



## COVID-19 information for the marine industry

**This fact sheet applies to all international voyages entering Australia, except for cruise ships. There is a separate factsheet specifically for cruise ships.**

**Additional immigration, reporting and isolation requirements apply to maritime crew who have been in, or transited through, a country other than Australia in the past 14 days.**

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

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, sore throat, tiredness and shortness of breath. Difficulty breathing is a sign of possible pneumonia that requires immediate medical attention.

### What is Australia doing?

From 29 March 2020, all people entering Australia will be required to undertake a period of mandatory isolation in the state in which they disembark.

From 25 March 2020 Australian citizens and Australian permanent residents are restricted from travelling overseas.

From 20 March 2020 Australia will deny entry to foreign nationals. Exceptions include permanent residents (and their immediate family) and New Zealand nationals resident in Australia.

**International maritime crew have exemptions to these restrictions. More information on the restriction and exemptions is available from Australian Border Force.**

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is in contact with international vessels to ensure they understand the requirements and comply with pre-arrival reporting of ill travellers.

**Maritime crew disembarking commercial vessels are still subject to self-isolation requirements outlined in this document.**

### What vessels have additional COVID-19 isolation requirements?

- Vessels with crew who have left, or transited through, any country other than Australia in the last 14 days.
- Vessels that have ill crew on board.

The Maritime Arrival Reporting System (MARS) identifies vessels arriving within the 14 day time period that require additional screening requirements. Vessels that have been at sea for more than 14 days, with no illness on board, do not pose a COVID-19 risk.

Where vessels have a suspected case of COVID-19 on board, a human biosecurity officer will determine the appropriate course of action. This may include isolation, hospitalisation or COVID-19 testing. The vessel will not be allowed to unload goods or disembark travellers until cleared to do so by the human biosecurity officer

## What should commercial vessels do if a crew member is ill?

As per the normal pre-arrival reporting process, it is a legal requirement to report all crew who have been ill through the MARS. The ill crew member should isolate on the vessel in a single cabin until further direction is given by a biosecurity officer or human biosecurity officer.

A biosecurity officer will then meet the vessel to screen for COVID-19 and other serious infectious diseases. Biosecurity officers do this by administering the Traveller with Illness Checklist (TIC) to the ill crew member, or by discussing case diagnoses with the vessel's doctor.

Depending on the outcome of the TIC, a state and territory human biosecurity officer will provide advice to the biosecurity officer. The biosecurity officer will tell the vessel master what they need to do next. A biosecurity officer or human biosecurity officer may also issue directions for the management of a suspected case of COVID-19 and contacts of that person.

If testing for COVID-19 is recommended by a human biosecurity officer, the vessel will be directed to berth at a port and the ill person can either be tested at the port or transferred to a medical facility. This will be at the discretion of a human biosecurity officer. A health care worker will not board a vessel at anchorage and a port authority should not stop a vessel berthing because of an ill traveller.

## What if a crew member requires medical attention?

Notifying a biosecurity officer will not interfere with the vessel being met by medical or ambulance services. The operator of the vessel is responsible for requesting medical or ambulance services. The operator should inform medical or ambulance services if anyone on board has been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, and the travel history of the ill passenger and the vessel over the past 14 days.

## What are the requirements for international maritime crew?

**Maritime crew are exempt from the mandatory isolation requirement** and are instead required to self-isolate at their accommodation, or on the vessel. Self-isolation means that when not in transit they should remain at their accommodation and not attend public places or have visitors. Detailed information can be found in the isolation guidance information on Health's website [www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers](http://www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers)

The isolation period is for 14 days since anyone on the vessel was last in an international port. Time at sea counts towards the 14 days of self-isolation if no illness has been reported on-board. Crew signing off commercial vessels that have spent greater than 14 days at sea, with no known illness on-board, do not need to self-isolate on arrival.

## Can disembarking crew who are required to self-isolate fly home within Australia or take public transport?

Crew should firstly follow any instruction given to them by biosecurity officers, state or territory health authorities, or Australian Border Force officers, at the time of disembarkation. Crew should also check any domestic isolation requirements and exemptions with the relevant State or Territory Health Authority if transiting domestically.

Providing no alternate advice has been given, crew who are not ill can travel domestically to reach their accommodation within Australia to complete their self-isolation period. For isolation

period concessions and precautions for maritime crew, refer to advice from the Australian Border Force.

## Do international crew flying into Australia to join a commercial vessel need to self-isolate?

On arrival in Australia, additional health recommendations apply to international crew.

International crew:

- May take a domestic flight/s in Australia to their final destination to meet their vessel but must self-isolate at their accommodation if they have a layover at any time
- Must proceed directly to the vessel and must self-isolate at their accommodation if not joining the vessel immediately
- Who are ill, must not join a vessel and should seek medical assistance
- Are permitted to undertake vessel functions and must wear PPE while performing these functions

Joining a vessel taking domestic legs within the 14 day self-isolation period, will result in the 14 day isolation requirement recommencing for the vessel and all crew on-board.

## How can the marine industry reduce the risk to the crew of commercial vessels?

Crew should be advised to continue to follow existing employer infection prevention work instructions when in contact with anyone who is unwell, including the use of PPE when recommended by employer work instructions.

Person-to-person spread of COVID-19 can occur, but it is not yet understood how easily this happens. The following measures will help reduce the risk of illness on board commercial vessels:

- Crew should be encouraged to practise good hand hygiene and good sneeze/cough hygiene:
  - Wash hands often with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser, before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet; and
  - Cough and sneeze into the elbow or a clean tissue, dispose of the tissue and use alcohol based hand sanitiser
  - If unwell, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people).
- Crew should be encouraged to avoid touching the face (mouth, eyes, and nose) with unwashed or gloved hands.
- Crew should use appropriate PPE if close contact with an ill person is required.
- If PPE is used, it should be fitted and worn properly.
- Vessel should ensure appropriate cleaning and disinfection activities are undertaken.

## What cleaning and disinfection activities are appropriate for commercial vessels?

Commercial vessels should follow existing protocols for cleaning and disinfection.

Environmental cleaning and disinfection guidelines are being developed by an expert group and will be published in future updates of this [factsheet](#) when available. The following are general recommendations for cleaning and disinfection practices:

### ***Routine Sanitation***

Routine cleaning and disinfection practices are essential in minimising the spread of infection. Increasing the frequency of routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is an important measure in controlling the spread of infection (such as hand rails, guard rails, dogs, hatch combings, shared navigation equipment, chair backs and arms). It is recommended that all vessels arriving from areas affected by COVID-19 thoroughly clean and disinfect frequently touched areas.

### ***Response to an ill crew member***

Following identification of a crew member with COVID-19, the local public health unit should be contacted for specific guidance on areas to be disinfected and disinfection procedures.

### ***Other considerations***

Baggage and Packages:

- No additional precautions are recommended for baggage and packages that accompany ill crew members. Routine precautions are recommended.

Waste Management:

- No additional precautions are recommended for the handling of standard waste. All personnel handling waste should use standard precautions and perform hand hygiene after removing personal protective equipment.
- Waste disposal and destruction should be conducted according to standard protocols, legislation and regulations.

## **How can the marine industry reduce the risk to marine industry staff (e.g. stevedores)?**

Persons should be advised to continue to follow existing employer infection prevention work instructions when in contact with anyone who is unwell, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when recommended by employer work instructions.

Vessels are to provide PPE to their crew so vessels entering Australia within the 14 day period can meet Australian requirements

Time at sea, health screening, risk profiling and the requirement for crew to wear PPE when interacting with non-crew for 14 days since departing their last port all minimise the risk to stevedores.

The following measures will help reduce the risk of illness on board commercial vessels:

- Marine industry staff should be encouraged to practise good hand hygiene and good sneeze/cough hygiene. Including
  - Washing hands often with soap and water, or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser, before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet
  - Coughing and sneezing into the elbow or a clean tissue, disposing of the tissue and using alcohol based hand sanitiser

- If unwell, avoiding contact with others (staying more than 1.5 metres from people).
- Marine industry staff should be encouraged to avoid touching the face (mouth, eyes, and nose) with unwashed or gloved hands.
- Marine industry staff interacting wharf-side with crew from a vessel subject to additional COVID-19 isolation requirements should stay 1.5 metres or more away from crew
- All crew must remain on-board while a vessel with COVID-19 isolation requirements is berthed in Australia. Crew are permitted to conduct essential vessel functions at the port and must wear PPE while performing these functions.
- Crew must also wear PPE in public spaces on-board the vessel while non-crew members are on-board. Crew not performing essential work *must* isolate when non-crew members are on-board. Non-essential interactions with non-crew should be restricted.

## Are Australian marine industry staff (e.g. stevedores) subject to health screening and isolation requirements if they board a vessel with additional COVID-19 isolation requirements?

Australian marine industry staff are exempt from Australia's health screening and isolation requirements when the guidance in this document is followed.

If staff have been in contact with people with symptoms of COVID-19 while on board the vessel, staff should make themselves known to the biosecurity officer.

For the most current testing criteria, please visit the Department of Health's [guidelines](#).

## What should marine industry staff do if they develop symptoms after disembarking the vessel?

With appropriate precautions, it is extremely unlikely that any illness or symptoms marine industry staff develop will be related to this virus. If, however, marine industry staff become ill, they should inform their doctor or clinic when making an appointment that they have had some contact with people who may have had exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.

They should also:

- Wash their hands frequently, with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub
- Use good cough and sneeze hygiene – cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and wash their hands afterwards, or use alcohol-based hand rub.
- Inform their supervisor of symptoms.

## Other information

The Department of Health is closely monitoring the situation in collaboration with the World Health Organization and Australian states and territories.

## Who should vessels contact if they need further advice?

For questions about the temporary ban on international cruise ships or travel restrictions:

- Contact the Australian Border Force Border Operations Centre at **+61 1300 368 126**

For human biosecurity questions:

- Contact the Maritime National Co-ordination Centre 1300 004 605 (operating hours 6am-6pm Australian Central Standard Time, for urgent after hours enquiries, call +61 417 666 648)

For general COVID-19 questions:

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting, call 131 450.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available at [www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts](http://www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts)

If you have concerns about your health, speak to a doctor.