



CHINA

24 SEP 2020

Coronavirus, COVID-19

The following information was received from our correspondent 24 September:

QUOTE

Attached herein please kindly find our latest circular regarding the Covid-19 for your easy reference, contents of which you will find self-explanatory.

Thank you for your kind attention and we hope this will be of some assistance. Should you have any query, please be free to let us know.

UNQUOTE

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Circular No.: SPI200901

Date: 24 September 2020

Subject: Measures in Response to COVID-19 Infections of Seafarers in China

Dear Sirs / Madams,

In the past few months, we have seen a number of confirmed Covid-19 cases of seafarers upon vessel's arrival at Chinese ports. We would like to share some information in relation to the measures in response to Covid-19 infections among seafarers in Mainland China for your easy reference:

1. Government strategy on regular prevention and control of COVID-19

According to Guiding Opinions of the Joint Mechanism of the State Council on Prevention and Control of COVID-19 on Fulfilling the Work of Preventing and Controlling COVID-19 on a Regular Basis:

- 1) The general strategy – forestalling imported infections and domestic resurgence.
- 2) Establishing a regular epidemic prevention and control mechanism – in which cases are detected in a timely way, are promptly handled, precisely prevented, and effectively treated.

2. GACC (General Administration of Customs of PRC) scrutiny of international arrivals

- 1) Stepping up scrutiny of all inbound travelers
 - a) The customs shall take strict quarantine measures on disembarked crew members and seafarers and a three-step comprehensive scrutiny should be carried out. First, health declaration checking, body temperature test and medical inspection for all inbound travelers, anyone found with respiratory symptoms will then be subject to epidemiological investigation, medical screening and laboratory test. Where further diagnosis and treatment is required, transfer to local health department should be made in accordance with the joint prevention and control mechanism.



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- b) For crew members and seafarers that remain on the vehicle but show mild symptoms, the customs will take samples for Nucleic Acid Test (NAT) and transfer suspected cases to local health department in accordance with the joint prevention and control mechanism for further diagnosis.
 - c) For crew members and seafarers that remain on the vehicle and show no symptoms, no NAT sample taking will be carried out.
- 2) Toughening quarantine measures on inbound vehicles
- a) An onboard quarantine inspection will be conducted at a designated spot for all vehicles entering China from countries/regions with high infection risks, or vehicles from non-high-risk countries/regions but with individuals declaring COVID-19 symptoms onboard, or foreign going vessels in need of crew disembarkation and crew change.
 - b) Apart from strict examination of health declaration documents, the three-step comprehensive scrutiny should be implemented with guidance and supervision on vehicle disinfection to cut off routes of transmission and prevent spread of virus.
3. GACC measures on prevention and control of COVID-19
- 1) Ships shall fill in the health declaration form at request of local agents prior to arrival, providing information regarding the ship's itinerary record, crew's travel history, crew change record and body temperature record etc.
 - 2) In the event of any unusual body temperature records or other symptoms among the crew, cargo operation will be allowed only if all the crew onboard are tested negative for covid-19 (note: tests to be taken at anchorages in emergency and at berth in non-emergency situations).
 - 3) Ships with normal crew temperature records, no change of crew at the last port of call and having been engaged in a voyage for more than 14 days, can proceed with cargo operations after a temperature measurement.
 - 4) Ships with normal crew temperature records, conducting crew change at the last port of call and having been engaged in a voyage for more than 14 days, can proceed with cargo operations after a temperature measurement.
 - 5) Ships with normal crew temperature records, conducting crew change at the last port of call and having been engaged in a voyage for less than 14 days, can proceed with



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cargo operations only if crew members are tested negative for covid-19.

4. Procedures of handling imported cases with positive test results at Chinese ports
 - 1) Management of COVID-19 infections are basically led by local municipal government and coordinated by the port authorities, with the epidemic prevention and control command office in charge of execution.
 - 2) Upon detection of positive NAT results, the customs will report immediately to the local government who will make decisions about the next step and the epidemic prevention and control command office will make arrangements for isolation and treatment ashore.
 - 3) For close contacts of confirmed cases (crew members and/or stevedores), the customs will arrange screenings as soon as possible and infected individuals, as the test result reveals, will be sent for isolation and treatment as well. If there aren't any positive results, the vessel will be thoroughly disinfected and these close contacts will be subject to a 14-day quarantine period.
 - 4) After the two-week observation, if these close contacts are again tested normal, they will be allowed back to work and departure from the port.
 - 5) Infected seafarers will go through further examinations (such as serodiagnosis and CT tests) when put into hospitals. A panel of experts will then formulate treatment plans upon confirmed diagnosis of the infected seafarers.
 - 6) Recovered seafarers, if conform to the standard of discharge from hospital, will be repatriated after several rounds of tests and confirmation.

Exceptions:

- 1) If multiple crew members are tested positive prior to arrival, berthing may be denied if local hospitals are not able to accommodate the infected or the port authority is not capable of containing the risk.
- 2) If crew members are tested positive after berthing of vessel, it is possible that, with all infected cases transferred, considering the trading element, the vessel may be allowed to carry on with cargo operation after the scrutiny procedures of other crew.
- 3) If multiple crew members are tested positive after berthing, considering the capability of local hospitals and the level of risks, it is possible that the port may order sailing of the vessel with the infected seafarers on board upon application and confirmation submitted by the vessel.



5. Explanatory notes on relevant issues

1) Diagnostic samples

Pursuant to the procedures of GACC's three-step comprehensive scrutiny, customs officers, with personal protection in place, will take nasopharyngeal swabs and/or throat swab from persons meeting epidemiologic evidence or showing fever and/or respiratory symptoms.

While nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal samples are preferred by the GACC, samples of blood or sputum can be taken for laboratory testing if conditions permit.

2) Method of diagnostic testing

At the press conference of the State Council joint prevention and control mechanism on April 6, deputy director of the Department of Health Quarantine, GACC introduced that NAT (nucleic acid testing) will be conducted for testing and screening whenever necessary.

While NAT is preferred by the GACC, an antibody test will be conducted for accurate clinical judgement, even with the NAT result being positive already.

3) Medical and biological terms

RT-PCR: a variation of the Polymerase Chain Reaction test and one of the most widely used laboratory methods for NAT to detect the COVID-19 virus.

IgM/IgG antibody testing: theoretically, nucleic acid can be detected 1-2 days after virus infection (at this time there may be no clinical symptoms); positive IgM (Immune globulin M) can be detected after 3-5 days and positive IgG (Immune globulin G) can be detected in another 10 days.

4) Confirming infection of COVID-19

Pursuant to the NHC Guidelines on the Novel Coronavirus-Infected Pneumonia Diagnosis and Treatment (8th edition), a suspected case can be confirmed as infected case by meeting one of the following etiology or serology evidence:

- a) real-time fluorescent RT-PCR tests positive for novel coronavirus nucleic acid;
- b) viral genome sequence is highly homologous with novel coronavirus;
- c) both IgM and IgG are positive for antibody testing;



d) IgG antibody turns positive from negative or there is a 4-fold change in IgG-specific antibody titers in acute and convalescent serum samples.

5) Role of the embassy

Upon confirmation of infection among foreign seafarers in mainland China, the intervention of embassy may assist in facilitating treatment arrangement and the processing of the temporary medical entry visa in order to prevent delay of the ship's schedule.

6) Visa for infected seafarers

A temporary entry permit will be issued by local immigration authority when the infected are transferred, and a visa issued by the Immigration Administration Department of public security bureau will be required before the ship's departure. The visa will be valid for 30 days and extension is allowed for up to 3 times with consideration of the seafarer's health status.

7) Tickets for repatriated seafarers

Many flights, especially those from / to heavily affected countries, are cancelled with the pandemic going on. It is advisable to book tickets early for repatriated seafarers and involve professional travel agencies where necessary.

6. Risks concerning shipowners and P&I clubs

- 1) Delay in ship's schedule for taking disinfection and quarantine measures when there are suspected cases on board or seafarers with Covid-19 symptoms or positive NAT results.
- 2) Denied departure from the port for not having entry visa for infected seafarers in accordance with local regulations.
- 3) Additional costs for agents, tugboats, disinfection efforts, medical treatment etc. which are to be borne by the owners when infected case is found on board.

7. Our advice on managing infected cases

- 1) Take protection and isolation measures in accordance with official guidance immediately when suspected or confirmed cases are identified on board to prevent spread of the virus. Notify the club and local correspondent as soon as possible and



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seek advice from the correspondent if necessary.

- 2) Appointing own protective agent for onsite coordination can be time and cost-saving for shipowners, and a local one with rich experience in handling infections may render great help in effective communication with the authorities.

- 3) In order to obtain a visa for the infected without affecting the ship's schedule, owners or clubs are advised to report the situation to the embassy as early as possible so that it can help coordinate with Immigration Administration Department of public security bureau of PRC.

We hope the above will be of some assistance. If you have any further queries, please feel free to contact with us.

Yours faithfully,

General Manager

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