COVID-19 update for Maritime Pilots

Last updated: 8 April 2020
This document is uncontrolled if printed. Please refer to the Maritime New Zealand website for the latest version.

Following engagement with the New Zealand Maritime Pilots Association President, Steve Banks, the following information is intended to provide guidance to support New Zealand’s Maritime Pilots to carry out their critical functions.

Maritime NZ continues to monitor the COVID-19 situation and, in conjunction with the New Zealand Maritime Pilots Association, will update this guideline as the response develops.

Pilotage, shipping, and the operation of ports is essential

Essential service within the ports industry is described in Schedule 1 Part A clause 7 & 8 of the Employment Relations Act 2000.

7. The provision of all necessary services in connection with the arrival, berthing, loading, unloading, and departure of ships at a port.

8. The operation of—
   (a) a service for the carriage of passengers or goods by water between the North Island and the South Island or between the South Island and Stewart Island; or
   (b) a service necessary for the operation of a service referred to in paragraph (a).

Pilots are an integral link in New Zealand’s national and international import and export of essential goods.

Travelling to and from work

Pilots, like other essential service providers, are exempted from COVID-19 travel restrictions when travel is required directly to and from the place where such essential service is being provided. At all other times, Pilots must avoid all non-essential travel and follow the guidance for Alert Level 4 available on the COVID-19 website.

As essential service providers, Pilots may be asked, while travelling, to identify their employer. It is recommended that Pilots carry a form of identification to show their role and employer e.g. business card.

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card, letter from employer, pilot licence and work ID such as a security access card. An increasing number of Pilots are already reporting encounters with police patrols. Both parties have a role to play. Pilots can help to make such encounters quick, polite and successful.

**Shipping is exempted from border closure restrictions**

Ships can enter NZ waters, and berth at Ports regardless of whether they have been at sea for 14 days since their last port of call.

Maritime crew however, can only have shore leave if:

- the vessel/crew have been away from their last Port of call for more than 14 days
- there has been no suggestion of COVID-19
- they have a place to self-isolate, and
- they will travel direct to that place of self-isolation and comply with the Ministry of Health requirements for Alert Level 4.

Embarking maritime crew may self-isolate onboard if proceeding directly from the aircraft to the vessel.

**Establishing the health status of inbound ship crews**

Health declarations from ships (the request for free pratique) now include reference to COVID-19 symptoms. As of March 2020, the ship must include reference to COVID-19 when submitting a ‘no change of health status’ report 12 to 24 hours before arrival:


Individual ports can also check via their harbour control monitoring offices using VHF. It is recommended that each port develop a standard announcement in accordance with their own SOP’s to confirm the absence of COVID-19 symptoms on inbound vessels.

Please refer to the Ministry of Health website for the latest information on COVID-19, including symptoms:


**Pilots can board vessels that have not been at sea for 14 days**

Restrictions on maritime crews having shore leave/disembarking do not prevent Pilots and other essential workers from boarding international ships within the 14 day period, subject to taking appropriate steps to manage health and safety by following Ministry of Health guidelines, including advice for essential workers on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

Ministry of Health Guidelines for Pilots boarding vessels to undertake pilotage work

For Pilots, basic hygiene measures remain the most important way to stop the spread of infections, including COVID-19. Basic hygiene measures include:

- hand hygiene – washing hands regularly with soap and water or using hand sanitiser
- staying at home if you are sick or begin to show symptoms
- coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and then performing hand hygiene, and
- cleaning surfaces regularly.

Good hygiene practices are also relevant on the pilot boat to keep this environment as sterile as possible. For up to date advice on hygiene, please refer to the Ministry of Health website:


The use of PPE such as face masks can reduce the spread of infection when used correctly and in the appropriate context. This is recommended for Pilots when boarding vessels that have not been at sea for 14 days since their last port of call or when there is any concern regarding the health status of anyone on board.

In addition to the Ministry of Health (MoH) guidelines, and in order to avoid any errors in defining the 14 day period or a potential undiagnosed positive among crew members, Pilots are advised to use PPE including gloves and a face mask on all ships. This is consistent with the New Zealand Maritime Pilots Association approach of operation above minimum standards.

Other social distancing considerations might include:

- Is it possible to access the bridge via an external stairway?
- Is it necessary for the crew escort to also be in the elevator with the Pilot?
- Refreshment hospitality is a very common gesture from bridge team members to Pilots. For the period of COVID-19 isolation, to maintain their personal health and wellbeing, Pilots should decline to maintain the integrity of both face mask and gloves.
- The wearing of reading glasses and or hearing aids may interfere to some extent with the optimal wearing of face masks. However the mask is a first line of defence against body fluid droplets in either direction from nose or mouth. It has a secondary and equally important feature of stopping inadvertent touching of the face with potentially contaminated fingers.

Australasian Marine Pilots Institute advice

The Australasian Marine Pilots Institute (AMPI) COVID-19 advice to AMPI members, dated 28th March 2020 has been endorsed by NZMPA as a fellow professional Pilot organisation document. The advice may be accessed via the following link:


This advice provides an excellent resource that is consistent with the Ministry of Health Guidelines

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referred to above and, as Pilot specific advice, is also endorsed by Maritime NZ.

**Protecting your personal ‘bubble’**

Pilots perform their essential service role on the front line of potential infection. Consideration must be given to good practices as each Pilot returns to the home and family ‘bubble’. This might include:

- Identifying a quarantine zone at home for storage of bags, uniforms and other equipment associated with your role
- Washing with soapy water immediately upon return to your home bubble
- Washing external clothes frequently
- Wiping equipment with medicated wipes after each use.

Current research shows that COVID-19 can remain viable longest upon hard surfaces such as your PPU computer and AIS aerial, cell phone, VHF aerial, and hard hat for up to three days.

**Availability of PPE**

Steps have been taken to ensure that all Ports have an adequate supply of PPE, for use by Pilots and other workers.

**Support from Defence personnel**

Defence personnel are available to assist Pilots in assessing COVID-19 health and safety risks, if required. Please contact Maritime NZ for assistance in this area at least 24 hours prior to ship arrival.

**Exemptions from Continuing Professional Education (CPE) requirements**

It has been identified that exemptions are likely to be needed for Pilots who are unable to meet requirements to remain licensed during the COVID-19 response period. Maritime NZ is ready to take requests where COVID-19 response measures restrict the ability to remain licensed.

**Support for other essential port workers and activities to follow Ministry of Health Guidelines**

Maritime NZ will engage directly with other entities that provide essential services relating to shipping and Port activity, for example stevedores and port company workers, to support and reinforce the need to follow Ministry of Health Guidelines.

Here are a number of valuable questions for consideration by Pilots and port companies that will further support the ongoing health and welfare of all parties. Although not comprehensive, they may serve as a conversation starter.

- ISPS Code MARSEC level 3 security procedures could provide a model for maintaining a secure access point and sufficient monitoring of all essential service workers in and out.
- Visible identity such as coloured wristbands may quickly identify all those inside the port area.
who have passed through a health and security screening process to be at their place of work.

- Where local operational procedures, resources and scheduling priorities allow, consider only one Pilot per pilot boat voyage and use social distancing by sitting only in the rear of the boat, with pilot boat crew also using PPE.

- Where local operational procedures, resources and scheduling priorities allow, Pilots should consider the possibility of making their own way to and from departing ships either by walking, using a solo vehicle designated for that purpose or riding with linesmen but only as an individual separated in the rear seat and only with all parties using PPE.

- Where local operational procedures, resources and scheduling priorities allow, employers might consider the possibility of isolation by social distancing of individuals or groups or teams or skill sets into a range of temporary shelters or waiting and rest areas while waiting to start or during breaks between various tasks. Such might apply to all employees at a port.
  - Temporary facilities such as a toilet or washing facilities may also need to be part of such arrangements.

**Contact us – Maritime NZ first port of call for pilots with COVID-19 related queries**

Maritime NZ has set up a specific email address for Pilots with any queries regarding pilotage during the COVID-19 pandemic:

   [pilots@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:pilots@maritimenz.govt.nz) (during business hours), or 0508 225522 (after hours)

Maritime NZ will ensure that matters raised are actioned within 24 hours. This may include a direct response or notification of how the matter raised is being addressed in conjunction with other agencies such as the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

Maritime NZ (Kenny Crawford, Deputy Director, Maritime Systems Assurance) will maintain contact with Steve Banks to ensure that Pilotage matters are being dealt with effectively during the pandemic.

**What happens next?**

Maritime NZ is continuing to monitor the situation with COVID-19 and will update this guideline with any changes and additional information when it becomes available.

**Key resources**

The following websites provide relevant advice:


*New Zealand Maritime Pilots Association*