



# SHIP SAFETY BULLETIN

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**Subject:** Guidance for Cruise Operators to Mitigate Risks associated with COVID-19

## *Purpose*

This bulletin outlines recommended measures for Authorized Representatives of cruise ships operating in Canadian waters, and persons on board those vessels. These measures aim to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission, and the severity of the disease, on board cruise ships.

## *Scope*

Due to the unique nature of cruise ships which sees large groups of people congregating in communal areas, often for extended periods of time, it is recommended that Authorized Representatives of cruise ships operating in Canadian waters follow the measures set out in this bulletin.

## *Background*

In March 2022, Transport Canada implemented a strict comprehensive public health framework, developed in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada, to support the safe restart of the cruise season. This framework focused on COVID-19 related health requirements to ensure safe cruise activities in Canada.

As Canada's COVID-19 situation has continued to evolve throughout the 2022 cruise season, and the cruise industry has demonstrated an ability to successfully manage COVID-19 cases on board cruise ships, Transport Canada has removed mandatory requirements for cruise ships operating in Canadian waters. To help maintain the safety of passengers and crew onboard cruise ships, it is **strongly recommended** that the industry continue to follow the guidance in Transport

**Keywords:**

1. \*
2. \*
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**Questions concerning this Bulletin should be addressed to:**

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Marine Safety and Security  
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Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N8

**Contact us at:** [marinesafety-securitemaritime@tc.gc.ca](mailto:marinesafety-securitemaritime@tc.gc.ca) or 1-855-859-3123 (Toll Free).

Canada's public health framework, outlined below.

It should be noted that all operations and guidance are subject to changing epidemiological conditions in Canada.

## **COVID-19 - Recommended Procedures**

### **COVID-19 Management Plan**

Authorized representatives of cruise ships operating in Canadian waters are strongly encouraged to implement COVID-19 Management Plans outlining measures to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission onboard. COVID-19 Management Plans should be vessel-specific and should contain the following components:

- measures implemented in accordance with the vaccination and testing framework section below;
- measures to prevent or limit the spread of COVID-19 onboard a cruise ship;
- measures to protect crew members and passengers from the transmission of COVID-19 when the cruise ship stops at a port of call during the voyage; and
- measures to respond to a COVID-19 outbreak onboard a cruise ship.

The authorized representative of a cruise ship should ensure that a copy of their COVID-19 Management Plan is kept on board the cruise ship at all times.

Authorized representatives can refer to this [Instructional Reference Tool](#) to assist in the development of their COVID-19 Management Plans.

### **Ship to Shore Checklist Respecting Procedures at Ports**

The authorized representative of a cruise ship operating in Canadian waters is strongly encouraged to develop and maintain onboard a checklist outlining procedures to be followed when the cruise ship is at a port of call. Authorized representatives should coordinate with the port authorities where the cruise ship is scheduled to call when developing this checklist.

The checklist should include measures to prevent or limit the spread of COVID-19 during the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers at a port of call.

For further guidance on the development of checklists please see the [Standards for the Development of a Ship-to-Shore Checklist Respecting Procedures at Ports](#).

## **Reporting Requirements**

### **Maritime Declaration of Health**

While many of the border and public health requirements have been lifted, industry partners are reminded that the *Quarantine Act* continues to apply to all travellers and conveyances arriving in Canada and departing from Canada. As per the *Quarantine Act* operators must submit a [Maritime Declaration of Health \(MDH\)](#):

- As soon as possible before a conveyance arrives at its destination in Canada (recommended 24-48 prior to arrival), if
  - a) any person, cargo or other thing on board the conveyance could cause the spreading of a communicable disease listed in the schedule; or
  - b) a person on board the conveyance has died.
  
- As soon as possible before a conveyance departs from Canada through a departure point, the operator shall inform a quarantine officer or cause a quarantine officer to be informed of any circumstance referred to above exists.
  - [Annex A](#), which is currently used to report COVID-19 cases onboard, is to be submitted at the same time as the MDH. If there are confirmed cases onboard, the Annex A Case Reporting Form must be completed and attached to the Annex A submission.
  - An [Annex B](#) report on other communicable diseases to be submitted as outlined in the schedule to the *Quarantine Act*. The Annex B Case Reporting Form must be completed and attached to the Annex B submission.

Guidance documents for how to use the Maritime Declaration of Health can be found at this [link](#).

To request a copy of the forms please contact CNS/SNC at the following email: [cns-snc@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:cns-snc@phac-aspc.gc.ca).

Operators can refer to section 4.3.8.5 “Quarantine Messages” in the [Radio Aids to Marine Navigation 2022](#) document to help identify reportable signs and symptoms. These signs and symptoms are often referred to as the syndromal case definition (SCD). COVID-19 is a communicable disease listed in the schedule of the *Quarantine Act*, and therefore, like other scheduled diseases suspected and/or confirmed cases of COVID-19 must continue to be reported to PHAC.

## **Record Keeping**

### **Passengers and Crew**

Authorized representatives of a cruise ship operating in Canadian waters, should maintain records onboard that include the following information:

1. Company Name
2. Vessel IMO Number
3. Date of Record
4. Total number of passengers on board

5. Number of passengers fully vaccinated
6. Number of passengers with positive COVID-19 test
7. Total number of crew on board
8. Number of fully vaccinated crew
9. Number of crew with a positive COVID-19 test

## **Vaccination and Testing Framework**

### **Vaccination**

Authorized Representatives are strongly encouraged to verify that all persons 12 years of age and older are **fully vaccinated** before boarding the vessel (i.e., at least 14 days after they complete a COVID-19 vaccine dosage regimen).

### **Testing**

Authorized representatives should require that all persons 5 years of age and over provide a **pre-embarkation test** prior to being on board a cruise ship that is operating in Canadian waters.

### **Pre-Embarkation Testing Requirements for Passengers**

Authorized representatives should require that persons seeking to board the cruise ship provide one of the following:

- Evidence of a negative COVID-19 molecular test (e.g. PCR test) – performed on a specimen collected from the person no more than 72 hours prior to their initial boarding of the cruise ship.
- Evidence of a negative COVID-19 antigen test (e.g. RAT) – performed on a specimen collected from the person no more than 2 days before initially boarding the cruise ship.
- Evidence of a positive result for a COVID-19 molecular test that was performed on a specimen collected from the person at least 10 days and no more than 180 days before the person initially boards the cruise ship.

Authorized representatives should also require persons who are not fully vaccinated to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 antigen test taken on the day they embark the vessel.

Evidence of a result for a COVID-19 molecular test or antigen test should include:

- a) the name and date of birth of the person from whom the specimen was collected for the test

- b) the name and civic address of the accredited laboratory or the testing provider that performed or observed the test and verified the result
- c) the date the specimen was collected and the test method used
- d) the test result

Evidence of COVID-19 test results should be from tests that were performed or observed by a testing provider, meaning:

- a) a person who may provide COVID-19 screening or diagnostic testing services under the laws of the jurisdiction where the service is provided;
- b) an organization, such as a telehealth service provider or pharmacy, that may provide COVID-19 screening or diagnostic testing services under the laws of the jurisdiction where the service is provided and that employs or contracts with a person referred to in paragraph (a); or
- c) in the case of a COVID-19 Antigen Test - a person employed by the Authorized Representative who is trained to oversee and attest to the results of such a test.

### **Continued Testing Requirements**

As COVID-19 positivity rates are higher onboard cruise ships on longer voyages, it is recommended that Authorized representatives establish regular testing intervals for crew on board these cruise ships. As such, crew on board cruise ships on voyages of 6 days or more should be tested for COVID-19 every 3 days.

### **Additional Testing Requirements**

Authorized representative should require the following additional testing measures:

- All persons onboard the ship, or intending to re-embark the ship, with signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e. fever and a cough, or fever and difficulty breathing) should take either a COVID-19 molecular test or a COVID-19 antigen test.
  - A person who is awaiting test results for a COVID-19 molecular test should isolate while awaiting the result.
  - A person who receives a positive antigen test should isolate for 24 hours and retest with a molecular test.
  - If the results of a COVID-19 molecular test are negative, the person should be released from COVID-19 isolation requirements.
  - If the results of a COVID-19 molecular test are positive, the person should isolate in accordance with local public health guidelines.
- All COVID-19 tests should be either performed or observed by a testing provider.

### **Close Contacts**

Authorized Representatives should require all persons who are a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case onboard the ship to take a COVID-19 molecular or a COVID-19 antigen test 48 hours after contact with the positive case.

All COVID-19 tests should be either performed or observed by a testing provider.

### **Isolation Measures**

Isolation places onboard the cruise ship should have the following accommodations:

- a) it allows the person to remain in isolation during the applicable isolation period;
- b) it allows the person to avoid all contact with other persons, unless that person is a dependent child in a parent-child relationship or 22 years of age or older and dependent on them for care or support by reason of mental or physical limitation and no alternative care arrangement is available;
- c) it allows the person to avoid all contact with any other people unless they are required or are directed to go to a place to seek medical care;
- d) it allows the person to have access to a bedroom that is separate from those used by all other persons;
- e) it allows the person to have access to a bathroom that is separate from those used by all other persons; and
- f) it allows the person to have access to the necessities of life without leaving that place.

Authorized representatives of cruise ships should work with local public health authorities and port authorities to ensure the safe disembarkation of any COVID-19 positive individuals.

Authorized representatives should organize a suitable isolation or quarantine for any COVID-19 positive individuals disembarking the vessel who are required to continue isolation in accordance with local public health guidelines. This includes arranging a location for isolation or quarantine, daily meals, and, in the case of isolation, private transportation to the isolation location on shore. Authorized representatives should cover all costs associated with the isolation or quarantining of these individuals.