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The following is intended to provide some high-level guidance and consideration for the Marine environment to both vessel Operators and Duty Holders in the face of the current COVID19 Pandemic.

It is not intended to override Flag State Guidance or Location Regulatory Guidance. The requirements and advice issued by local Regulatory Bodies and Flag State should be referenced and followed as applicable.

## COVID-19 General Information

- COVID-19 is a respiratory disease. The main symptoms are fever, aches and pains, a sore throat, a dry cough and shortness of breath.
- SARS-CoV-2 the causative agent of COVID-19 is transmitted in droplets and through contacts.
- Droplets are transmitted in coughs and sneezes and are limited in the main to 1m from an infected person.
- The virus remains viable on surfaces and therefore transmission can occur by what is known as contact route (touching or handling contaminated surfaces)
- It is believed that most transmission is due to people with symptoms passing it via droplets and contact routes

Key means to avoid COVID in workplace

1. Follow UK self-isolation guidance if symptomatic and if from household of symptomatic
2. If higher and highest risk group then practice social distancing/ shielding
3. Hand and respiratory hygiene are important
4. Regular cleaning of surfaces in workplace
5. Social distancing in workplace as much as is reasonable by ceasing non-essential tasks, use of shifts, remote working
6. Awareness of symptoms and clear reporting mechanism for symptoms plus immediate self-isolation
7. Do not travel if you are sick
8. Do not shake hands or other similar physical greeting
9. Follow Coughing and Sneezing etiquette, use a tissue or the crook of your elbow
10. Do not touch your face, eyes or mouth

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has stated that the risk of passing on the virus from packages is low (and therefore assumed cargo units / hoses is also low), but possible. Therefore, it would be prudent for deck crew when dealing with backload / hoses originating from such an installation to utilize PPE such as gloves, avoid touching face, and employing standard hygiene activities as promoted in standard Government guidance in combatting the virus. Such

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operations should be formally risk assessed, and all personnel clear of the mitigating barriers through the normal risk management processes e.g. tool box talks.

#### Vessel Crewing Considerations

While the UK and Scottish governments have adopted a policy of social distancing for the population in general in order to manage the outbreak it recognises that there are essential services where the social distancing measures recommended cannot be applied with the same strictness. Such employers are urged to carry out risk assessments and look at reducing COVID-19 risk through:

- Reduction in manning levels. This should be completed in line with safe manning and operational requirements, with the vessel client/duty holder consulted where required.
- Consider how to minimise close contact through the use of shift systems, ceasing of non-essential tasks, and implementing social distancing in living, eating, and working premises.
- Minimise contact with contaminated surfaces by use of regular cleaning, handling with gloves, or using means which limit handling of objects or people who may be affected

While doing this it is important that employers are obliged to continue to ensure the safety of staff generally and minimise the risk of accidents and other dangerous occurrences.

The below is simple advice for all ship operators to consider implementing as a bare minimum during the current health crisis, however they should conduct their own assessment.

- Wash your hands thoroughly using warm water and soap or Hand sanitizer regularly throughout the day
- Minimise close contact between shore side personnel and crew. Where contact is required social distancing (2m distance) should be used as a minimum for interactions. Shore side personnel should not be allowed on board if they are from a group that should be in self-isolation (the 2m rule may vary in different countries, where possible, the stricter rule should apply)
- Where possible, conduct audits or other verification processes remotely or postpone if possible
  - Consult with your flag and classification societies, most are giving extensions to surveys and certificates
- Separate crew and shoreside personnel when onboard
- Maintain a gangway watch and have the ability to close the gangway (using a chain or other such methods) proving the ships phone number for individuals looking to board the vessel. Gangway watch should maintain social distancing as a minimum at all times
- Ensure that all stores and other deliveries are left at the base of the gangway, and only after the delivery driver has left, have crew collect them, using disposable gloves where available, where not, hands are to be cleaned immediately after retrieval
- Stop all non-essential maintenance for the time being. Crew to conduct as much maintenance onboard themselves as possible, reducing the need for outside parties and thus reducing the likelihood of introducing infection onboard. However, this should be balanced with safety of vessel
- Documents should be communicated in electronic form where possible in order to avoid contact with potentially contaminated objects
- Have company shore-based personnel come to vessel to monitor and oversee shore side personnel carrying out tasks onboard to avoid need for crew to carry out this function, maintaining a minimum of 2m distance at all times
- Have all shore-based personnel planning to board completed a declaration document stating that they are free of COVID symptoms and have not, to the best of their knowledge, come in contact with anyone suspected or confirmed of being infected by COVID-19 e.g. from a household where there is a case in past 14 days
- For first 14 days of voyage maintain a log of daily crew temperatures and symptoms
- Before traveling to join the vessel crew to complete a health declaration form, confirming, as a minimum, that that they have no symptoms, and have not come into contact with anyone confirmed or suspected of having COVID-19 in the last 14 days

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- Consideration should be given to the use of disposable plates and cutlery for the first 14 days of a voyage or for those quarantined with symptoms of COVID-19.
- With the exception of legally mandated drills and exercises, consideration should be made for table top exercises to be used for the first two weeks of any trip, followed up by live exercises after this period has passed to reduce the occurrences whereby social distancing would not be possible.

#### Considerations for Crew on extended tours of duty

- Management of fatigue and potential for additional stress
- Are the crew able to maintain decent communications with family or loved ones?
  - Consider increasing bandwidth onboard
  - If calls are not normally free, consider making them free for duration of extended voyage
- Medications required for the additional time onboard been supplied?
- Additional toiletries needed for extended voyage
- Consider additional confectionary normally brought by crew for duration of extended voyage

#### Crew Handovers

A suitable and sufficient handover is essential to the ongoing safe operation of any vessel, as such it is vitally important that how such handovers are conducted for part of any organisations COVID risk assessment and management of change.

Consideration should be made for the following

- Comprehensive written handover notes over and above usual company format
- Removal of face to face handover in favour of
  - Telephone
  - video conferencing call
  - recorded video handover
  - recorded voice handover
- back to back contact details being provided (subject to permission being sought if required by GDPR) to facilitate further communications should a need arise

#### Travel to and from vessel

As keyworkers, travel is permitted for Seafarers to join and leave a vessel, though it is essential that this is undertaken after appropriate care and consideration is given.

When travelling seafarers should;

- make sure that you carry or have access to sufficient money to cover emergencies (whilst the vessel operator is responsible for the cost of repatriation, it is important that you maintain access to ready available money in the event of an unforeseen circumstance)
- Be prepared to follow the advice of local authorities and be ready to comply with local isolation or quarantine requirements
- Make sure that enough medication is carried including extra in case of unforeseen delays
- Be prepared for logistical and financial disruption to your travel
- Arrange extra support for family members, dependants or pets who may need care if you delayed longer than planned
- Where possible, avoid public transport

If travelling by car;

- Distance travelled should be kept to a minimum
- If being driven, this should be undertaken only by an individual you are staying with/have been staying with
- No other passengers should be in the vehicle unless it is seafarers travelling with you to/from the vessel you will/have be working on

If use of public transport is unavoidable

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- Maintain social distancing from other passengers
- Avoid rush hours and busy times if possible
- Cover your cough or sneezes with a tissue or crook of elbow (dispose of tissue as soon as possible)
- Wash hands regularly and/or make use of hand sanitiser if available

#### Use of air travel

- Due to the methods used to circulate and filter air onboard planes, most viruses do not spread easily on flights, however they may still be a risk if you are unable to practice social distances from others on the plane (i.e. maintain a 2m distance)
- Maintain social distancing from other passengers
- Cover your cough or sneezes with a tissue or crook of elbow (dispose of tissue as soon as possible)
- Wash hands regularly and/or make use of hand sanitiser if available

### Offshore Personnel Transfer

The potential use of vessels to assist in transfer of offshore personnel for the UKCS is currently being reviewed by several operators to assess what level of need there may be for this.

Various scenarios involving both Frog transfers and Walk to Work are being assessed with a view to developing a shared industry solution. Norway have taken a similar approach and are working on a shared solution which currently involves 3 vessels for different geographical areas of the NCS.

Any solution which is developed will give utmost consideration to the segregation of personnel where necessary to ensure the safety of vessel crew and offshore personnel alike.

Any use of vessels to assist in transfer of offshore personnel not previously noted in the duty holders safety case will need to be discussed with HSE as soon as reasonably practicable in the planning process in order to determine if this option would be permissible.

### Social Distancing on Vessels

Where practicably possible, vessel crew and client contractors should exercise social distancing to the best of their abilities in order to prevent the spread of the virus. Below are areas where social distancing could be applied on board (some may be more applicable depending on vessel POB) and other preventative measures that could be put in place in that area, please note all measures should be carried out with regular cleaning/ hand and respiratory hygiene measures,

- **Wheelhouse**
  - Avoid meetings/gatherings on the wheelhouse where possible
  - Only authorized persons responsible for the safe navigation and operations of the vessel allowed on wheelhouse
- **Engine Control Room**
  - Avoid meetings/gatherings in the ECR where possible
  - Only authorized persons responsible for operating/maintaining vessel machinery/equipment allowed in ECR
- **Gymnasium**
  - Avoid overcrowding in the gymnasium, maintain social distancing length from others in gymnasium (2m or stricter depending on country guidelines)
  - Consider establishing a maximum number of users at any given time
  - Wipe down equipment with disinfectant after use by individual who has just used the equipment, making sure not to make any further contact with the equipment.
- **Mess Room**
  - Only catering staff to serve food

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- Consider establishing a maximum number of persons allowed in the messroom at the same time.  
*Note: Mealtimes may need to be extended*
- Mess room only to be open during mealtimes
- Make sure hot meals are served at the correct temperature
- Mess room to be cleaned between meals, chairs, tables and all other touch points
- Juice dispensers, milk dispensers, coffee makers, door handles etc. to be cleaned and disinfected after every meal

It should be noted that some tasks, regardless of areas they are completed in may, by their very nature make social distancing difficult to achieve. This guidance is to help ensure that social distancing is put in place where safe and practicable to do so only, and where tasks require more individuals to complete them safely this should still be the case onboard.

### Supporting Platforms with COVID 19 cases (suspected or confirmed)

There may be instances where a vessel provides support to the activities of an installation with a known or suspected case of Coronavirus onboard. It is essential to ensure that all suspected or confirmed cases are openly reported between vessel Master and platform/installation OIM, so that any mitigating measures can be discussed and agreed in advance of further operations. Where there are no cases OR where cases are in isolation and cleaning carried out then vessels and platforms/installations may be considered low risk. As with shore and ship measures to be taken to minimise contact between vessel and installation crew.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has stated that the risk of passing on the virus from packages is low (and therefore assumed cargo units / hoses is also low), but possible. Therefore, it would be prudent for deck crew when dealing with backload / hoses originating from such an installation to utilize PPE such as gloves, avoid touching face, and employing standard hygiene activities as promoted in standard Government guidance in combatting the virus. Such operations should be formally risk assessed, and all personnel clear of the mitigating barriers through the normal risk management processes e.g. tool box talks.

### Assurance Activities

Whilst assurance activities cannot be neglected there is a balance and responsibility to avoid infection of crew members and due consideration needs to be given to whether alternative ways of working can achieve an equivalence in assurance.

For example:-

- Remote assurance - desk top reviews of documents (crew experience, certification etc.) and telephone verifications.
- ERRV Validation Trials – witnessed from after deck of the ERRV maintaining remoteness from vessels crew, or witnessing from an observation vessel (in both cases maintaining VHF listening watch to operations)
- DP Assurance to be agreed between charter and owner

Note that both the CMID and OVID schemes are extending the availability of inspection reports to 18 months instead of the standard 12-month period. It is up to individual Duty Holders regarding their policy in respect of validity of an individual report.

The UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency has published a COVID Contingency Plan in relation to vessel certification and medical requirements

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875135/COVID-19\\_contingency\\_plan\\_and\\_guidelines\\_for\\_seafarers\\_24-03.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875135/COVID-19_contingency_plan_and_guidelines_for_seafarers_24-03.pdf)

#### COVID-19 FAQ

The below information has been collated from reputable sources only. We have collated this information to answer as many questions as you may have.

##### **What are the symptoms of COVID 19?**

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough.

Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment.

##### **How does COVID spread?**

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales.

##### **Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be transmitted through the air?**

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air. These droplets are too heavy to hang in the air. They quickly fall on floors or surfaces. You can be infected by breathing in the virus if you are within 1 metre of a person who has COVID-19, or by touching a contaminated surface and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth before washing your hands.

##### **Can COVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?**

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low

##### **Are antibiotics effective in preventing or treating the COVID-19**

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses, they only work on bacterial infections. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics do not work. Antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of COVID-19. They should only be used as directed by a physician to treat a bacterial infection.

##### **Should I wear a mask to protect myself?**

This is not required. Only wear a mask if you are ill with COVID-19 symptoms or looking after someone who may have COVID-19 symptoms.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue and maintain distance of at least 2 metres from people who are coughing or sneezing.

##### **How long is the incubation period for COVID?**

The "incubation period" means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days.

##### **Is it safe to receive a package/Cargo from any area where COVID has been reported?**

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

##### **Will Search and Rescue be available in an emergency?**

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency will react to all emergencies in the UKCS and will provide SAR to any and all life threatening cases however, they have stated, that not every Suspected COVID case is Life threatening.

They will monitor on an ongoing basis and remain in contact with any and all vessels that report in for advice, however only when it is classed as life threatening (or potentially life altering) by medical advice by radio, will they then activate the SAR helicopters, as is usually the case for any and all emergencies.

Where there is a suspected case onboard, though not classed as life threatening, however another member of crew require medevac'd for another life threatening reason they will respond

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Ultimately any suspected cases should be reported to the company Doctor (now a recognised doctor by the Coastguard and able to discuss matters directly with Medical Advice by radio) as well as reporting it to Medical Advice by radio for advice and ongoing monitoring.

Please be assured that our main concern throughout is the wellbeing and health of our crews, and that we are constantly monitoring the situation with regard to available treatment and emergency arrangements.

#### Is there anything I should not do?

The following measures ARE NOT effective against COVID-2019 and can be harmful:

- Smoking
- Wearing multiple masks
- Taking antibiotics

#### How do we isolate someone onboard?

- Staff should only go into the cabin if essential, and no-one should be allowed in the cabin unless wearing appropriate PPE consisting of a fluid-repellent surgical face-mask, gloves and a disposable apron
- Maintain a log listing everybody who enters the cabin
- Meals should be left outside the door and normal housekeeping duties suspended
- staff should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds minimum (or longer depending on country guidance) immediately after removing PPE, or alcohol hand sanitiser can be used
- Provide a means of communication – i.e. Radio
  - Check if situation is deteriorating
    - Are they feeling worse?
    - Is breathing harder
    - Non-responsive?
- If the individual(s) must leave their cabin or area of isolation, they must wear a surgical mask and any surfaces touched by the individual(s) should be immediately cleaned and disinfected.

#### How to clean an area after a person with suspected COVID has left

- Leave room to ventilate and then clean with detergent and disinfectant
- Wherever possible, wear disposable or washing up gloves for cleaning. These should be double bagged, then stored securely for 72 hours, then thrown away in the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished.
- If an area has been heavily contaminated, such as with visible bodily fluids from a person with COVID-19, consider using protection for the eyes mouth and nose as well as the gloves and apron
- Using a disposable cloth, first clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water, then disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use. Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, such as bathrooms, grabrails and door handles.
- Cleaning an area with regular household disinfectant will reduce the risk of passing the infection to other people
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water and after removing gloves, aprons and other protective equipment used whilst cleaning
- Avoid creating splashes and spray when cleaning
- Any cloths and mop heads used must be disposed of and should be put into waste bags as outlined above
- When items cannot be cleaned using detergents or laundered, steam cleaning should be used where possible.
- Any items that are heavily contaminated with body fluids and cannot be cleaned or washed, should be disposed of.
- Do not touch your face, eyes or mouth.

#### Laundry

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- Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest water setting and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an unwell person can be washed with other people's items.
- Do not shake dirty laundry, this minimizes the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
- Clean and disinfect anything used for transporting laundry with your usual products, in line with the cleaning guidance above.

#### What measures can be taken to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19

- Wash your hands thoroughly using hot soap and water or Hand sanitiser throughout the day
- Avoid all nonessential physical contact between shore side personnel and crew
- Where possible, conduct audits or other verification processes remotely or postpone if possible
- Separate crew and shoreside personnel when onboard
- Maintain a gangway watch and have the ability to close the gangway (using a chain or other such methods) proving the ships phone number for individuals looking to board the vessel
- Ensure that all stores and other deliveries are left at the base of the gangway, and only after the delivery driver has left, have crew collect them
- Stop all non-essential maintenance for the time being
- Any paperwork normally necessary between crew and shore side personnel should be changes, where possible, to electronic means
- Have company shore-based personnel come to vessel to monitor and oversee shore side personnel carrying out tasks onboard to avoid need for crew to carry out this function
- Have all shore-based personnel complete a declaration document stating that they are free of COVID symptoms and have not, to the best of their knowledge, come in contact with anyone suspected or confirmed of being infected by COVID-19

#### How do we disembark a person suspected of COVID infection?

The local health protection team will advise on

- arrangements for disembarkation for possible cases
- how close contacts will be managed
- who may remain on the vessel
- any recommended measures in terms of enhanced surveillance, reporting, cleaning and respiratory hygiene
- any follow-up monitoring required and where necessary limitations to further travel

#### Consider the following -

- When did symptoms first start?
- What are their movements over the last 14 days
- Does the individual have any underlying conditions
- Clean all equipment necessary for Pilots
- Ensure only those persons who display no symptoms are on the bridge (where possible) during pilotage
- Provide notification to port ASAP utilising the Health declaration form

#### Useful Links

UK MCGA <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-seafarer-careers-training-provision-and-information>

OGUK <https://oilandgasuk.co.uk/covid-19/>

Step Change In Safety <https://www.stepchangeinsafety.net/covid-19>

World Health Organisation (WHO) <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>