

Guidelines for Effecting Safe Shore Leave for Seafarers

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The health and safety of seafarers and waterfront workers is our top priority and essential to supporting continued vessel and cargo operations to secure Canada's supply chain and international trade. Seafarers have experienced a significant level of hardship due to COVID-19 restrictions on their necessary movement for crew changes and shore leave.

Transport Canada now authorizes "unrestricted shore leave" for healthy crew members for a period of six hours in length per interval. Crew members are permitted access all shore facilities (e.g. local stores, malls, restaurants and entertainment facilities, but they must follow the [direction and guidelines](#) of the Public Health Authority of Canada and advice of local health officials.

Seafarer's who meet the Government of Canada requirements for a fully vaccinated traveler may extend shore leave beyond six hours in length, per interval.

While Transport Canada [Ship Safety Bulletin 16/2021](#) provides access for seafarers to local shopping and medical facilities, it is strongly suggested that seafarers keep their interaction with local workers at destination to a minimum as COVID-19 remains present in local communities. Shore leave is not recommended for seafarers when a ship has one or more crew that have contracted or been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Under the current health risk posed by COVID-19 in British Columbia, it is prudent to exercise heightened levels of protective measures during shore leave for seafarers. These guidelines strive to summarize and integrate all known Canadian/BC provincial public health policies and developing international standards/guidelines through the International Maritime Organization (IMO). They do not supersede any COVID-19 safety provision already implemented by a ship operator or terminal. The overall policy for shore leave is outlined in Transport Canada's [Ship Safety Bulletin 16/2021](#). These guidelines will be updated occasionally, and the most recent edition posted on the website of the Port of Vancouver.

Responsibilities for Shore Leave

1. **A ship's agent** coordinating logistics and administration for a ship should:
 - a. Ensure that a ship is provided a copy of these guidelines, Transport Canada's Ship Safety Bulletin, [Ship Safety Bulletin 16/2021](#) and any protocols for Seafarer Welfare Organizations, normally prior to arrival.
2. **A transportation provider** should ensure that protective measures are adhered to during the transfer to/from a Seafarer Centre or other local facility. Normally, transport to/from a Seafarer Centre or to/from a local mall, church, or medical facility will be provided by a Seafarer Centre, or Port Chaplaincy vehicle, or Crew Transfer Company. Taxis and ridesharing are also an option, but they may not adhere to these measures. These measures include:

- a. Ensuring proper “social distancing” of 2 metres is exercised at all times of the personnel transfer between the driver and crew. This may require empty rows of seats for separation and/or additional vehicle/launch runs. When 2 metres separation is not possible, the vehicle should be fitted with a screen between the driver and passengers. Normally, a vehicle will transport only a single ship’s seafarers at a time;
 - b. Ensuring that the vehicle is properly sanitized before and after every crew transfer with a recognized commercial disinfectant or that disposable covers are used on seat surfaces;
 - c. Ensuring that any baggage is handled only by the crew; and
 - d. Confirming verbally with each crew member that they do not exhibit common symptoms for COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing).
3. **A Seafarer Centre** should ensure that protective measures are adhered to by staff and visiting crew, including:
 - a. Ensuring that the facility is cleaned and sanitized before the arrival of a visiting crew;
 - b. Ensuring that non-medical masks or face coverings are worn;
 - c. Ensuring proper “social distancing” of 2 metres is exercised at all times; and
 - d. Ensuring that temperature checks are performed prior to entry to the facility.
4. **A vessel** with crew taking shore leave shall ensure that protective measures are adhered to, including:
 - a. Calling a Seafarer Centre in advance to ensure that transportation and space is available;
 - b. Providing a list to the terminal Marine Facility Security Officer of all crew taking shore leave;
 - c. Ensuring that the path to/from the vessel and the gangway is clear of all non-essential personnel during the passage of seafarers;
 - d. Ensuring that crew proceeding on shore leave wear a new/fresh face covering; and
 - e. Ensuring that the location of crew on shore leave is known to the Master at all times to support possible contact tracing.

5. **Crew** proceeding on shore leave shall:
 - a. Ensure that their ship is aware of their location ashore;
 - b. Ensure proper “social distancing” of 2 metres is exercised at all times during shore leave;
 - c. Wear a new/fresh face covering at all times;
 - d. follow [PHAC guidelines](#) regarding COVID-19 prevention, including proper hand hygiene, physical distancing, and cough/sneeze etiquette;
 - e. minimize contact with local workers at a destination;
 - f. closely self-monitor; and
 - g. self-isolate and contact the local Public Health Authority should they exhibit any symptoms.

6. **A terminal** should ensure that:
 - a. A ship is briefed on Transport Canada Ship Safety [Ship Safety Bulletin 16/2021](#) and these guidelines; and
 - b. Facilitate crew taking shore leave by providing exit/entrance privileges to the terminal.

7. **All parties** with responsibilities for supporting shore leave of seafarers shall stop the shore leave and contact the ship’s agent and the Public Health Authority should any of the crew exhibit common symptoms for COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing). In such situations, the vessel and/or the ship’s agent should coordinate the self-isolation of the crew member for a 14-day period in accordance with the BC Centre for Disease Control guidelines.

Key Supporting Documents:

BC Centre for Disease Control [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Transport Canada [Ship Safety Bulletin 16/2021](#)

Transport Canada [Special Marine Security Notification 007-2020](#)

Transport Canada [Announcement on the requirement for non-medical masks](#)

International Maritime Organization [Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.14 dated 5 May 2020](#)

Mission to Seafarers Protocol for visiting Seafarer Centre’s