

COVID-19 related actions and measures – information from the Swedish Transport Agency as regards shipping (2020-04-03)

This information note has been reissued in a revised version on 3rd April 2020 to incorporate recent developments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. It replaces the information note dated 19th March 2020.

There is an ongoing outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which causes the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The Swedish Transport Agency (STA) is following developments carefully and is in continuous contact with other responsible authorities – nationally within Sweden, within the EU and internationally.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten) is leading the Swedish Government response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The STA wants to underline that it is essential for everyone to stay up to date on information and adhering to the most recent advice and guidance from the Swedish Government, in particular the Public Health Agency of Sweden as well as other government agencies. Specific guidance on e.g. travel may also be given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

General information

Decision to temporary restrict non-essential travel to Sweden from countries outside of the European Union

On 17 March 2020, the Swedish Government decided to temporary restrict non-essential travel to Sweden from countries outside of the European Union, EES countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) and Switzerland. United Kingdom nationals are still to be treated in the same way as EU citizens until the end of 2020. The temporary entry ban entered into force on 19 March 2020 and will apply for 30 days. If this period is to be extended will be assessed depending on further developments.

The entry ban does not apply to people whose reason for travelling is to return to their homes, if they:

- are an EEA or Swiss citizen, or are a family member of such a citizen;
- have long-term resident status in Sweden or another EU Member State;
- have a temporary or permanent residence permit in Sweden or another EEA State or Switzerland; or
- have a national visa for Sweden.

In addition, the entry ban does not apply to people who have particularly urgent needs or who are to carry out essential functions in Sweden. For example, this may be the case for:

- personnel transporting goods and other staff in the transport sector;
- passengers in transit;
- healthcare professionals; and
- people with imperative family reasons.

For information on the application of the temporary restriction of non-essential travel to Sweden, see:

<https://www.government.se/articles/2020/03/faqs--entry-to-the-eu-via-sweden-banned/>

Ships calling at Swedish ports

Regular routines/procedures are in place and still appropriate. Also, if a ship, arriving to a Swedish port from a foreign port, is carrying or suspects it is carrying an infectious disease onboard, a declaration on the state of health onboard (corresponding to the Maritime Declaration of Health (MDH)) shall be submitted to the relevant authorities (Swedish Coast Guard (Kustbevakningen) or the Swedish Customs (Tullverket)). Such a declaration, containing three general questions on the health status onboard, is to be fulfilled in the Swedish Maritime Single Window (MSW) together with other reporting formalities for ships before entry into port. For more information on MSW, see <http://www.sjofartsverket.se/en/e-Services/Maritime-Single-Window/>.

Please observe that local requirements on submitting the state of health onboard for the MDH may exist for e.g. ports.

The Swedish law provides the possibility for the Public Health Agency of Sweden to designate “certain areas” as especially affected (by hazards such as the COVID-19). However, no such decision has been made at this time, but this is continuously under review.

Furthermore, the Public Health Agency of Sweden has issued detailed instructions to personnel working in ports and airports, in regards to hygiene and disinfection measures. Please note that the English webpage might not contain the most up to date information:

<https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/communicable-disease-control/covid-19/>

Quarantine ports in Sweden

Information that a ship has a suspected communicable disease outbreak onboard will be handled by the Swedish Coast Guard (Kustbevakningen), the County Medical Officer and other relevant authorities, as appropriate.

The County Medical Officer decides what action needs to be taken. One measure may be to place the ship in quarantine, or in other words limit the ability to get on or off the ship.

There are eight quarantine ports in Sweden. A quarantine port has an obligation to accept a ship that has declared a suspected communicable disease outbreak aboard. To be able to deal with this there are defined procedures and the relevant authorities work together.

The eight quarantine ports in Sweden are:

- Gävle
- Göteborg
- Helsingborg
- Luleå
- Malmö
- Stockholm
- Sundsvall
- Umeå

Ship sanitation certificates

Ship Sanitation Certificate (SSC) is a document that verifies a ship's compliance with maritime sanitation and quarantine rules specified in Article 39 of the International Health Regulations (IHR). The certificate serves as proof that the ship is free of clear sources of contagion and may be a requirement for permission of entry into port in some jurisdictions.

In Sweden, it is the municipalities (kommuner) that issue SSCs. Those municipalities that has authority to issue SSC are listed in annex 2 to

regulation HSLF-FS 2015:8 adopted by the Public Health Agency of Sweden. The municipalities has designated ports where SSCs can be issued. WHO maintains a list of ports where SSCs can be issued:

https://www.who.int/ihr/ports_airports/IHR-list-of-Authorized-ports-to-issue-Ship-Sanitation-Certificates.pdf?ua=1

The Master should, through MSW, certify that a valid ship sanitation certificate exists onboard. In case a ship requests an SSC at a Swedish port that is not on the list, the ship will be referred to a port where one can be issued.

Information on services provided by the Swedish Transport Agency

The Swedish Transport Agency (STA) will continuously provide information about all relevant guidelines published to date – such as the recommendations published by the EU Health Gateways and by the IMO.

Extension of statutory supervision, issuance/endorsement of statutory certificates and certification of seafarers due to COVID-19

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease in 2019 (COVID-19), the STA has received inquiries from seafarers, shipowners, Recognized Organizations (RO) and others, regarding the postponement of supervision and extension of validity of mandatory certificates. This includes an extension of statutory certificates or postponement of hull surveys as a result of unavailable dry-dock facilities.

The STA has also received several indications that seafarers will have problems with completing refresher courses etc., required for the renewal of personal certificates. This could be caused by cancelled courses, quarantine or travel bans at the venue.

For the STA, the main focus at this time, is to take all possible measures to ensure that ships registered in Sweden and Swedish seafarers, to the greatest extent possible, will not be negatively affected due to the expiration of certificates because of the current COVID-19 situation.

The Swedish Government has decided that all ships' statutory certificates that expire on or after the 1st of April and before 1st of September 2020 will remain valid for 6 months from the date of expiry of the certificate without further approval from the Swedish Transport Agency or a RO. This extension does however not apply to ISM- or ISPS- certificates and documents since these are regulated by EU-regulations, and not in Swedish national law.

In addition to the extension of validity of ships' certificates, the Swedish Government will propose a corresponding extension (six months) of the time frames for statutory surveys, including annual, periodical, intermediate and bottom surveys, in cases where such surveys cannot be carried out at regular intervals due to the current situation. The certificates related to the postponed surveys will remain valid without further approval by the Swedish Transport Agency or a RO. This extension also refer to servicing of equipment and certificates issued by service providers surveys, verifications and inspections on behalf of the Swedish Transport Agency, including, but not limited to, service providers certifying life-saving equipment, fire-

fighting equipment, etc. As with the certificates, this extension does not apply to surveys related to ISM or ISPS certificates. If a ship experiences any problems before this solution has come in effect, please make contact with the STA (see contact details below) that will see to the situation on a case-to-case basis.

The Swedish Government has also decided that a medical certificate with a validity of 1 year or longer, a Certificate of Competency (CoC) and/or a Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) that expires on or after the 1st of April and before 1st of September 2020 will remain valid for 6 months from the date of expiry of the certificate without a specific approval from the Swedish Transport Agency.

Also, if a seafarer holds an endorsement issued by Sweden based on a CoC or CoP issued by a country other than Sweden, the validity of the Swedish endorsement will automatically be considered as extended for the same period as the national CoC or CoP (a general extension is acceptable), but in no case longer than 6 months from the original expiry.

Further information on the measures taken by the Swedish Transport Agency can be found on the Swedish Transport Agency's website:
<https://transportstyrelsen.se/sv/sjofart/>

Conduction of ship surveys and flag/port state inspections by the STA

The STA has adopted specific instructions for its employees, especially personnel involved in ship surveys and flag/port state inspections. These instructions specify specific precautionary and hygiene measures to be taken before boarding a ship and during the survey.

Also, the STA is working through its international contacts (for example within the EU, the IMO and the Paris MoU) to find consensus on a pragmatic approach to inspections and survey.

Contact

Shipowners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters, Owners' Representatives, Recognised Organisations and seafarers may encounter a range of difficulties, as many States are closing borders and/or ports. The STA will continuously work, within our mandate, to provide assistance to those affected and endeavour to help minimize disruption.

Further information on the measures taken by the Swedish Transport Agency to mitigate disruption to the maritime sector caused by the worldwide coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19 outbreak) and to protect the health and well-being of employees in the sector can be found downloaded from the Swedish Transport Agency's website:

<https://transportstyrelsen.se/sv/sjofart/>

Please use the specific email address below to get in contact with the STA on Covid-19 issues, to discuss possible solutions.

Questions regarding ship:

sjofartstillsyn@transportstyrelsen.se

Questions regarding seafarers and manning:

sjofart.behorighet@transportstyrelsen.se

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