

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)



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Coronavirus pandemic

The World Health Organization (WHO) determined that the outbreak of outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Read more [here](#).

With the information currently available on novel coronavirus, WHO advises that measures to limit the risk of exportation or importation of the disease should be implemented, without unnecessary restrictions on international traffic.

WHO technical guidance on **detection and management of ill travellers suspected of COVID-19 infection**, including at ports, can be downloaded [here](#).

WHO **Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships** can be downloaded [here](#).

IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim statement (19 March 2020) [Tackling COVID-19 – a voyage together](#)

Advice for IMO Member States, seafarers and shipping

IMO has issued the following circular letters:

- [Circular Letter No.4204/Add.5](#) (17 March 2020) Coronavirus (COVID-19) – **Guidance relating to the certification of seafarers**
- [Circular Letter No.4204/Add.4](#) (5 March 2020) contains ICS Coronavirus (COVID-19) **Guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers**
- [Circular Letter No.4204/Add.3](#) (2 March 2020) - **Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak on board ships**
- [Circular Letter No.4204/Add.2](#) (21 February 2020) contains the **Joint Statement IMO-WHO on the Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak** and encourages Member States and international organizations to disseminate it as widely as possible. Available in the six official languages of the United Nations system.
 - [Arabic](#) [Chinese](#) [English](#) [French](#) [Russian](#) [Spanish](#)
- [Circular Letter No.4204/Add.1](#) (19 February 2020) provides advice on **Implementation and enforcement of relevant IMO instruments**
- [Circular Letter No.4203.Add.1](#) (12 February 2020) provides information and guidance on the precautions to be taken to minimize risks to delegates

- [Circular Letter No.4204](#) (31 January 2020) providing information and guidance, based on recommendations developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), on the **precautions to be taken to minimize risks to seafarers, passengers and others on board ships** from the coronavirus.



World Health Organization advice

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The virus did not match any other known virus. This raised concern because when a virus is new, we do not know how it affects people. One week later, on 7 January, Chinese authorities confirmed that they had identified a new virus. The new virus is a **coronavirus**, which is a family of viruses that include the common cold, and viruses such as **SARS** and **MERS**. This new virus has been named COVID-19.

Because this is a coronavirus, which usually causes respiratory illness, WHO has advice to people on [how to protect themselves and those around them](#) from getting the disease. WHO provides Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) travel advice here: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/travel-advice>

IMO meetings postponed

IMO has decided to postpone a number of meetings following the global coronavirus outbreak.

Updates on meetings

- **Circular Letter No.4213/Add.2** (17 March 2020) Postponement of the forty-fourth session of the Facilitation Committee, the second meeting of the IMO Expert Group on Data Harmonization, the Port symposium "A Holistic approach to standards for port operational data in maritime supply chains" and the 102nd session of the Maritime Safety Committee due to the COVID-19 outbreak
- **Circular Letter No.4213/Add.1** (12 March 2020) Postponement of the thirty-third meeting of the Editorial & Technical Group (IMSBC), the seventh meeting of the Intersessional Working Group on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships and the seventy-fifth session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee due to the COVID-19 outbreak
- **Circular Letter No.4213** (6 March 2020) Postponement of the joint session of the LC/LP Scientific Groups and the 107th session of the Legal Committee due to the COVID-19 outbreak

Updates on the IMO Headquarters

- **Circular Letter No.4220/Add.1** (18 March 2020) Update on the status of the International Maritime Organization Headquarters building and telecommuting arrangements due to the COVID-19 outbreak
- **Circular Letter No.4220** (12 March 2020) Update on the status of the International Maritime Organization Headquarters building and its closure due to the COVID-19 outbreak

Read more - further links

The following links also provide advice and information to seafarers and shipping (this list is not intended to be a complete reflection of all available information) - IMO is not responsible for the information in these websites:

- International Maritime Health Association (IMHA) - [advice for shipping companies](#) on the new type of coronavirus (2019-nCoV)
- International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidance](#) for Ship Operators for the Protection of the Health of Seafarers
- BIMCO - <https://www.bimco.org/covid19>
- ISWAN - "Managing Your Mental Health During the Covid 19 Pandemic - A guide for seafarers" on YouTube. Mental health tools are also available to download free of charge from the ISWAN website at <https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/seafarer-health-information-programme/good-mental-health>
- USCG - <https://www.uscg.mil/coronavirus/>
- Safety4Sea - <https://safety4sea.com/cm-how-coronavirus-affects-shipping-everything-you-need-to-know/>
- Wilhelmsen COVID-19 Global Port Restrictions Map - <https://www.wilhelmsen.com/ships-agency/campaigns/coronavirus/coronavirus-map/>

Communications received from Member States

- Circular Letter No.4233 25 March 2020 Communications from the Governments of: i Ireland; and ii the Republic of the Marshall Islands
- Circular Letter No.4232 24 March 2020 Communications from the Governments of: i Georgia; ii The Republic of Poland; and iii Ukraine Extending validity of certificates
- Circular Letter No.4231 24 March 2020 Communications from the Governments of: i the Republic of Italy; and ii the Kingdom of Norway
- Circular Letter No.4230 24 March 2020 Communication from the Government of the Republic of Panama - Coronavirus and Seafarers employment agreement and Certificates
- Circular Letter No.4228 23 March 2020 Communication from the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Contingency Plan and Guidelines
- Circular Letter No.4226 20 March 2020 Communication from the Government of Canada - Extending the Validity of Canadian Marine Personnel Certificates
- Circular Letter No.4225 20 March 2020 Communication from the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas - BMA Technical Alert No 20-03 Novel Coronavirus
- Circular Letter No.4223 18 March 2020 Communication from the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan - Extension of validity STCW certificates
- Circular Letter No.4221 18 March 2020 Communication from the Government of the People's Republic of China - Guidance on the prevention and control of COVID-19 on board (Version 1.0)
- Circular Letter No.4216 11 March 2020) Communication from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran -Extension of certificates