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Chamber of Shipping

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Coronavirus (COVID-19): Seafarer Shore Leave Principles



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This document sets out principles for providing shore leave during the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Principles

1

Companies are recommended to consider the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC, 2006) when determining approval of shore leave, which states:

“Seafarers shall be granted shore leave to benefit their health and well-being and consistent with the operational requirements of their positions”. MLC, 2006, Regulation 2.4, Paragraph 2

For more information see the International Labour Organization (ILO) *Information note on maritime labour issues and coronavirus (COVID-19)*:

www.ilo.org/global/standards/maritime-labour-convention/WCMS_741024/lang--en/index.htm

2

Maritime authorities must continue to respect this obligation, without prejudice to the proportionate and specifically adopted measures to minimise the risk of contagion. Access to port-based welfare services should also be ensured, as far as possible, during the pandemic. Compliance with these obligations is being facilitated by increased access to personal protective equipment and enhanced knowledge about COVID-19.

3

The ILO Committee of Experts has requested flag States to ensure:

- a. Seafarers are granted shore leave for their health and well-being consistent with operational requirements of their positions, subject to strict respect of public health measures applicable to the local population. It is further requested that seafarers enjoy their right to shore leave, subject to strict respect of any public health measures, applicable to the local population; and
- b. Seafarers have access to shore-based welfare facilities, where they exist, subject to the strict respect of any public health measures applicable to the local population (Regulation 4.4); and measures are taken to support the seafarer’s wellbeing on board, in particular during extended periods of service on board, including arrangements to contact family and friends.

4

Companies are responsible for crew health, safety and wellbeing. Shore leave is key to seafarer physical and mental health and reduces risks of fatigue. Further information can be found on The Mission to Seafarers’ website:

www.missiontoseafarers.org/about/our-issues/shore-leave

5

The appropriateness of permitting shore leave should be determined utilising COVID-19 protocols¹ and prevalence within the country, local area or port where shore leave is envisaged and should be based on an assessment of the risks to the operation of the vessel and to the health of the seafarers. Account should also be taken of infection within the country, local area or port where shore leave is envisaged.

¹ IMO MSC.1/Circ.1636/Rev.1 *Industry recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic*, 22 April 2021; and IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.4/Rev.3 *Coronavirus (COVID-19) – ICS Guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers*, 16 July 2021.



6

Ship to shore interaction and vaccination status should be considered. To facilitate such discussions, the *ICS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Ensuring a Safe Shipboard Interface Between Ship and Shore-Based Personnel* document should be circulated: www.ics-shipping.org/publication/coronavirus-covid-19-guidelines-for-ensuring-a-safe-shipboard-interface-between-ship-and-shore-based-personnel/

7

Seafarers should be encouraged to be vaccinated at the earliest opportunity and should refer to the available industry guidance on vaccination of seafarers:

- a. ICS/IMHA/INTERTANKO/ITF *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccination for Seafarers and Shipping Companies: A Practical Guide*:
www.ics-shipping.org/publication/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-practical-guide/
- b. IGP&I *FAQs about P&I Club cover relating to the vaccination of seafarers*:
www.igpandi.org/article/frequently-asked-questions-about-crew-vaccinations

Seafarers should be fully vaccinated for at least 14 days or 28 days in the case of the Janssen (J&J) vaccine in order to have the maximum protection.

8

There has been an increase in vessels placed at anchor for 14 or more days due to COVID-19 outbreaks on board. This impacts businesses operationally and financially. Companies are encouraged to review the *ICS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Ship Operators for the Protection of the Health of Seafarers*:
www.ics-shipping.org/publication/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-fourth-edition/

9

If seafarers have been vaccinated, companies should conduct a risk assessment and consider the factors below when determining shore leave provisions:

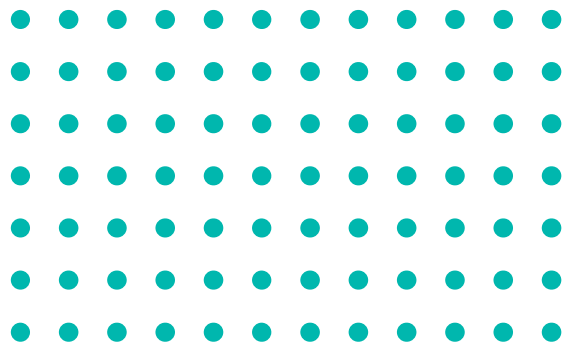
- a. Whilst no risk can be eliminated, an evaluation should be determined by balancing the detriment to seafarer wellbeing from restricting shore leave and from the risk of infection to the seafarer and other members of the crew;
- b. Ship owners/managers should consult with crew regarding guidance on shore leave;
- c. Companies should work diligently to ensure all crew eligible for a visa/shore pass have them to facilitate shore leave when possible. Seafarers not possessing a visa/shore pass are often not allowed to go ashore. In the United States, seafarers without shore passes may be denied the chance to get a COVID-19 vaccine causing difficulties to transport them to a vaccination location. Companies should ensure that all necessary documentation related to visas/shore passes are submitted promptly and always in accordance with the rules and regulations of the competent authorities; and
- d. The decision to grant shore leave should not be based on financial implications imposed by ports for landing passes/shore leave documentation and administration.





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