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## **Novel Coronavirus**

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### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This Technical Alert is issued by the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) to provide information on the widely reported outbreak of novel coronavirus.

### **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. The Bahamas Ministry of Health has advised of the occurrence of a newly discovered novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) which has been associated with an outbreak of pneumonia type illness in Wuhan City, capital of Hubei Province, China. There have been cases discovered worldwide.
- 2.2. Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases, such as, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). These viruses are zoonotic, meaning that they are transmitted between animals and people. A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain which has not been previously identified in humans.
- 2.3. Common signs of infection with this virus include:
- respiratory symptoms,
  - fever,
  - cough,
  - shortness of breath and
  - breathing difficulties.
- 2.4. In more severe cases, infection can cause:
- pneumonia,
  - severe acute respiratory syndrome,
  - kidney failure and
  - even death.
- 2.5. Standard recommendations to prevent the spread of this infection include:
- regular proper hand washing,
  - covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing,
  - thoroughly cooking meat and eggs and
  - avoiding close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

- 2.6. The international medical community, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the regional Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) are concerned that this new virus can result in a pandemic (a worldwide occurrence of the virus) as occurred with SARS and H1N1 avian influenza. Should the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) become more efficient at human-to-human transmission, the threat of a pandemic will increase dramatically. The global nature of travel and trade could increase the likelihood of the risk of rapid transmission around the world in a very short period of time.
- 2.7. This situation is evolving and, after the second meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee on 30 January, the World Health Organization has declared the new corona virus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
- 2.8. There have been only five previously declared global public health emergencies: H1N1 (swine flu) in 2009, Polio in 2014, Zika in 2016 and Ebola in 2014 and 2016.
- 2.9. Based on currently available information, however, WHO does not recommend any restriction of travel or trade.
- 2.10. Owners/operators should ensure that standard recommendations to prevent the spread of infection are implemented on their ships.
- 2.11. Owners/operators should also ensure that they are aware of any local reporting requirements in their ships' areas of operation, in case of any crew members or passengers showing signs of infection.
- 2.12. Prior to entering Chinese ports or other ports identified as having been affected by the outbreak of 2019-nCoV owners/operators should make appropriate risk assessments and take appropriate measures.

### 3. Preparations in The Bahamas

- 3.1. Whilst there have been no reported cases of 2019-nCoV in The Bahamas to date, following the Level 3 travel advisory issued by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concerning the outbreak in China, along with travel restrictions in France, the United Kingdom, Australia, Jamaica and other sovereign nations, the Government of The Bahamas has implemented a travel ban, restricting all travel from China to The Bahamas.
- 3.2. Effective immediately, **any non-resident regardless of nationality who has visited China in the last 20 days will be denied entry into the country.** All residents returning to The Bahamas will be strictly quarantined and monitored for development of symptoms for the duration of the incubation period with a maximum of 14 days.

#### 4. Travel to China

- 4.1. The WHO's current recommendation is against non-essential travel for persons to China at this time.
- 4.2. The Ministry of Health, therefore, recommends that persons who MUST travel in that region, take precautions to protect themselves by avoiding direct contact with sick people and products that come from animals.
- 4.3. Be diligent, pay attention and equip yourself with travel advisory information related to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus before you travel.
- 4.4. If during, or after your travel, symptoms of respiratory illness are experienced, you are encouraged to immediately contact a medical provider who will guide you as to your next steps. Be ready to give your full travel history to health care providers. As mentioned, all persons returning to The Bahamas from China will be quarantined.

#### 5. Actions to be taken in case of suspected cases

- 5.1. Where coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is suspected, medical advice should be sought.
- 5.2. Owners/operators are invited to report any suspected cases of 2019-mCoV to the BMA by email to [casualty@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:casualty@bahamasmaritime.com).
- 5.3. In cases where crew members may have to exceed the 12 months or contractual period onboard as stated in their original Seafarers' Employment Agreement (SEA) because of travel restrictions imposed due to the outbreak of the corona virus, The Bahamas will consider such extensions to be **force majeure** and therefore not a breach of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, (MLC) as amended.
- 5.4. In such cases, an entry shall be made in the ship's official logbook describing the situation and listing the crew members who have had to extend their stay.
- 5.5. A new SEA shall be arranged for the crewmembers in question, and it shall be stated that the seafarers are entitled to repatriation at no cost to the seafarer at one week's notice.

## 6. Further information

- 6.1. Bahamas Ministry of Health:
  - i. [Press Release 22 January](#)
  - ii. [Press Release 31 January](#)
- 6.2. United States Coast Guard [Marine Safety Information Bulletin 02-20](#)
- 6.3. World Health Organization:
  - i. [Outbreak News](#)
  - ii. [Information and Guidance on 2019-nCoV](#)
- 6.4. Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) [Coronavirus FAQs](#)
- 6.5. International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) [Press Release 28 January](#)
- 6.6. International Marine Contractors' Association (IMCA) [Safety Flash 04/20](#)
- 6.7. United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Notice](#)

## 7. Validity

- 7.1. This Technical Alert is valid until further notice.