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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Project Professionals Group (PPG) developed this policy to highlight safety issues in the freight forwarding and related industries and provides information on how to best manage those risks to minimise contracting the COVID-19 virus and comply with occupational safety and health legislation.

Simple precautions and planning can make a big difference. Action now will help protect our employees, members and the PPG business.

This policy includes resources for workplaces in the Stevedoring and Port Operations industries on work health and safety and COVID-19. Stevedoring and port operations involves a range of commercial port, maritime and dockside functions, including:

- Ship loading or unloading services
- Stevedoring services
- Coal loader operations
- Container terminal operations
- Grain loader operations
- Port operations
- Ship mooring services
- Water freight terminal operations
- Water passenger terminal operations
- Wharf operation, and
- Other water transport support services, such as pilotage and salvage.

Workplaces may include quays, wharfs, freight stations or freight terminals, shipping channels, land and waters adjacent to the wharf and office amenities or administration buildings.

All sections of our society – including businesses and employers – must play a role if we are to stop the spread of this disease.



## **2.0 How COVID-19 spreads**

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

If they are standing within one meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience a more serious illness which may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

## **3.0 Simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our workplaces.**

The low-cost measures below will help prevent the spread of infections in our workplaces, such as colds, flu and stomach bugs, and protect yourself, contractors and employees. Employers should start doing these things now, even if COVID-19 has not arrived in the communities where they operate. They can already reduce working days lost due to illness and stop or slow the spread of COVID-19 if it arrives at one of your workplaces.

- i. Make sure your workplaces are clean and hygienic (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly, because contamination on surfaces touched by employees and clients and contractors is one of the main ways that COVID-19 spreads.
- ii. Promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors and clients.
- iii. Put sanitising hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled.
- iv. Display posters promoting hand-washing – ask your local public health authority for these.



- v. Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefings at meetings and information on the intranet to promote hand-washing.
- vi. Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water, because washing kills the virus on your hands and prevents the spread of COVID19.
- vii. Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace. Display posters promoting respiratory hygiene. Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefing at meetings and information on the intranet etc.
- viii. Ensure that face masks and / or paper tissues are available at your workplaces, for those who develop a runny nose or cough at work, along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of them, because good respiratory hygiene prevents the spread of COVID-19.
- ix. Advise employees, members and contractors to consult national travel advice before going on business trips.
- x. Brief employees, contractors and customers that if COVID-19 starts spreading in your community anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more) needs to stay at home. They should also stay home (or work from home).
- xi. Provide surgical face masks and keep communicating and promoting the message that people need to stay at home even if they have just mild symptoms of COVID-19. Display posters with this message in your workplaces. Combine this with other communication channels commonly used in our organisation.
- xii. Your occupational health services, local public health authority or other partners may have developed campaign materials to promote this message. Make clear to employees that they will be able to count this time off as sick leave.



#### **4.0 How to manage COVID-19 risk when organising meetings & events.**

Organisers of meetings and events need to think about the potential risk from COVID-19, because there is a risk that people attending your meeting or event might be unwittingly bringing the COVID-19 virus to the meeting. Others might be unknowingly exposed to COVID-19.

While COVID-19 is a mild disease for most people, it can make some very ill. Around 1 in every 5 people who catch COVID-19 needs hospital treatment.

#### **5.0 Key considerations to prevent or reduce COVID-19 risks BEFORE the meeting or PPG education and conference events.**

- ❖ Check the advice from the authorities in the community where you plan to hold the meeting or event. Follow their advice.
- ❖ Develop and agree a preparedness plan to prevent infection at your meeting or event. Consider whether a face-to-face meeting or event is needed. Could it be replaced by a teleconference or online event? Could the meeting or event be scaled down so that fewer people attend?
- ❖ Ensure and verify information and communication channels in advance with key partners such as public health and health care authorities. Pre-order sufficient supplies and materials, including tissues and hand sanitiser for all participants. Have surgical masks available to offer anyone who develops respiratory symptoms.
- ❖ Actively monitor where COVID-19 is circulating. Advise participants in advance that if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, they should not attend. Make sure all organisers, participants and visitors at the event provide contact details: mobile telephone number, email and address where they are staying. State clearly that their details will be shared with local public health authorities if any participant becomes ill with a suspected infectious disease. If they will not agree to this they cannot attend the event or meeting.



Develop and agree a response plan in case someone at the meeting becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, fever, malaise). This plan should include at least:

- Identify a room or area where someone who is feeling unwell or has symptoms can be safely isolated.
- Have a plan for how they can be safely transferred from there to a health facility.
- Know what to do if a meeting participant, staff member or service provider tests positive for COVID-19 during or just after the meeting.
- Agree the plan in advance with your healthcare provider or health department.

#### **6.0 DURING the meeting or PPG education and conference events.**

- Provide information or a briefing, preferably both orally and in writing, on COVID-19 and the measures that organisers are taking to make this event safe for participants.
- Build trust. For example, as an icebreaker, practice ways to say hello without touching.
- Encourage regular hand-washing or use of an alcohol rub by all participants at the meeting or event.
- Encourage participants to cover their face with the bend of their elbow or a tissue if they cough or sneeze. Supply tissues and closed bins to dispose of them in.
- Provide contact details or a health hotline number that participants can call for advice or to give information
- Display dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub prominently around the venue.
- If there is space, arrange seats so that participants are at least one meter apart.



- Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the venue is well ventilated.
- If anyone who starts to feel unwell, follow your preparedness plan or call your hotline.
- Depending on the situation in your area, or recent travel of the participant, place the person in the isolation room. Offer the person a mask so they can get home safely, if appropriate, or to a designated assessment facility.
- Thank all participants for their cooperation with the provisions in place.

#### **7.0 After the meeting:**

1. Retain the names and contact details of all participants for at least one month. This will help public health authorities trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more participants become ill shortly after the event.
2. If someone at the meeting or event was isolated as a suspected COVID-19 case, the organizer should let all participants know this. They should be advised to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.
3. If they develop even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate. This means avoiding close contact (1 meter or nearer) with other people, including family members. They should also telephone their healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them details of their recent travel and symptoms.
4. Thank all the participants for their cooperation with the provisions in place.

#### **8.0 Things to consider when you and your employees travel:**

- Before traveling, make sure your organisation and its employees have the latest information on areas where COVID-19 is spreading. You can find this at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>
- Based on the latest information, your organisation should assess the benefits and risks related to upcoming travel plans.



- Avoid sending employees who may be at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. older employees and those with medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease) to areas where COVID-19 is spreading.
- Make sure all persons travelling to locations reporting COVID-19 are briefed by a qualified professional (e.g. staff health services, health care provider or local public health partner)
- Consider issuing employees who are about to travel with small bottles (under 100 CL) of alcohol-based hand rub. This can facilitate regular hand-washing.

#### **9.0 While traveling:**

- i. Encourage employees to wash their hands regularly and stay at least one meter away from people who are coughing or sneezing.
- ii. Ensure employees know what to do and who to contact if they feel ill while traveling.
- iii. Ensure that your employees comply with instructions from local authorities where they are traveling. If, for example, they are told by local authorities not to go somewhere they should comply with this. Your employees should comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement or large gatherings.
- iv. Encourage all employees to maintain a detailed diary of events i.e. How they travelled (plane, taxi etc), where they went, who they met with, where they stayed etc. This will help public health authorities trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19

#### **10.0 When you or your employees return from traveling:**

Employees who have returned from an area where COVID-19 is spreading should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.

If they develop even a mild cough or low grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate. This means avoiding close contact (one meter or nearer) with other people, including family members. They should also telephone their healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them their diarised details of their recent travel and symptoms.



### **11.0 Getting your workplace ready in case COVID-19 arrives in your community**

- Develop a plan of what to do if someone becomes ill with suspected COVID-19 at one of your workplaces.
- The plan should cover putting the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others in the workplace, limiting the number of people who have contact with the sick person and contacting the local health authorities.
- Consider how to identify persons who may be at risk, and support them, without inviting stigma and discrimination into your workplace. This could include persons who have recently travelled to an area reporting cases, or other personnel who have conditions that put them at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. diabetes, heart and lung disease, older age).
- Tell your local public health authority you are developing the plan and seek their input.
- Promote regular teleworking across your organisation. If there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community the health authorities may advise people to avoid public transport and crowded places. Teleworking will help your business keep operating while your employees stay safe.

### **12.0 Develop a contingency and business continuity plan for an outbreak in the communities where your business operates:**

1. The plan will help prepare your organisation for the possibility of an outbreak of COVID-19 in its workplaces or community. It may also be valid for other health emergencies.
2. The plan should address how to keep your business running even if a significant number of employees, contractors and suppliers cannot come to your place of business - either due to local restrictions on travel or because they are ill.



3. Communicate to your employees and contractors about the plan and make sure they are aware of what they need to do – or not do – under the plan. Emphasise key points such as the importance of staying away from work even if they have only mild symptoms or have had to take simple medications (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen) which may mask the symptoms.
4. Be sure your plan addresses the mental health and social consequences of a case of COVID-19 in the workplace or in the community and offer information and support.

**13.0 For small and medium-sized businesses without in-house staff health and welfare support:**

- Develop partnerships and plans with your local health and social service providers in advance of any emergency.
- Your local or national public health authority may be able to offer support and guidance in developing your plan.

**14.0 How can Shipping industry reduce COVID-19 risk to marine industry staff (e.g. stevedores, marine pilots)?**

Crew should continue to follow infection prevention work instructions when in contact with anyone who is unwell. This includes the use of PPE when recommended by employers.

Vessels should provide PPE to their crew and on-board visitors to meet local requirements.

There are a number of factors that minimise the risk of crew transmitting an illness to marine industry staff. These include, health screening, risk profiling and the requirement for crew to wear PPE when interacting with non-crew.

The following measures will help reduce the risk of illness on board commercial vessels. They will also reduce the risk of marine industry staff boarding a vessel contracting an illness:



- Marine industry staff should 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.
  - Staying more than 1.5 metres from other people.
- Marine industry staff should avoid touching their face (mouth, eyes, and nose) with unwashed or gloved hands.
- If marine industry staff become aware of any ill person on board, they must immediately contact the local port authority and public health authority. They should ask the vessel master to report the illness in their pre-arrival report.
- The ill crew member or members must isolate on the vessel in a single cabin until further direction is given by a biosecurity officer or human biosecurity officer.
- Marine industry staff must avoid all contact with vessel crew on board that are unwell. If unwell crew are essential to the vessel, there must be a prior agreement on how staff can avoid close contact.
- All crew should remain on-board while a vessel is berthed. Crew are permitted to conduct essential vessel functions at the port and should wear PPE while doing so.
- Crew should also wear PPE in public spaces on-board the vessel while non-crew members are on-board. Crew not performing essential work should quarantine when non-crew members are on-board. Restrict non-essential interactions with non-crew.



**15.0 What should marine industry staff (e.g. stevedores, marine pilots) do if they develop symptoms?**

- With appropriate precautions, it is unlikely that any illness or symptoms marine industry staff develop will relate to this virus. If staff do become ill, they should tell their doctor's clinic when making an appointment that they work at an international port. They should also:
- Isolate themselves at home or in their accommodation and avoid contact with others until a doctor or respiratory clinic assesses them.
- Wash their hands frequently, with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- 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.