

CMC Ship Owners' Best Practices for COVID 19

Update Number 5. October 5, 2020.

- Reflects changes given the second wave of cases in Ontario and Quebec and protective measures introduced. Links are provided for Ontario's and Quebec's new restrictions, a map of Quebec's COVID-19 Alert levels by region, and for access to mental health resources across Canada. We added a recommendation for getting the flu vaccine and to install the COVID Alert on mobile devices.

Introduction

Health and safety is the first priority, as the marine sector continues the critical mission of delivering the goods and products people need for their daily lives. Marine shipping is an essential service and is vital to keeping supply chains operating in Canada and the United States.

With that in mind, the Chamber of Marine Commerce is in regular communication with federal government transport and health officials to ensure a coordinated approach that helps to protect employees and stakeholders who interact with the marine sector. We are providing our ship owner, port and other members information on the latest measures and best practices coming from federal and provincial government departments here in North America and through the International Chamber of Shipping.

This document was prepared to inform all the Chamber's members and partners about best practices our ship owner members are adopting to respond to COVID-19. It sets out best practices put in place by our ship owner members to protect their crews, customers, service providers and the public from risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It covers preventive measures before boarding ships and prevention while onboard, as well as measures for managing a sick person on board. As always, the Master of a vessel has discretion to set additional measures beyond what is provided here.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and further measures and guidance may be issued. Our ship owners may also take on additional measures as the situation requires. As we enter a second wave of cases in some provinces, experts continue to emphasize the [simple and basic protective steps we can all take](#) will determine how long we remain in this pandemic.

1. Before Boarding

Our ship owners carry out screening assessments of their employees prior to them joining their vessels and monitor their health on a daily basis while onboard. Ship owners use screening assessment questionnaires, similar to the screening tools released by [Public Health Authorities](#) in Canada. Crews who operate ships or personnel who service ships, and are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, have been deemed essential by the government and are exempt from the 14-day self-isolation period following travel.

An employee experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 must report it to the company and follow advice from the Public Health Authorities. Further measures will be carried out as per the most current direction from Transport Canada and if applicable, the United States Coast Guard. Employees who have previously exhibited COVID-19 symptoms will only be permitted to return to work once they have received the required medical clearances. See section 9 for further details.

Scheduling arrangements or leave will be made based on the results of the screening assessment and advice from health care professionals.

Other preventive procedures include:

- Avoiding crew changes in the United States, unless operationally essential
- Discouraging guests, with any guest requiring approval by company management before boarding
- Working with government agencies, customers, and service providers to reduce the need for boarding vessels and to carry out more tasks by electronic or other remote means
- Providing personal protection equipment to crews or other people boarding, if needed
- Following the measures requested by Pilotage Authorities through their notices to industry, before a pilot boards.

Vendors and service technicians that attend vessels will be screened using the tools mentioned above and approved by the company prior to boarding.

Personnel from government agencies, customers, pilots, and service providers that have undertaken similar protective practices for their employees and have shared these with CMC, should be seen as trusted partners and not need additional screening. Our ship owners will work with these stakeholders to exchange protection procedures and inform crews.

With the coming flu season this fall, in line with advice from provincial public health authorities, we recommend crew members get vaccinated for influenza (as the vaccine becomes available). Ideally, this should be done two weeks prior to boarding to allow for the immunity to set in and avoid any potential side effects. Crew members with underlying issues that preclude receiving the flu vaccine or who are concerned about such issues should consult their family doctor. Details on provincial and territorial flu vaccination programs are available through the following links: [Ontario](#), [Quebec](#), [New Brunswick](#), [Nova Scotia](#), [Prince Edward Island](#), and [Newfoundland and Labrador](#), [Manitoba](#), [Saskatchewan](#), [Alberta](#), [British Columbia](#), [Nunavut](#), [Northwest Territories](#), and [Yukon](#).

As well, CMC recommends all personnel from ship owning firms, marine service providers and their customers obtain and install the [federal COVID-Alert application](#) on their mobile devices.

CMC acknowledges with increasing cases of COVID-19 and new restrictions that concerns for peoples' mental health and stress levels also increase. Access to support for mental health, wellness, and addiction is available in [Ontario](#) and [Quebec](#) and [other provinces and territories](#).

2. Keeping a Distance

Physical Distancing

- Ship owners follow restrictions designed to limit crew's exposure and risk of contracting the virus at work. Health authorities are recommending a 2-metre distance.
- Crew will limit exposure to each other, as much as possible, and observe social distancing as per their company specific protocols.
- For those who must work in closer proximity, these tasks will be assessed for safety taking into account the other protective measures in place: hand washing, hygiene, and disinfection.



- Ship owners will ensure employees have in their possession, or have access to, a non-medical mask or face covering. See Public Health Agency of Canada guidance on [how to wear a non-medical mask or face covering properly](#).
- A non-medical mask or face covering will be donned when indicated by the safety assessment noted above.

Shore leave

- Ship owners will provide onboard crews with personal items that they may find hard to obtain. Access will be made available to deliver online purchased items to crew members.
- While in port, crews are encouraged to remain on board the ship, in keeping with Transport Canada and provincial measures on shore leave, with the exception of crew change, authorized medical attention, normal dock operations and authorized shore leave.
- All shore leave is to be approved by the Captain. Decisions on shore leave will be guided by the reopening rules set by the province and local health authority of the port.
- Both [Ontario](#) and [Quebec](#) have paused the reopening of businesses and taken further protective measures as cases of COVID-19 have significantly increased. Shore leave should be restricted in ports seen as high-risk areas, (e.g. “Red zones”).
- In light of other areas that have maintained low case numbers, low risk activities may be approved, in consultation with the local port and subject to the operational needs of the ship, examples of which include a crew member:
 - Engaging in activities offered by the port or that are within the port's boundaries,
 - Going on a walk, run or bike ride in area where encountering others is unlikely, or
 - Visiting their home, if located within the surrounding community of the port.
- Whenever shore leave is granted, each crew member is advised to practice good judgment and proper hygiene, as well as to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from others and to carry a face covering in case that is not possible.
- Quebec has set a [progressive regional alert system](#) with increasing restrictions and provided a map of its [COVID-19 Alert Levels by region](#). Ontario has set [new restrictions](#) for restaurants, bars, clubs, and private gatherings.
- Ports may ask that crew remain within port boundaries in response to community concerns and where provincial rules require; namely in Atlantic Canada or **local public health authorities in communities with low numbers of active cases**. In the Arctic, shore leave remains restricted in accordance with Transport Canada measures to protect northern communities. In the United States, shore leave remains restricted owing to continuing higher risks and triggering requirements for 14-day self-isolation if a crew change is planned in the returning port in Canada.

Crew changes and travel

- Crews travelling to or from their vessel are to follow [Transport Canada requirements for travellers in Canada](#).
- When travelling by air, crew must cover their mouth and nose at airport screening checkpoints, whenever physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained and while onboard the aircraft. This practice is also strongly encouraged for all other modes of travel.
- Please consult the Public Health Agency of Canada [guidance on the wearing of non-medical masks and face coverings](#).
- When travelling to and from vessel, all crew should carry a copy of their seafarer documents as well as protective gear if necessary.
- Crew members or other marine workers, who are residents of the Atlantic provinces, are required by provincial rules to self-isolate for 14 days on returning home. While CMC has sought some flexibility, with the second wave of cases in Ontario and Quebec and [continuing low levels of cases](#) in the Atlantic provinces, it is highly unlikely public health authorities will extend any flexibility.



Shore-side interactions

- Crew will follow procedures to limit their in-person interaction with customers on the dock
- Deliveries should be made with limited contact between crew and shore side personnel.
- Inspectors, surveyors, service providers, including trusted partners such as pilots will maintain a 2-metre distance while aboard. Where this distance is impossible, for example in a small wheel house, further protective measures may be taken as noted above.
- Shore-side employees will limit their contact onboard vessels unless deemed necessary by management. Service providers will try remote operations first.
- Handling of paper documents for deliveries and invoices will be replaced by emails, where this is not possible see section 7, Port Procedures.

3. Sanitization

- Each vessel will receive a supply of personal protection equipment and cleaning items. Certain items may be subject to supply availability and alternatives will be sought.
- Sanitizing supplies should be available for cleaning in common work areas.
- All door handles, navigation equipment, engine control room equipment and other high-touch areas are to be wiped down with disinfectant cleaner on a regular basis.
- Crew are to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds minimum prior to entering the Galley and are responsible for wiping down the table with disinfectant after a meal.
- Each room is to be cleaned thoroughly from top to bottom when a crew member departs, this includes:
 - Bulkheads
 - Furniture and bunks
 - Electronic equipment
 - Sink, shower, and toilet
 - Door handles
- If the person departing was in isolation, the cabin should remain isolated until a third-party cleaning service is arranged.
- See [PHAC guidance](#) on Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces for more information

4. Navigational Watches on the Bridge

- All Navigation equipment is to be wiped down on a frequent basis.
- No officer is to use the same pen or pencil, each officer should have their own.
- Coffee cups are not to be shared.
- All railing, door handles should be wiped on frequent basis.
- Wheelhouse computer keyboard is to be wiped down on a frequent basis.
- If handheld radios are used, all mics are to be wiped down prior to handover to another.

5. Engine-room Watches

- Control room is to be wiped down on a frequent basis.
- No officer is to use the same pen or pencil, each officer should have their own.
- Computer touch screen or keyboard to be wiped down on a frequent basis.
- No coffee cups are to be shared.
- Railings should be wiped down or gloves worn when walking around doing rounds.
- Radios and mics to be wiped down prior to handover.



6. Galley Protocols

- Chief Cooks and galley personnel will continue to keep the galley clean as required by regulation, with additional procedures that all handles are wiped down every day.
- When handling food and dishes, cooks are to wear protective disposable gloves and hair nets or hats.
- Prior to handling any open fridges, getting coffee, food, dishes or sitting down, hands must be washed.
- At the end of each meal or coffee break, all tables, serving tables, food handling areas and chairs are to be wiped down.
- Fridge handles are to be wiped down regularly.
- Coffee pot handles are to be wiped regularly.
- No food is to be left out i.e. snacks and late lunches.
- Meal services are to be modified to facilitate social distancing.

7. Port Procedures

- Deckhands are not to shake hands with the customers but can verbally interact with customers when handing over Bills of Lading, Load Plans, other ships business documents, and radios. Preferably, documents can be handled and exchanged electronically.
- Radios should be wiped down before handing over to the customer and before shipboard use.
- The First Officer should ask that Bills of Lading and other documents be sent to ship's email.
- If documents must be signed, personnel are to wash hands afterwards.
- If one has to go ashore to sign or receive documents, if possible, ask for the document to be brought outside to be signed to avoid entering enclosed quarters.
- Where possible, consider alternatives for shore-side personnel to board the vessel, such as use of email, phone calls, or video calls
- For shore-side personnel who must board the vessel, the ship and shore-side personnel involved will exchange communications on their requirements
- Where possible, the following will apply to shore-side personnel boarding a ship:
 - Minimize number of people to board and keep to 2 metre space as per section 2
 - Boarding shore-side personnel must use outer walkways and avoid any access through the crew accommodation.
 - If crew accommodation access is required, limit time inside to the absolute minimum necessary to perform duties onboard
- Further considerations are set out in ICS [COVID-19 Related Guidelines for Ensuring a Safe Shipboard Interface between Ship and Shore-based Personnel](#)

8. Crew Changes

- Each room is to be thoroughly cleaned from top to bottom when a crew member departs as per section 3.
- Travel by public transportation will be reviewed by ship owner's human resource departments relative to flights, trains, or bus transportation requirements.
- Joining crew members are to carry their own luggage.
- When joining the ship, the joining crew member will go straight to their cabin by the outside stairway of the accommodations and, if possible, is to shower upon arrival.
- Handover notes are to be placed on the desk and no face to face time with crew exchange and the disembarking crew member is to provide detailed handover notes.

9. Onboard and Symptomatic

The following draws from guidance from Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), provincial health agencies, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for managing a case onboard. This also reflects [Transport Canada's Regional Operational Maritime Plan to Address Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) for the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Seaway](#).

Initial development of symptoms and screening

Any employee who feels the onset of potential COVID-19 symptoms while onboard a vessel is to report their condition immediately to the Captain and remain isolated in their cabin.

Where a ship owner has arranged private tele-medical services, they should be consulted. Where private services are not arranged, [screening tools](#) are available through the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) or local health authorities. If in Ontario waters, use that province's Self-Assessment Tool: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/#q0>. If in Quebec, see: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/>

The employee and Captain will follow the advice provided for both the affected crew member and for further disinfection procedures for the vessel, if so advised. A flow chart of the process is set out at the end of this section.

If advice from a health professional indicates the symptoms are consistent with COVID-19 or a public health screening tool indicates the person should self-isolate, the affected person would remain in isolation onboard and the Captain would inform the ship owner and make the required reports. A public health authority may advise testing of the affected person and of other people onboard with whom they recently have had close contact (within 2 metres for at least 15 minutes).

Reporting

Our ship owner members will follow both [Transport Canada](#) and [U.S. Coast Guard](#) requirements. If the vessel is destined to a Canadian port, reporting would be made to the nearest local health authority with Transport Canada being advised. A template for the report is set out in the [Annex](#) to this document. If in the waters of the Great Lakes or the St Lawrence Seaway, a report should be emailed to Transport Canada Ontario Region at ONIncidentReports-ONRappportsIncidents@tc.gc.ca

Other Canadian contact points are the nearest public health authority in [New Brunswick](#), [Prince Edward Island](#), [Nova Scotia](#), [Newfoundland and Labrador](#), [Manitoba](#), [BC](#), [Yukon](#), [Nunavut](#), and the [Northwest Territories](#).

If destined to a U.S. port and in U.S. waters, the report would be submitted to the U.S. Coast Guard [Captain of the Port](#) and to the nearest regional quarantine station for the [Centers for Diseases Control \(CDC\)](#).

Once authorities have been notified, the Captain must also notify the Port Authority and docking facilities at the next port of call, the traffic management authorities (the Seaway's and the Canadian Coast Guard), and any potential partners that may be scheduled to board the ship such as inspectors or pilots.

Management

The Captain and the affected crew member (who remains isolated) will liaise through local health authorities or CDC to develop an appropriate plan of care. Data from PHAC, CDC, and other health authorities indicate most cases are mild and can be managed by isolation and bed rest, however, more severe cases can occur.



The care plan will be guided by the severity of the case and would be based on providing care to the crew member either onboard or at the closest care facility. Basic options for care are:

- being kept isolated aboard the vessel, if practical, or
- transferred ashore for isolation at a facility determined by the local health care authority
- if severe, being transferred to an available care facility, coordinated by the local health care authority and first responder services.

PHAC and TC have been clear that a case of an affected crew member which warrants a transfer to a care facility must be managed at the closest facility. The person is not to travel home, no matter how mild the symptoms, as that poses greater risks to the general public. However, if the closest option is the crew member's home, such a transfer could be considered, but the decision would rest with local health authorities.

Onboard isolation

As soon as the potential symptoms are confirmed by the company's telehealth services or a local health authority to be consistent with COVID-19, the person must remain in isolation. CDC has provided [guidance on managing cases on board vessels](#). A poster on caring for people suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 is [available from the International Chamber of Shipping](#).

Isolation means that the affected employee is not to leave their cabin until they receive instructions from the Captain. As this could be several days and up to two weeks, ideally, the cabin should be equipped with toilet and shower facilities. If the cabin is not equipped with such facilities, if possible, available facilities should be reserved for the affected employee. If not, the bathroom facility should be thoroughly cleaned immediately after the affected employee's use.

During isolation, measures should be taken to look after the isolated employee's well-being. A crew member should be designated to provide food and personal items, which should be left just by the door inside the cabin for easy collection and to minimize entry into the cabin by the supporting crew member. Protective coverall and gloves should be worn by the supporting crew member. CDC has provided [guidance on the donning and removal of protective garments](#). PHAC has provided [advice on wearing non-Medical masks](#) which would be used mainly to contain coughs.

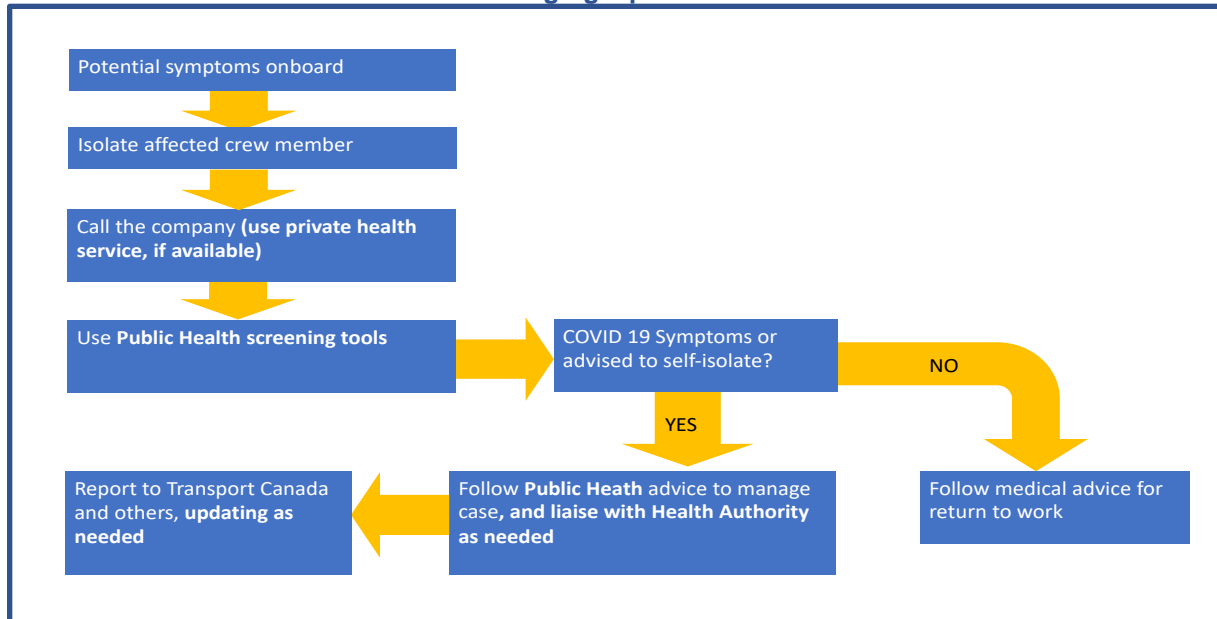
Transfer ashore

If approved or directed by public health authorities, our ship owners will arrange to transfer a person who is ill ashore to a health facility or designated quarantine facility, if not near home. Arrangements will follow the advice of health care professionals.

Ship owners will cooperate with each other and with traffic control authorities to assist a vessel in need of a berth in order to facilitate the transfer of an affected person ashore.



Flowchart: Managing a potential case on board



Additional References

Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC -the federal lead) [Main COVID 19 page](#)

PHAC [Online Screening Tool](#), with links to provincial screening tools

Transport Canada's infographic on the [Marine Sector and COVID-19](#)

COVID-19 measures, [updates and guidance issued by Transport Canada](#)

Transport Canada's [Regional Operational Maritime Plan to Address Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) for the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Seaway](#)

World Health Organization (WHO) [Main COVID 19 page](#) and WHO [operational advice](#)

International Chamber of Shipping [updated technical guidance](#) and [Guidelines for ship-shore interface](#)

United States [Coast Guard COVID-19 page](#)

United States [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)

Chamber of Marine Commerce [COVID-19 page](#)

[Marine Industry Trusted Partners for COVID-19](#)

The St. Lawrence Seaway Management and Development Corporation's [Mariners Notifications](#)

[Great Lakes Pilotage Authority Protective Measures](#), [Laurentian Pilotage Authority Protective Measures](#),

[Atlantic Pilotage Authority Protective Measures](#)

October 5, 2020



Annex: Reporting Template for a Suspected Case Onboard a Vessel

When completed, please email Transport Canada or the US Coast Guard Captain of the Port

Date of report:

First Report (Y/N):

Update:

1. Vessel Name:
2. Contact Person Name and Phone Number:
3. Current Location:
4. Last port and date of departure:
5. Next port and ETA:
6. Number of crew with symptoms:
7. Date symptoms began:
8. Date health authority was notified:
9. Name of health authority notified:
10. Recommendations of health authority:
 - a. Is COVID-19 test recommended (Y/N)?
 - b. If self-isolation is recommended, when did it begin? And for how long?
 - c. Has the crew member(s) been isolated to a part of the ship away from areas where shore-side personnel may need to access if boarding?
11. What disinfection protocols is the ship applying, if any?
12. Is the ship scheduled to go to a port in the US (Y/N)?
13. Confirmation that Captain will advise all service providers in advance of interactions (pilots, Seaway, Port Authority or marine facility, etc.)