

Covid in the maritime setting FAQs

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The following are a set of FAQs which further interpret Government guidance on Covid19 for the maritime sector.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-staff-in-the-transport-sector/covid-19-guidance-for-staff-in-the-transport-sector>

Other useful contacts:

- (England only) Find your local Health Protection Team here (<https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team>)
- Contact details for Port Health Authorities available here (<http://www.porthalthassociation.co.uk/>)

Summary of principles;

- Recent experience has shown that it is not possible to self-isolate on ships without the risk of continuing transmission
- PHE advice is to get people off ships wherever possible if Covid 19 is suspected.
- The same guidance applies as on shore; seriously ill people go to hospital, mildly ill and contacts self-isolate ashore.
- For cases, contact the HPT (in England) for advice on appropriate accommodation.
- For those who have been in contact with a case ask the operators to arrange shore-side accommodation for self—isolation.
- Health and safety of crew takes priority over parking vessels.

Q Is there general guidance for the maritime industry to deal with Covid-19?

A Yes See gov.uk website *Guidance for shipping and seaports for coronavirus (Covid-19)*, 16 March 2020

[https://www.bing.com/search?q=Guidance+for+shipping+and+seaports+for+coronavirus+\(Covid-19\),&src=IE-SearchBox&FORM=IESR4A](https://www.bing.com/search?q=Guidance+for+shipping+and+seaports+for+coronavirus+(Covid-19),&src=IE-SearchBox&FORM=IESR4A)

Q Does this guidance cover all maritime situations?

A No. The above guidance sets out general principles, but because the maritime industry is so diverse, each incident will need to be assessed on a case by case basis. In England, the local Health Protection Team (HPT) will advise (similar but separate arrangements apply elsewhere in the UK).

Q Can a ship with suspected or confirmed Covid 19 cases dock at a UK port?

A Yes. The master should send a Maritime Declaration of Health to the PHA with details of illness on board and the PHA/LA will advise, in consultation with the local public health authority;- in England, the local Health Protection Team (HPT) will advise (similar but separate arrangements apply elsewhere in the UK).

Q Can a pilot join a ship with suspected or confirmed Covid 19 cases on board?

A Yes. Specific guidance has been issued for them (see Annex 1 below). This guidance covers PPE and social distancing. Pilots do not need to self-isolate after boarding a ship with suspected Covid 19 cases on board, as these individuals with suspected cases should be isolated in their cabins.

Q Does a ship with suspected or confirmed Covid 19 cases on board require to be quarantined?

A No. The ship should be allowed to dock as usual. This will allow easy access for affected individuals on board to be removed on shore if required and public health staff to board if required. If the ship is unable to leave the port, it can then be moved to a different anchorage if the berth is required for another ship.

Q Should a ship with suspected or confirmed Covid 19 cases on board be treated as a household?

A No. Individuals who are confined to their cabins should follow the same guidance as those confined at home. This does not mean that everyone on board automatically has to self-isolate for 14 days. As the living conditions on different ships vary widely, each case will be considered individually. In England, the local HPT will advise (similar but separate arrangements apply elsewhere in the UK).

Q What should happen to suspected or confirmed cases of Covid 19 on board?

A The same guidance applies as for domestic cases. At present, only seriously ill cases should be transferred to hospital (as an urgency). The local HPT will advise on ambulance transfer (similar but separate arrangements apply elsewhere in the UK). Symptomatic individuals who are not seriously ill should ideally be transferred for care ashore, if this is available, but may need to be confined to their cabins on board if this is feasible. They should self-isolate for 7 days.

Q What should happen to asymptomatic contacts of suspected or confirmed cases of Covid 19 on board?

A Given the close proximity of living conditions on board the majority of ships, it is usually more problematical to identify close contacts compared those with a lower likelihood of exposure, depending on the size and configuration of the ship. As with domestic cases, close contacts should self-isolate for 14 days, ideally ashore but on board if unavoidable, bearing in mind the likelihood of contacts becoming symptomatic and contributing to continuing transmission on board.

Q Is testing available for people on board a ship with suspected Covid 19 symptoms?

A At present, testing is only being carried out in non-hospital settings for suspected outbreaks. In England, the local HPT will advise. Different arrangements may apply elsewhere in the UK.

Q Can crew from ships with suspected or confirmed Covid 19 cases on board be allowed ashore?

A Providing they are not close contacts, they should be allowed ashore for limited exercise and essential shopping, as long as they observe the same social distancing precautions as the rest of the community.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

Q Will PHE (or similar public health authorities elsewhere in the UK) advise on safe manning levels for a ship to leave port?

A No. This is not within public health area of competence.

Annex 1

Coronavirus Resilience: Maritime Pilot Transfer Arrangements - suggested procedure at UK ports - 31 March 2020

This guidance note has been prepared in consultation with a collection of UK maritime trade associations and is designed to give some non-prescriptive options to help pilotage authorities remain resilient. There are a wide variety of pilotage options around the UK and our approximately 500 maritime pilots are an important component in facilitating a wide number of shipping movements, helping to maintain supply chains and trade. Pilots and other port and maritime operatives have been identified as 'Key Workers' by the Government and therefore expected to carry out their roles in as normal a way as possible whilst being mindful of advice on limiting the potential spread of COVID-19. The guidance is intended to supplement other local transfer advice such as already exists or be integrated, either in full or in part, where appropriate. It does not attempt to alter or replace the safety advice contained in the Pilotage Boarding and Landing Code or any Workboat Codes merely highlight procedures that will contribute to limiting the risks presented by infectious diseases such as COVID-19. The guidance is non statutory and harbour authorities may wish to use sections as appropriate.

Suggested procedures:

Like many Key Workers in other occupations, it will not always be practically possible to follow the Government's guidance to maintain a two-metre distance at all times during pilotage and pilot cutter operations. However the following measures could greatly reduce the likelihood of spreading COVID-19 if followed closely as far as practically possible but subject to review:

- Prior to boarding a cutter, the coxswain and crew should ensure they are not suffering with any of the symptoms of COVID-19 nor are any members of their household, i.e. the people they live with (in this case they should self-isolate in line with Government guidance)
- The cutter crew shall have all washed their hands thoroughly prior to boarding the cutter
- The coxswain/crew shall ensure that the cutter is clean and that appropriate areas such as handrails and seats are wiped down with a soap-based or disinfectant solution or wipes after each run. They should also aim to have an on board supply of hand sanitiser/wipes which are used regularly, especially on entry into the cabin
- Where possible the cutter should be as ventilated as possible with fresh air
- The pilot shall also be symptom free, having thoroughly washed their hands prior to boarding
- If the pilot is joining from a ship, the cutter crew should where possible provide disposable hand wipes to the pilot and have a suitable way to dispose of them after use
- Pilots should observe the highest precautions with their own health and to minimise exposure whilst on board the cutter, and minimise physical contact with cutter crew members if not essential or use of gloves where possible, maintaining as much distance as practical

- To aid physical distancing, for some operations the Competent Harbour Authority may wish to limit the number pilots transferred on a single cutter and, subject to boat size and seating arrangements attempt to maintain as close as is possible to a 2 metre space for those on board
- Consumption of food or drink whilst on board the cutter should be avoided unless essential
- Prior to boarding or landing the Pilot, the coxswain can, if possible, confirm via radio with the master of the ship that previous advice provided to the harbour authority/VTS that all on board are healthy. Some authorities may choose to seek this confirmation through their VTS.

There could be differences on the rare occasions a pilot may be asked/required to board a visiting ship that has, or suspects it has a member/s of crew experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. The industry is seeking advice from the UK Government about how this should be approached and what procedure including the specification of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) might be required. Separate advice as how to dress and de-clothe this PPE is also being sought.