



IMMARBE CIRCULAR LETTER No. **QAD-20-001**

To: Deputy Registrars, Registered owners, registered bareboat charterers, Managers and Representatives of ships flying the Belize Flag

Subject: Novel Coronavirus- Precautions to be taken to minimize risks to seafarers, passengers and others on board ships

Reference

- 1.1. IMO Circular Letter No. 4203 – Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)
- 1.2. IMO Circular Letter No. 4204- Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)
- 1.3. MSA, China: Announcement of the Maritime Safety Administration of the People's Republic of China on Issues Related to Ship Management during Epidemic Prevention and Control
- 1.4. WHO-International Medical Guide for Ships (Table-23.2)

Purpose: The purpose of this Circular is to promulgate IMO Circular Letter No. 4204 on the precautions to be taken to minimize risks to seafarers, passengers and others on board ships from novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

Overview

1. On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the outbreak of 2019-nCoV constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). On 31 January 2020, IMO issued Circular Letter No. 4204 to provide information and guidance, based on recommendations made by the WHO, on the precautions for minimizing risks to seafarers, passengers and others on board ships from novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).
2. The circular letter as attached to this Note provides information of the symptoms of 2019-nCoV infection, the risks of outbreak, WHO advice to reduce the general risk of transmission of acute respiratory infections as well as helpful links for available guidance to seafarers and shipping.
3. Shipowners, ship managers, ship operators and masters are urged to promulgate information to ensure that seafarers, passengers and others on board ships are provided with accurate and relevant information on the coronavirus outbreak and on the measures to reduce the risk of exposure if they are likely to be engaged on ships trading to and from ports in coronavirus-affected States.



4. Due to the continued spread of coronavirus, many cities have been closed in China and people are not allowed to go outside unless for daily supplies, for this reason MSA, China has issued the following announcement for the Chinese domestic vessels during the epidemic prevention and control period:
 - a. “Relevant certificates of ships, crews, shipping companies, etc. issued (Audited) by the Maritime administrations and Recognized organizations, if they expire during the epidemic prevention and control period and cannot perform annual inspections, audits or reissues on schedule, they can be postponed. No Maritime administration shall impose administrative penalties”.(MSA,China)
 - b. “For "four types of ships" (i.e. passenger ships, dangerous goods ships, gravel ships, fluidized bulk cargo ships) and transportation ships of epidemic prevention and control material , if certificates expire due to epidemic prevention and control, that it is impossible to carry out on-site inspection, ship owners or operators shall strengthen the safety self-inspection of the ship. Ship owners/operators may submit the self-inspection report to the ships’ Recognized organizations in a timely manner and take full responsibility for the self-inspection report. The ship Recognized organizations shall carefully review the self-examination report, and shall promptly correct any problems found, guide ship owners and operators to make corrections, and ensure that ships are well equipped with technical conditions for safe navigation”.(MSA,China)

Preventive/Precautionary Measures

In view of the above mentioned, the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE) recommends implementing the following Preventative/Precautionary measures on board ships:

Vessel Owners, Company Security Officers, Designated Persons Ashore, Masters and Ship Security Officers of Ships flying the Belizean flag trading in areas which are experiencing an outbreak of 2019-nCoV are encouraged to implement measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

Seafarers calling at Chinese ports are advised to wear masks and take precautionary measures to avoid getting infected and prevent its potential spreading.



When entering Chinese ports, seafarers may be required to remain on board their ships and disembark their vessels only where absolutely necessary.

It is reported that local Chinese authorities are requiring all vessels to report the temperature and condition of vessel's crew before entry into the port.

Ships' crews are also advised to alert the authorities in the event coronavirus is suspected on board, and take precautions to reduce the possibility of the spread of any virus, including minimal interpersonal exchanges with persons from ashore, avoiding contact with people who show symptoms of flu or high temperature and taking care of personal hygiene including more frequent handwashing, etc.

Establishing preventive measures against security incidents may also be effective in preventing the spread of the virus to ships and seafarers. These include conducting a risk assessment prior to entry into an affected port, assessing the preventive measures taken by those ports, and diligent application of access controls. Such measures may serve to support other actions aimed at preventing the spread of 2019-nCoV and thus enhance the safety of seafarers and persons with whom they may come into contact.

1. Only those cleared by the port authorities should be allowed on board.
2. Limit visitor access to the vessel and to the crew as much as possible.
3. Avoid shaking hands.
4. Wipe down areas and items visitors have touched or may have touched with disinfectant wipes and/or sprays.
5. Handwashing is the best way to reduce the risk of infection being transmitted from one person to another:
 - a) hands should be washed before and after every contact with a patient, using alcohol-based gels or liquids rather than soap to disinfect the hands;
 - b) the use of gloves does not replace the need for hand-washing.

It is also worth noting that additional port control measures may adversely impact the rate of loading and discharging operations leading to delays. Besides seaports, there are strict restrictions on the land side in China such as lockdown of some cities and stoppage of public transport operations. As a result, ship operators could face operational issues, such as arranging for surveyors, service engineers and supplies, or even delays in port operations, due to labor shortage.

We expect that most port health authorities will, as a precautionary measure, be on a heightened state of alert in order to identify crewmembers displaying relevant symptoms for ships and crews that have previously called at any Chinese port.

Many countries and ports have already implemented specific quarantine measures for ships arriving from China. One example is Singapore. The Maritime Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) has implemented temperature screening of passengers and crew at all



sea checkpoints. In addition, persons with a travel history to China in the previous 14 days will not be allowed to enter Singapore. However, the MPA does emphasize that “ships can continue to berth at terminals to carry out operations”. Other countries, such as the US, also require ships to proactively report any suspect or actual illness cases to local health authorities after arrival. Some ports authorities, such as the Port of New Orleans, may even impose a fine on ships that do not accurately report the health condition of crew members.

Suspected infection

In the event a Seafarer or Passenger on board a vessel registered with IMMARBEL is Suspected of being infected with 2019 nCoV the following actions should be taken:

1. Suspected infected seafarer or passenger (see Table 23.2 of “International Medical Guide for Ships” issued by the World Health Organization).
 - a) Isolate the infected person in a single-berth cabin: door may be open; masks (N95) to be worn within one meter of patient.
 - b) Contacts to wear disposable gloves; for close contact (e.g. to bathe or turn the patient); plastic overalls or aprons also essential
2. Vessel operators and Masters are reminded that they are required to report sick seafarers prior to entering port.

The following links provide advice and guidance to seafarers and shipping (non-exhaustive list):

- ✓ International Maritime Health Association (IMHA) advice for shipping companies on the new type of coronavirus (2019-nCoV)
- ✓ IMO Circular Letter No. 4203 – Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)
- ✓ USCG Novel Coronavirus Precautions
- ✓ WHO issues advice on international travel and health. This information is regularly reviewed and updated by WHO and can be found at the following address: www.who.int/ith/updates

Additional information can also be found at:

- ✓ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/1056031>
- ✓ https://www.who.int/ith/other_health_risks/en/
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The publications listed below may also be helpful:

- ✓ WHO International Health Regulations
- ✓ WHO Guide to ship sanitation International Medical Guide for Ships



Further Recommendations for Registered owners, registered bareboat charterers, Managers and Representatives of ships registered with IMMARBEL:

We recommend checking with the Port Agents and Authorities for further information especially when calling on ports in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore and other port areas where the infection has been reported. We also recommend reviewing the following:

- ✓ WHO: www.who.int/ith/2020-24-01-outbreak-of-Pneumonia-caused-by-new-coronavirus/en/; [https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/23-01-2020-statement-on-the-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/23-01-2020-statement-on-the-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov))
- ✓ Hong Kong: <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202001/22/P2020012200982.htm>
- ✓ Singapore: <https://www.mpa.gov.sg/web/portal/home/media-centre/news-releases/detail/1a8e0ea3-4a09-4a66-8357-12e1ff06d534>

We recommend monitoring the situation by consulting webpages maintained by the WHO and other public health authorities and evaluate the risks present in the next port of call. WHO-website: <https://www.who.int/ith/2020-27-01-outbreak-of-Pneumonia-caused-by-newcoronavirus/en/>

In consideration of the current circumstances faced in China where our Designated offices are currently closed, vessel owners, managers, representatives etc. are encouraged to contact head office for any queries regarding the registration of vessels, seafarers certification and statutory certification services in the event Designated offices cannot be reached.

For any questions or queries on this matter, kindly contact Mrs. Annette Garel, Senior Deputy Registrar of Ships at deputyregistrarbze@immarbe.com or Mr. Albert Melendez at albert.melendez@immarbe.com. General queries can be sent to immarbe@immarbe.com.



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Status: Released

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