

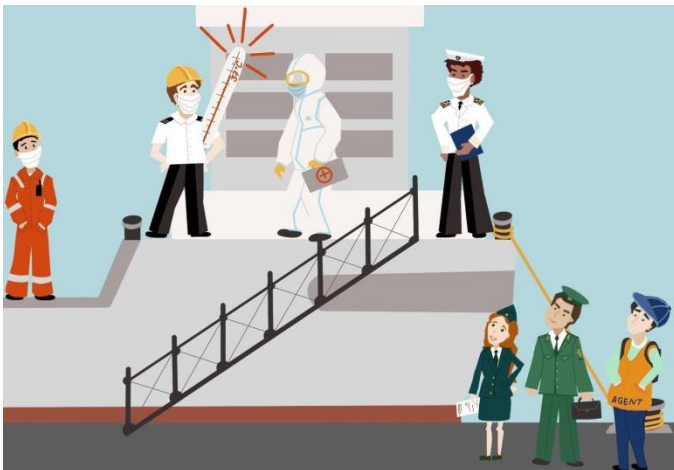
COVID-19 – risks at the Black Sea ports, Russia

February 2021

1. Vessel delays

Since March 2020, when the enhanced preventive measures called ‘*algorithm of vessel’s handling*’ were adopted by the Russian Health authorities¹ in response to the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19), a number of vessels at ports of Kavkaz, Novorossiysk, Taman and Tuapse suffered substantial delays arising out of these restrictions.

In the event that high body temperature or other symptoms of respiratory disease are confirmed during screening of the crew on arrival or if presence of ill persons or persons developing any symptoms is reported by vessel, the



seafarer will be transported to a hospital for examination, medical tests and treatment, and Health authorities will impose a quarantine regime prohibiting vessel’s operations at port, clearance formalities and/or departure unless and until the absence of COVID-19 is confirmed by negative tests of the crew member.

These delays cause serious operational and financial consequences for the Owners and Charterers.

Each case is different and sometimes requires non-standard approach and solutions. Proper coordination between Agents and Health authorities is crucial.

In the situation described above the risk of vessel’s delays is unavoidable as long as the prevention and control measures are in place at the Black Sea ports of Russia.

2. Shipboard interface between ship and shore-based personnel – risk for the crew

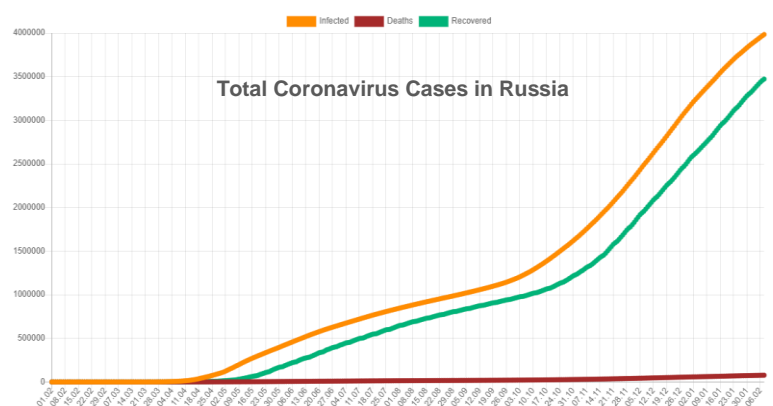
The importance to protect the crew from being exposed to the virus is not fully realized by some Masters.

The crewmembers and shore-based personnel frequently ignore internal safety rules set up by their companies and recommendations given by IMO and other organizations – they shake hands, do not wear a face mask, do not maintain social distancing or reduce interaction with each other.

At the same time the rate of infection in Russia is high, so is the number of asymptomatic persons which may carry COVID-19 onboard the ship.

Visits from shore are inevitable and shore-based workers visiting the vessels are a part of the local community.

The Owners’ initiatives aimed at managing risks at ports such as requirement for the shore-based personnel to provide negative test results before boarding do not work at the Black Sea ports.



¹ Health authorities are also referred to as ‘Rospotrebnadzor’ <https://www.rospotrebnadzor.ru/en/>

The authorities will not follow such requirements.

It is also hard or impossible to follow the advice set out in the IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.16² to limit, as far as possible, the number of interactions with shipboard personnel by entities in the port to only those critical and essential for the continued operation and supply of the ship.



The IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.27³ highlighted the following important facts:

- Evidence suggests that asymptomatic persons still carry COVID-19 and transmit it to others.
- A negative PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test does not guarantee seafarers are not infected with COVID-19 and could still potentially carry it onboard the ship.

Advice to Master

- Follow the IMO guidelines for ensuring a safe shipboard interface between ship and shore-based personnel.
- Keep in mind high rate of infection in Russia, risk of COVID-19 from asymptomatic persons, that attendance onboard a ship by the immigrations and other authorities is unavoidable, and the crew cannot exclude entry of the officials to the crew accommodation during formalities.
- Ensure strict compliance of both the crew and shore-based personnel with safety requirements like use of personal protective equipment (PPE), maintaining social distancing, hygiene at all times.
- Access to the accommodation for other visitors to be denied, duration of working meetings minimized.

3. Sampling of bunkers during pandemic

As many local suppliers have denied access onboard their bunker barges and both the crew of the sea-going vessel and the surveyors representing the Owners or Charterers are not allowed to check the bunker barge tanks before and after supply, shortage issues are often the case during bunkering.

However, there is more serious risk and it is connected with improper bunker sampling procedure onboard the barge, when the crew of barge may try to fill the sample bottles at any moment of supply instead of using continuous drip method when a sample is collected over the entire bunkering process.



Practical advice

- The Owners or Charterers to check with the bunker trader/broker/supplier whether access onboard the bunker barge is allowed. There is no risk for the crew of barge if the seafarers remain on deck to witness the process of sampling and distribution of samples, wearing PPE and maintaining distance at all times, provided they do not enter the accommodation or interact with the crew of bunker barge.
- Where access on barge is denied, the Chief Engineer is to control that the samples are taken by the barge correctly throughout bunkering at the closest available sampling point to the vessel. The barge to ensure that this process can be monitored from the deck of the vessel.

² COVID-19 related guidelines for ensuring a safe shipboard interface between ship and shore-based personnel, 6 May 2020

³ Protocols to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 cases on board ships, 26 August 2020