



Advisory Circular

Subject: Protecting the health & safety of employees on board aircraft in epidemic situations involving airborne communicable diseases

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Advisory Circular (AC) is provided for information and guidance purposes. It may describe an example of an acceptable means, but not the only means of demonstrating compliance with regulations and standards. This AC on its own does not change, create, amend or permit deviations from regulatory requirements nor does it establish minimum standards.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this AC is to provide guidance to air operators on the method of protecting the health & safety of their employees on board aircraft in pandemic situations involving airborne communicable diseases.

1.2 Applicability

This AC is applicable to air operators under federal labour jurisdiction, in regards to their employees working on board aircraft in operation.

1.3 Description of Changes

Not Applicable.

2.0 REFERENCES AND REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Reference Documents

It is intended that the following reference materials be used in conjunction with this AC:

- (a) *Canada Labour Code*, Part II, section 124;
- (b) *Aviation Safety and Health Regulations*, sections 6.8 and 6.14;
- (c) Transport Canada Publication TP12295, *Flight Attendant Manual Standard*, Part A, section 6;
- (d) Transport Canada Publication TP12296, *Flight Attendant Training Standard*, Initial Part 8, section 8.1.

2.2 Cancelled Documents

Not applicable.

2.3 Definitions and Abbreviations

The following definitions and abbreviations are used in this AC:

- (a) **Respiratory Protection** means a respiratory protective device that is listed in the NIOSH Certified Equipment List as of October 1, 1984, dated February 1985.
- (b) **NIOSH** means the United States National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- (1) In accordance with the *Canada Labour Code*, Part II, employers are required to ensure the health and safety of all employees who are under federal jurisdiction while at work.
- (2) Furthermore, the *Aviation Safety and Health Regulations* dictate that an employer must provide Respiratory Protection to employees whenever there is a hazard of an airborne dangerous substance on an aircraft.

4.0 PROCEDURES

- (1) Air operators should conduct a risk-assessment concerning airborne communicable diseases based on information available from various public health authorities, such as Health Canada (HC), the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the

Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States and other authorities such as the International Air Transportation Association (IATA) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

- (2) When there is no pandemic situation and no outbreak of airborne communicable diseases in Canada, there generally is no need for Respiratory Protection. When air operators travel to a destination where there is an outbreak, containment procedures must be put in place to eliminate the risk posed by such diseases.
- (3) When a pandemic situation is declared or an outbreak of an airborne communicable disease becomes known, air operators should consult with the public health authorities and implement the measures recommended by those authorities to protect their employees, as well as their passengers. Such situations may warrant the need to provide Respiratory Protection to employees.
- (4) Irrespective of the recommendations made by leading authorities and experts on the issue of Respiratory Protection, air operators shall comply with the *Canada Labour Code*, Part II, and its pursuant *Aviation Safety and Health Regulations*, which require the use of Respiratory Protection where there is a hazard of an airborne hazardous substance and no containment measures are in place to eliminate the risk posed by this substance to on board employees.
- (5) When Respiratory Protection is required, air operators must train and instruct their employees on the use, the operation and the maintenance of the device before it can be used. As Respiratory Protection comes in different shapes and sizes, fit testing could be necessary.
- (6) Air operators should also prevent obviously ill passengers from boarding their aircraft when they show signs such as persistent coughing, impaired breathing, persistent diarrhea, persistent vomiting, skin rash, abnormal bleeding and reduced mental clarity.
- (7) When an ill passenger is detected on board the aircraft, the employer should implement certain precautionary procedures, such as isolating the ill passenger as much as practically possible, requiring the ill passenger to wear a surgical mask, requiring the ill passenger to use a dedicated washroom during the flight, as well as other precautionary measures recommended by public health authorities. Furthermore, it should be noted that the pilot-in-command has the obligation to advise the authorities where the aircraft is bound, as soon as they become aware, that there is an ill passenger on board the aircraft with a potential communicable disease.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- (1) It is important to keep in mind that in the case of airborne communicable diseases, Respiratory Protection is but one of several lines of defence. Control measures that should be developed and implemented to prevent and control the spread of such diseases will vary with the situation and may range from the application of basic hygiene rules to the provision of appropriate protective equipment not limited to Respiratory Protection. If a pandemic situation is declared or an outbreak of an airborne communicable disease becomes known, control measures recommended by public health authorities must be implemented. Nonetheless, should Respiratory Protection be recommended, a NIOSH approved device must be provided.
- (2) Notwithstanding this AC, in the event of a refusal to work in both normal and pandemic situations, it is the investigating Health and Safety Officer who will determine, based on the employer's risk assessment and other relevant information, if the control measures put in place by the air operator are adequate.
- (3) Air operators should develop company specific procedures and incorporate this AC into their standard operating procedures.

6.0 CONTACT OFFICE

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Suggestions for amendment to this document are invited and should be submitted via the Transport Canada Civil Aviation Issues Reporting System (CAIRS) at the following Internet address:

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