



MEMORANDUM

TO: OMSA Members
FROM: Chad Fuhrmann, Director of Regulatory Affairs
RE: Personnel Transport Considerations During COVID-19 Pandemic
DATE: March 25, 2020

Purpose and Summary:

OMSA has created this guidance on the transport of potentially infected personnel in order to assist members in generating internal guidance using appropriate industry standards.

This document is a supplemental resource to the [Memo to Members on COVID-19](#) released on March 13, 2020.

This document serves as guidance only and should not be considered exhaustive. In all cases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) document, [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Guidance for Ships](#); local USCG Captain of the Port (COTP); and port and regional Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) directives should be sought and followed.

Any questions, concerns, or recommendations may be addressed to Chad.Fuhrmann@offshoremarine.org.

Prior to Transporting Potentially Infected Personnel from Offshore Locations:

Transporting infected or potentially infected individuals could increase crew exposure to COVID-19 and could result in quarantine of the vessel and/or the vessel's crew for a period of no less than 14 days. Considering the criticality of these consequences:

- All stakeholders (e.g. charterers, employers, USCG and other government bodies) should risk assess and reach consensus regarding all planned activities and protocols prior to executing any related operations;
- Relevant stakeholder Safety Management Systems (SMS) should be consulted to determine the safest means of performing any necessary activities and Management of Change (MOC) procedures applied appropriately; and
- Ensure all discussions, agreements, arrangements, quarantine and isolation measures, crew protective procedures, protocols, screening records, etc. are well documented.

Personnel Transfer to the Vessel – Procedures and Precautions:

Transfer of infected persons should abide by the requirements outlined within appropriate SMS procedures with the suggested following modifications to account for extraordinary circumstances.

The individual being transported should be accompanied from the installation or point of origin by one (1) or more assistants to ensure safety during transfer. All personnel participating in transfer operations, including assistants and vessel crew, should don appropriate medical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) per the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [Regulations \(Standards – 29 C.F.R.\)](#) and CDC guidelines, [Healthcare Infection](#)

[Prevention and Control FAQs for COVID-19](#). Vessel operators should consider providing personnel with [CDC guidance on how to don \(and remove\) PPE](#).

Once the individual is on board, he or she should be directly taken to the quarantine facility or designated area. Assistants should leave the vessel immediately. The route(s) taken during transfer of individual and disembarking of assistants should be disinfected as should any surfaces that may have been contacted, this should include any paperwork and other materials that may have been exchanged between the vessel and transferring location/facility. Vessel crews should utilize listed in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) guidance, [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#) and CDC guidance [Interim Recommendations for US Households with Suspected/Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019](#). Crew personnel should remove and disinfect PPE or dispose of as hazardous material, as recommended within CDC guidance [Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of PPE](#).

Quarantine and Isolation Procedures Onboard Transporting Vessel:

When the individual is brought on board, all appropriate isolation and quarantine procedures should be implemented per CDC guidance, including [Guidance for Cruise Ships on Influenza-Like Illness \(ILI\) Management](#). As a minimum, vessel Master and shoreside management should reference CDC's [Interim Guidance for Ships on Managing Suspected Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

Potentially infected personnel should be isolated as completely as possible, restricted to a single cabin or area of the vessel. Precautions should be implemented to prevent airborne spread including (to the extent possible) sealing off the cabin from connected spaces and creating negative air pressure within the space. Cross connections in ventilation should be closed and the use of High-Efficiency Particulate Absorbing (HEPA) equipment, such as portable air filtration units should be as an additional precaution. Contact between vessel personnel and potentially infected individuals should be kept at an absolute minimum, following additional guidance as outlined within CDC guidance for [Management of Ill Passengers/Crew](#) for COVID-19 and similarly transmitted diseases.

Quarantine should be maintained until the infected individual is removed from the vessel. Discontinuing quarantine precautions for any other reason should only be made during emergency situations or in consultation with, and following the explicit approval of, the CDC and USCG.

Safety and Protection of All Personnel During Transit:

In order to ensure the continued health of the vessel's crew, crew members and other personnel onboard should be regularly screened and results/responses recorded. Screening questionnaires should focus on symptoms listed in CDC guidance, [COVID-19 Symptoms and Testing](#), with particular attention to the listed "emergency warning signs." Responses should be recorded appropriately and stored in personnel records onboard.

If crew members onboard begin showing symptoms of illness during transit, similar quarantine procedures described above should be followed. Isolating these individuals as soon as possible can minimize even further transmission of this virus. The USCG is currently taking the approach that there is no such thing as over-reporting of illnesses but is likewise aware of the possibility of overwhelming existing response capabilities. Records of regular screenings, temperature readings, specific symptoms, and any relevant medical information should be relayed to the COTP and each case will be addressed on a case by case basis.

Arrival in Port Carrying Potentially Infected Personnel

Illness of a person onboard a vessel that may adversely affect the safety of a vessel or port facility is a hazardous condition per [33 C.F.R. 160.216](#) and must be immediately reported to the USCG COTP. Vessels that have visited a foreign port and are returning to a U.S. port are required to report to the CDC any illnesses or deaths among the vessel's crewmembers per [42 C.F.R. 71.21](#).

During transport, regular status reports should be provided to the relevant USCG COTP including patient condition and vessel Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA). If the COTP cannot be reached prior to arrival, USCG district maritime emergency contact details may be found at [District and Regional Command Center Contact Information](#).

Personnel Transfer from the Vessel to Shoreside Parties – Procedures and Precautions

When disembarking a potentially infected individual, similar precautions should be taken as observed during embarkation. The individual being transferred to shore should be accompanied by one (1) or more assistants to ensure safety. If possible, these assistants should be from the shoreside medical facility, transportation entity, or other responsible party rather than vessel crew. If required, vessel crew participating in transfer operations should don appropriate medical PPE.

Once the individual has disembarked the route(s), surfaces, paperwork and other materials contacted by the individual and assistants should be disinfected in the same manner as when they were brought on board. Area(s) used for quarantine/isolation should be decontaminated as noted below.

Disinfecting and Cleaning of Vessels in Port

Cleaning and disinfecting of the vessel in general and the affected areas specifically will be required, in all cases, but the extent of these activities will need to be determined. The whole vessel may need to be decontaminated unless the individual in question was successfully isolated to specific areas and such isolation is explicitly documented.

Those areas to which the individual was exposed should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected in accordance with available industry practices, such as [World Health Organization's Guide to Ship Sanitation and](#) CDC guidance including the "Recommendations – Environmental Services" section of [Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities](#). Until such procedures are performed other personnel should be restricted from entering those areas. Personnel performing cleaning tasks should take all necessary safety precautions including donning all proper safety gear and protective equipment using guidance provided in [Procedures and Precautions](#), above.

Additional Topics for Consideration

The health and welfare of personnel is, of course, the primary concern during this time. However, there are also commercial concerns to take into consideration. As with each previous phase discussed above, these concerns need to be agreed upon by all relevant parties prior to proceeding with any transfer and transport of potentially infected personnel.

These discussions are primarily commercial in nature and directly impact the continuity of operations during and after the transport and transfer of personnel to shoreside facilities. The topics to be discussed include, but may not be limited to:

- Responsibility and liability during transport of the potentially infected individual,
- Financial responsibility for downtime of vessel incurred during any quarantine (including demurrage),
- Financial responsibility associated with quarantined crew and additional crew for vessel operations, and
- Decisions and financial responsibility surrounding cleaning and disinfecting activities.