

## COVID-19 Border Advisory (15) – 20 March 2020

Dear Colleagues

This is the fifteenth border advisory relating to COVID-19. These Border Advisories are available on the Ministry of Health's website, along with guidance, fact sheets and updates. We encourage you to keep checking the Ministry's website for updated information at: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

### Summary:

This Border Advisory includes the following information:

- Current situation: updated
- Temporary border restrictions: updated
- COVID-19 is a Quarantinable Disease: no change
- Implications for the Aviation Sector: updated to refer to any overseas port
- Implications for the Maritime Sector: updated to refer to any overseas port
- Personal protection for border staff: updated to add 2metres as a precautionary distance
- Frequently Asked Questions: new section
- Further information: updated advice for air crew included

### Current situation

The first reported cases of COVID-19 were reported from Hubei Province, China in late December 2019. The Director-General of the World Health Organization has stated that Europe has now become the epicentre of the pandemic. Reported case numbers have been increasing most rapidly in Italy, Spain, Iran, France and Germany. The World Health Organization has declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and on 11 March, the Director-General of the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic.

As of 20 March 2020, there are 191,127 confirmed cases reported globally and 7,807 confirmed deaths. Based on the confirmed cases reported globally, the case fatality rate varies from approximately 1 percent to 4.1 percent.

There are 39 confirmed and three probable cases in New Zealand and the likelihood of further cases is high. To date, all cases in New Zealand have a history of overseas travel within the previous 14 days, or close contact with a family member with recent travel history.

New Zealand's risk assessment is that the likelihood of one or more further imported cases of COVID-19 infection from category 1 countries (mainland China, Iran, Italy, the city of Seattle and the Republic of Korea) is high, and from other countries is moderate. The likelihood of limited transmission is high and the likelihood of limited transmission in New Zealand is high, the likelihood of sustained transmission is moderate, and the likelihood of widespread outbreaks is low.

It is important to note that this is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and this risk assessment may change as more information on COVID-19 and its epidemiology becomes available.

This is the northern hemisphere influenza season and so we expect to see increased numbers of travellers from the northern hemisphere with influenza-like illnesses.

The primary objectives of the New Zealand response to COVID-19 are:

- to identify and investigate cases/clusters of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and to apply appropriate infection control measures to prevent its spread
  - to detect cases/clusters of COVID-19 infection and prevent transmission in high risk settings (i.e., hospitals)
  - to apply infection prevention and control practices, including basic respiratory hygiene, to minimise the transmission risk of respiratory infections, including infections by COVID-19
  - to prevent sustained outbreaks of COVID-19 in the New Zealand community.
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## Temporary Border Restrictions

New Zealand has implemented temporary border measures to reduce the chances of COVID-19 spreading within New Zealand. From 11.59pm 19 March 2020, only New Zealand residents and citizens (and their children and partners) are permitted to enter New Zealand.

People who are exempt from the temporary restrictions are:

- New Zealand citizens (including those from the three Countries of the Realm: Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands), permanent residents and their immediate family
- Australian citizens and permanent residents whose primary place of established residence is New Zealand
- Air crews who have been using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

There can be exceptions, on a case by case basis, for example for essential health workers and for humanitarian reasons.

The passenger arrival card has been revised to include a series of questions identifying if the passenger may be at risk of COVID-19. It also requires the passenger to identify the address they will be self-isolating for 14 days after they return to New Zealand. Healthline will call people in self-isolation to ask about their health and welfare. Spot checks are being made to verify people are observing self-isolation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is advising that all New Zealanders do not travel overseas at this time due to the outbreak of COVID-19, associated health risks and travel restrictions. Countries around the world are imposing strict travel restrictions. This is leading to a reduction in passenger numbers and many air routes will not remain commercially viable for long. The options for New Zealanders to get home are reducing dramatically. We are therefore urging New Zealanders travelling overseas to consider returning home as soon as possible. Travelling New Zealanders should work with their travel agents and airlines to discuss options for returning home. For people returning to New Zealand, the Safe Travel website advises, for information on border restrictions, see the Immigration New Zealand website and factsheet on COVID-19. You can also call Immigration New Zealand on 0508 225 288 (within New Zealand) or +64 9 952 1679 (outside New Zealand). For updated information, see <https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/travel-advisories>

## COVID-19 is a Quarantinable Disease

'Novel coronavirus capable of causing severe respiratory illness' was made a notifiable disease under the Health Act 1956 on 30 January 2020. The provisions of the Health Act 1956 are available to support case management and contact tracing. From 11 March 2020, novel coronavirus capable of causing severe respiratory illness and COVID-19 were scheduled as 'quarantinable diseases' under the Health Act 1956. This means that the quarantinable disease provisions in the Health Act 1956 and the Epidemic Preparedness Act 2006 can be used if necessary.

As a result, vessels or aircraft may be quarantined when they come into New Zealand, where there are grounds to believe there may be cases of novel coronavirus capable of causing severe respiratory illness or COVID-19 on board. The public health units will activate their public health emergency contingency plans if a person on board the aircraft or vessel is suspected of having novel coronavirus capable of causing severe respiratory illness or COVID-19.

## Implications for the Aviation Sector

If the Captain reports ill travellers on the aircraft, public health staff will

- confirm with the Captain that the aircraft does not have pratique,
- inform the Ministry of Health (0800 GETMOH) urgently
- meet the aircraft on arrival, if there is history of travel to, or transiting through, any overseas port in the last 14 days (vessel, crew or passengers), **OR** a suspicion of COVID -19 infection.
  - implement the public health border contingency emergency response plan for managing suspected quarantinable diseases
  - complete a risk assessment
  - manage cases and contacts as laid out in the *Ill Traveller Response Framework*
  - ensure appropriate treatment for ill traveller
  - require close contacts to self-isolate until suspected case is cleared or 14 days if suspected case is confirmed.

- If there is no suspicion of COVID-19, meet the aircraft on arrival and issue pratique.

### Implications for the Maritime Sector

Illness is expected to be reported as part of the advance notice of arrival process submitted at least 48 hours before the vessel arrives and the health status update 12 to 24 hours before arrival.

To inform the assessment of the state of health on the ship, and to ensure health officials can be prepared for any potential health response for a vessel, additional questions are now being asked as part of the health clearance process (advance notice of arrival and no change of health status messages). The three questions will be updated in the no change of health status form to read:

- Has the vessel departed or transited through any overseas port in the last 14 days?
- Are there any passengers or crew on board who have departed, or transited through, any overseas port in the last 14 days?
- Are there any passengers or crew on board who have been had contact with a person who has confirmed or suspected COVID-19 in the last 14 days?

If **any** illness is reported, public health staff will

- inform the Harbour Master and border agencies of **all** reports of ill travellers
- withhold pratique (health clearance) if a quarantinable disease is suspected (note from 11 March 2020, COVID-19 will be a quarantinable disease)
- follow normal processes for ill travellers if there is no reasonable suspicion of a quarantinable disease risk, **AND** the symptoms are not consistent with COVID-19 **OR** there is no history of travel in the last 14 days (vessel or passengers): i.e. gather information, undertake a risk assessment and take actions to mitigate risk as necessary.
- withhold pratique, inform the Ministry of Health (0800 GETMOH) urgently, and meet the vessel on arrival, if there is history of travel to, or transiting through, any overseas port in the last 14 days (vessel, crew or passengers), **OR** a suspicion of COVID -19 infection.
  - implement the public health border contingency emergency response plan for managing suspected quarantinable diseases
  - complete a risk assessment
  - manage cases and contacts as laid out in the *Ill Traveller Response Framework*
  - ensure appropriate treatment for ill traveller
  - require close contacts to self-isolate until suspected case is cleared or 14 days if suspected case is confirmed.

Ministry of Health officials will inform the Customs Strategic Coordination and Integrated Targeting Operating Centre of any suspicion of possible COVID-19 cases on vessels, and this will be forwarded to border agencies nationally.

There is no expectation that vessels with ill crew or passengers should be held at anchor. Crew and passengers cannot disembark before pratique is issued and any risk management procedures will be discussed with the Master and Agent. Requiring first responders and public health staff to board the vessel at anchor would create disproportionate health and safety risks for those staff and for any unwell crew or passengers being removed for treatment.

### Personal Protection for Border Staff:

If you work in an area with high passenger flow, there are steps you should always take to reduce your chance of respiratory infection. This is especially important if you are interacting with passengers or crew who have travelled from or through any overseas port in the past 14 days. The advice from WHO and the Ministry of Health is:

- avoid close contact with people suffering acute respiratory infections
- frequently wash and dry hands, especially after contact with ill people or their environment
- avoid close contact with sick live farm animals or wild animals
- when coughing, maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow, disposable tissues or clothing, and wash and dry hands afterwards or use hand sanitizer.

Staff are also required to follow these infection control processes:

- when staff are required to wear gloves (for example when conducting personal searches) nitrile gloves should be worn. Ensure you remove your gloves with the correct technique, and dispose of gloves in a MPI quarantine bin, or if this is not readily available in a standard rubbish bin.

- be conscious of not taking gloved hands or ungloved hands to your eyes, nose or mouth and use a thorough handwashing technique
- before and after wearing gloves wash and dry your hands using the correct technique or immediately use the antiseptic gel (hand sanitizer) at your work station
- if there is droplet contamination of an area (eg. from coughs), use sodium hypochlorite spray to disinfect the area and dispose of wipes in designated bin. Note, normal clean wipes are not the same as antiseptic sodium hypochlorite and will not remove viruses.
- if staff caring for the very young, elderly or people with compromised immune systems have any concerns, please speak to your line manager.

Border staff who are working in situations that meet all three of the below requirements should wear a mask and gloves. A surgical/medical mask is acceptable:

- passengers/crew have come from overseas in the last 14 days, or are coughing, sneezing, or visibly sweating **and**
- you are going to be with the passenger/crew longer than 15 minutes **and**
- you are within 1 metre of the passenger/crew
- in addition, border staff may wear a mask and gloves for all personal searches as a precautionary measure or if they will be within 2 metres of a passenger/crew for 15 minutes or longer.

## **Frequently asked questions**

### ***What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?***

The terms have been used interchangeably and, for the purpose of the COVID-19 response, it means the separation of cases, contacts of cases, suspected case and those arriving to New Zealand from all other people. In public health terminology:

- quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of well persons
- isolation is used to separate ill persons from those who are healthy.

### ***What are the exceptions to the border measures that took effect on 19 March 2020?***

Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis and, in particular, for

- humanitarian reason
- essential health workers
- citizens of Samoa and Tonga for essential travel to New Zealand
- those on visitor visas who are the partners or dependants of a temporary work or student visa holder, and who normally live in New Zealand.

### ***Do the exceptions for air crew and marine crew still apply?***

Yes, it is important to allow the continuation of essential operations but there are requirements to ensure that the potential for spread is minimised.

Air crew (including repositioning crew) need not self-isolate if they follow the advice for aircrew: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-advice-airline-crew>

Vessel crew must self-isolate on the vessel for 14 days until they departed from after overseas port OR took on new crew (ie 14 days from the last day of possible exposure to a case). Shore leave is not permitted during the self-isolation period. If the crew or border staff need to interact, vessel and border staff should follow the advice above on personal protection for border staff.

### ***What is the recommended physical distancing?***

It is recommended that people in self-isolation after arriving from overseas maintain a physical distance of 1 metre from other people if the contact is 15 minutes or longer. People who are close contacts, suspected or confirmed cases must stay at least 2m from other people if the contact is 15 minutes or longer.

## Further information and resources

The COVID-19 webpages are updated daily: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

Advice for airline crew <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-advice-airline-crew>

Advice on general cleaning <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/general-cleaning-information-covid-19>

Advice for hotel operators and staff <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-hotels-and-hotel-staff>

Advice on personal protective measures <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals>

Advice for travellers <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-advice-travellers>

Advice on self isolation <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation>

Advice on caring for yourself and others who have, or may have, COVID-19 at home <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/caring-yourself-and-others-who-have-or-may-have-covid-19-home>

All of Government Factsheet for Welfare Support: information on what welfare support is available for people who may be self-isolating or are not sure what assistance may be available here <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources> or phone the 0800 Government Helpline on 0800 779 997 (9am–5pm, seven days/week). For health specific questions, please call Healthline directly on 0800 611 116 (24 hours/day, seven days/week).

Border advisories <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-resources-border-sector>

Current case definition <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/case-definition-covid-19-infection>

General information about COVID-19 <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public>

Information for the border sector <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-resources-border-sector>

Public events and mass gatherings <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-public-events-and-mass-gatherings>

World Health Organization situation updates and advice: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus> and <https://www.who.int/csr/don/en>(updates only).

World Health Organization guidance: Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/operational-considerations-for-managing-covid-19-cases-outbreak-on-board-ships>

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