implementing the EU Digital Covid Certificate for travel within the EU.

https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e885b2-covid-19-coronavirus-travel-advice/

All individuals and all business sectors should inform themselves about current COVID19 guidance, exercise judgement and take responsibility for decisions that they make about the risk of infection to themselves and to others in different situations.

As with any risk, businesses have a duty of care and should undertake a risk assessment to assess the COVID-19 related risk of their activities, particularly the risk to clients and to staff, and take appropriate actions to eliminate or reduce the risk of spreading infection to the lowest level practicable.

The responsibilities under this Protocol are without prejudice to obligations on employers pursuant to the Transitional Protocol: Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19, where appropriate www.gov.ie/transitional Protocol

2. Objective of the Protocol

The objective is an aviation health safety protocol and source of best practice to facilitate public health safety measures for passenger transport. This includes,

- to ensure the health and safety of passengers, as well as the staff and crew who service them, by reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission during the journey upon entering the airport
- to maintain safe and secure operations whilst minimising the risk of COVID-19 transmission during the journey upon entering the airport
- to complement the advice of public health authorities and help employers in their duties under the relevant legislation on protection of workers' health and safety'
- to achieve effective risk mitigation and ensure compliance with national public health requirements
- to ensure preventative measures are implemented in such a way as to consider both the actual risk factors and practical need for mitigation measures in different circumstances
- to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission at the airport and on board the aircraft as much as practicable

It is noted that High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters have been installed in all modern commercial jet aircraft which provides a higher level of health safety assurance than other public transport modes. Aircraft manufacturers have stated that these air filtration (HEPA) systems operate to hospital standards and provide for the equivalent of 2 meters separation between passengers, even on a full flight[1].

In addition, this Protocol sets out a suite of preventative health safety measures for passenger air travel aimed at reducing the risk of transmission at airports and onboard aircraft.

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[1] https://www.boeing.com/confident-travel/research/engineered-physical-distance-equivalence-for-a-cough.html

Communication materials developed should reinforce passengers' personal responsibility for the health and safety of themselves and others. This is of particular importance in respect of messaging about the wearing of face coverings, as a primary measure for preventing transmission of COVID-19. The Protocol does not constitute guidance for guaranteed 'safe' travel in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 situation. WHO advises, in the context of delta variants, that at points of entry, countries further strengthen risk communication to the public and staff with information on local transmission and required individual measures. Adherence to personal protective measures such as mask use and physical distancing should continue to be respected by all international travellers, both while on board conveyances and at points of entry.

As a voluntary Protocol, it is necessary that businesses assess their individual risks against current national guidance. Risks should be reduced by operators to the lowest reasonably practical level by taking preventative measures to include business process, environmental and engineering solutions to eliminate risk where possible. The wearing of face coverings by members of the public or staff should only be viewed as an adjunct to the taking of other preventive measures.

Businesses have a duty of care to clients and staff. Businesses should provide information in advance to intending passengers about COVID-19 related restrictions at points of departure and points of arrival and about risk reduction measures being employed at airports and on-board aircraft to minimise the risk of transmission, including seating arrangements, to enable passengers to make informed decisions about travel.

Passengers should be informed about the statutory mandatory requirement for completion of a Covid-19 Passenger Locator Form prior to travel.

Nothing in this Protocol alters or detracts from requirements provided for under Regulation EC1007/2006 concerning persons of reduced mobility who have a right to equal access to air travel.

3. Passenger Guidance

In communications and promotional material, the following guidance is for passenger awareness:

- **Passenger's cooperation is required to ensure public health safety measures are applied in air travel.**
- Follow the airport operator and air carrier advice concerning **the expected duration of time required to be at the Airport before your flight.**
- Passengers **should make themselves aware and ensure** in advance of their flight that they meet the entry requirements of their destination.
- **Follow the instruction of Airport Staff and Air Crew**, when in the Airport and on the Aircraft.
- Where possible use **On-Line Check-In, Self-Bag d r o p , and an electronic Boarding Pass.**
- **Practice physical distancing.**
- **At all times, adhere to respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, and avoid touching your face, nose, eyes and mouth.**
- **A face covering[1] should be worn throughout your journey**, in the Airport and must be worn onboard the Aircraft, to protect yourself and your fellow passengers and make sure to **practice physical distancing** where possible.
- **Watch the on-board safety demonstration;** be aware of **new procedures** in place for in-flight services – such as lavatories; and disembarkation.
- Be aware that there will be l**imited movement permitted in the cabin during flight, and that face covering can be removed temporarily for specific reasons, e.g. eating or drinking.**
- Upon arrival, collect your bags (if applicable) and leave the **terminal building as soon as possible.**
- **Reduce the risk of virus transmission by minimising interaction with people** in the arrival terminal.
- **Be patient and considerate of staff, crew and other passengers.**
- Passengers should self-monitor for the potential onset of symptoms on arrival and report symptoms and travel history to local health authorities.

Passenger can find guidance and requirements in relation to International to Ireland on the Government website www.gov.ie/travel

Guidance in relation to requirements for other countries is available on the Department of Foreign Affairs website https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/

In addition, please refer to the following published guidance, Health Service Executive advice on preventative measures https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/?source=banner-www

HSE Advice for seeking medical attention
https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/testing/get-tested/

To locate a GP https://www.icgp.ie/go/find_a_gp

HSE Advice on restricting your movements
https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/restricted-movements/restricted-movements/

HSE Covid-19 tracker App
https://www2.hse.ie/services/covid-tracker-app/why-use-the-covid-tracker-app.html

Gov.ie Guidance on use of face coverings
https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/

European Aviation Safety Agency Guidance for passengers
https://www.easa.europa.eu/document-library/general-publications/easaecdc-process-passengers

https://www.easa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/dfu/EASA-ECDC%20Posters%20-%20Blue%20-%2028MAY2020%20-%20FINAL.PDF

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[1] Face covering - a cloth face covering is a material you wear that covers the nose and mouth https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/#cloth-face-coverings

4. Table of Measures

In general, the best protection against transmission of coronavirus has proven to be through physical distancing, routine cleaning practices, wearing of face coverings and hand and respiratory hygiene, as primary mitigating measures.

At All Times.

Measures	Responsibility
Physical distancing in line with EASA/ECDC guidance is required following entry to Airport.	Passenger Airport Air Carrier
Ensure use of preventative measures – use of face covering, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, avoid touching your face, nose, eyes and mouth, limit direct contact (touch) of surfaces.	Passengers
Promotion of preventative measures – use of face covering, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, avoid touching the face, nose, eyes and mouth, limiting direct contact (touch) of surfaces.	Airports Air Carriers
Face Covering should be worn in the airport and must be on-board aircraft.	Passenger Airport Air Carriers
Appropriate use of PPE by staff who interact with passengers directly (e.g. security check agents, assistants for passengers with reduced mobility, cleaning staff etc.), or where physical distancing cannot be maintained between staff members.	Employers staff
Provide for the disposal of used face covering.	Airports Air Carriers

Before the Airport (pre-flight)

Measures:	Responsibility
Promotional information to encourage passengers to wear face coverings throughout the journey, unless requested to remove for security checks, border control, or by staff.	Air Carriers Airports
Information for passenger's awareness of their responsibility to ensure a sufficient supply of face coverings for the entire duration of their journey.	Air Carriers Airports
Pre-travel advice (do not present if showing COVID-19 symptoms, , or advised to restrict their movements by doctors,	Air Carriers
Passengers should be asked to confirm in advance of their flight that they meet the entry requirements of their destination country	Air Carriers
Air carriers to continue to review existing processes to ensure passengers with COVID-19 symptoms do not present for travel.	Air Carriers

At the Airport (pre-flight)

Measures	Responsibility
Face Covering recommended, Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette signage.	Airports Service providers
Cleaning and disinfection procedures including management of waste materials that were in direct contact while treating or supporting passengers, staff or aircrew members.	Airports Service providers
Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems optimized to ensure high rate of change of air.	Airports
Protective screens as appropriate	Airports
Where possible, provide for physical distancing of passengers.	Airports
Promote online/self-check-in and bag drop facilities.	Air Carriers
Passengers should be asked to confirm in advance of their flight that they meet the entry requirements of their destination country	Air Carriers
At the airport, i.e. before the aircraft doors are shut, when non-compliance of passengers with health safety measures results in an event which has implications for aviation security or safety, or for public order, airport procedures for removal or refusal of access to be applied.	Airports

On Board the Aircraft

Measure:	Responsibility
Cleaning and disinfection procedures including management of waste materials that were in direct contact while treating or supporting passengers or aircrew.	Air Carriers
Maximised fresh air intake and/or air filtration using HEPA Filters, or air conditioning as appropriate,	Air Carriers
Promote hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette	Air Carriers
When events of passengers not adhering to measures in place on board, aircraft, procedures relating to handling of unruly passengers are to be applied.	Air Carriers
Air carrier promotion and specific procedures to reduce and manage queuing in aisles.	Air Carriers
Use of face covering by passengers in-flight and information by air carriers to passengers concerning,	Air Carriers Passengers
Contingency procedures in the event a passenger displays COVID-19 symptoms, and management of any suspected COVID-19 case as well as management of waste materials that were in direct contact while treating or supporting passengers or aircrew members.	Air Carriers Airports

Disembarkation

Measures	Responsibility
Where possible, facilitate physical distancing in line with EASA/ECDC guidance during dis-embarkation, and disembarkation should start with the seat closest the exit	Passenger Airports Air Carriers
Use of face covering advised.	Passenger Airports Air Carriers
Contingency procedures in the event a passenger displays COVID-19 symptoms, and management of any suspected COVID-19 case as well as management of waste materials that were in direct contact while treating or supporting passengers or aircrew members.	Air Carriers Airports HSE

Arrival at the Airport (post-flight) including transit

Measures	Responsibility
Promotion of preventative measures - respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, avoid touching the face, nose, eyes and mouth, limiting direct contact (touch) of surfaces, use of face coverings	Airports
Physical distancing in line with EASA/ECDC guidance is required following entry to Airport.	Passenger Air Carriers Airports
Promotion of the use of face covering.	Air Carriers Airports
Contingency procedures in the event a passenger displays COVID-19 symptoms, and management of any suspected COVID-19 case as well as management of waste materials that were in direct contact while treating or supporting passengers, airport staff or aircrew members.	Air Carriers Airports HSE
PPE and/or screens and barriers as appropriate (including for border security/customs).	Airports, BMU Customs
Use of automated passport control where available.	Airports BMU
Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection, including management of waste materials that were in direct contact while treating or supporting passengers, airport staff or aircrew members.	Airports Service providers
Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems optimised to ensure high rate of change of air.	Airports

Appendix: National Air Transport Facilitation Committee Representatives

Department of Transport

Department of Foreign Affairs

Department of Justice

Department of Health

Health Service Executive

Department of Agriculture

Office of the Revenue Commissioners

Airport Authorities

Irish Registered Airlines

Ground handling Representatives

Cargo/Freight Representatives

Irish Aviation Authority

Commission for Aviation Regulation

Garda National Immigration Bureau

US Customs and Border Protection