



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What Maritime Pilots Need to Know about COVID-19

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. [Symptoms](#) often include cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. Our understanding of how the virus spreads is evolving as we learn more about it, so check the [CDC website](#) for the latest information. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:

- Between people who are [in close contact with one another \(within about 6 feet\)](#)
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks

Recent studies indicate that the virus can be spread by people who are not showing symptoms. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, but we are still learning more about this virus. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at [higher risk for more serious complications](#) from COVID-19.

As a maritime pilot, how can I protect myself and slow the spread of COVID-19?

For maritime pilots, potential sources of exposures include close contact with a vessel crewmember with COVID-19 and touching your nose, mouth, or eyes after contacting surfaces or handling items that a person with COVID-19 has touched.

- Notify your pilots' association and stay home if having [symptoms](#).
- Follow [CDC-recommended steps](#) if you are sick. You should not return to work until the [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers.
- Follow [CDC-recommended precautions](#) and notify your pilots' association if you are well but have a sick family member at home with COVID-19.
- Limit close contact (within 6 feet) with others when possible and consider taking the following steps:
 - Use external stairs following a path of minimum exposure to anyone on board to access the vessel bridge when possible.
 - Do not shake hands with anyone aboard, including during the "master-pilot exchange".
 - Remind the vessel master to limit wheelhouse crew to essential personnel (such as crew involved in vessel navigation) while the pilot is on board.
 - Limit your use to one radar, workstation, etc.
 - Avoid unnecessary contact with frequently touched bridge surfaces.
 - Consider carrying hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for all pilotage assignments and use it to clean hands when soap and water are not available for handwashing.
 - Following each pilot job, [clean and disinfect](#) radios, portable pilot units, life jackets, etc. with an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) [↗](#) against the virus that causes COVID-19. If EPA-approved disinfectant is not available, a diluted bleach solution prepared according to the manufacturer's label for disinfection can be used.
- CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. Cloth face coverings may prevent people who don't know they have the virus from transmitting it to others. These face coverings are not surgical masks or respirators and are not appropriate substitutes for them in workplaces where masks or respirators are recommended or required.
- Practice proper [hand hygiene](#). This is an important infection control measure. With appropriate hand hygiene, gloves are not necessary for workers not already required to wear them. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

- Key times to clean hands include:
 - Before and after pilotage assignments
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
 - After using the restroom
 - Before eating and before and after preparing food
 - Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings or personal protective equipment (PPE) (if applicable).
 - After touching objects which have been handled by coworkers, such as tools, equipment, or surfaces
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Use tissues when you cough, sneeze, or touch your face. Throw tissues in the trash and wash your hands.

What steps should pilots' associations take?

It is important to note that maritime pilotage is based upon local policies and procedures and each group is unique. While these guidelines are a general framework, each association should tailor protocols to local needs and customs. Pilots' associations should have a COVID-19 response plan to protect employees, following [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#). This plan should be shared with you and your coworkers. Pilots' associations should train and designate a competent person at each work site to ensure the plan is implemented and has the knowledge and authority to recognize hazards and address them on vessels. Pilots' associations should take steps to:

Reduce transmission while on piloted vessels

- Conduct a hazard assessment before boarding each vessel to determine if hazards are present, or are likely to be present, for which workers may need PPE. [CDC](#) and [OSHA](#)  [have recommended PPE for some types of work activities when engineering and administrative controls are not able to be implemented or are not fully protective. Employers are required to determine, select, provide, and train on correct PPE use and application for their workers' specific job duties.](#)
- Report pilot boat or vessel crew who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms to the nearest Captain of the Port (COTP).
- With the cooperation of local authorities and COTP, consider advising vessels planning to engage a pilot that they must take the following precautions prior to the pilot boarding:
 - Immediately prior to pilot boarding, use an [product that meets EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2](#), [against the virus that causes COVID-19 to wipe down any surface that the pilot might be anticipated to touch, such as: bridge equipment, radar, ECDIS controls, VHF radios, helm and machinery controls, the interior buttons of any elevator, and staircase hand railings that the pilot may use. If EPA-approved disinfectant is not available, a diluted bleach solution prepared according to the manufacturer's label for disinfection can be used.](#)
 - Provide a one-person escort for the pilot to and from the bridge following a path of minimum exposure to anyone on board. If equipped, only the pilot and the escort will be permitted in the elevator to and from the bridge.
 - Allow only essential personnel on the bridge while a pilot is on board.
 - Anyone entering the bridge must thoroughly wash their hands immediately prior to entering. Hand soap and paper towels should be available in the bridge head for this purpose.
 - All aboard shall maintain a minimum 6 feet from the pilot and each other to the extent feasible.

Reduce transmission among pilots and employees while in the office or on pilot boat

- Take steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if a pilot or employee becomes sick.
 - Actively encourage sick pilots and employees to stay home.
 - Sick pilots and employees should not return to work until the [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers. [Clean and disinfect](#) any areas that symptomatic individuals have had access to. Inform client vessels with individuals suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19, that they should clean and disinfect their vessels appropriately.
- Provide and train pilots and employees with accurate information (in their native language) about COVID-19, how it spreads, risk of exposure, the designated competent person, and how to contact them.

- Be aware that some pilots or employees may be [at higher risk for serious illness](#), such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. Implement specific policies to minimize face-to-face contact between these pilots and employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of at least six feet from other workers, customers, and visitors.
- Institute measures to physically separate and increase distance between employees and others, such as:
 - Rearrange workstations and break rooms at the port office so that employees can stay at least 6 feet away from other employees (i.e., use alternative work areas such as conference and training rooms).
 - Reduce staffing levels on each shift or implement telework policies, where applicable.
 - Implement on call protocols to reduce the number of employees at the port office at a given time.
 - Provide technology solutions to reduce the need for face-to-face communication.
- Provide pilots and employees training on proper [handwashing](#) practices, [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and other routine infection control precautions. This will help prevent the spread of many diseases, including COVID-19.
- Provide pilots and employees with access to soap, clean running water, and materials for drying their hands, and provide hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol.

Maintain a healthy work environment

- Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [good hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to the office and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by pilots and employees.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces on a routine basis:
 - In break rooms, rest rooms, and office spaces: such as telephones, door handles, keyboards, card readers, radios and electronics.
 - On pilot boats, such as door handles, control panels chart table, armrests, headsets, radio controls, and mics.
- If the surfaces are visibly dirty, clean them prior to disinfecting. To disinfect, use [products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2](#), [diluted household bleach solutions](#) prepared according to the manufacturer's label for disinfection, or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and are appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's directions for use.
- Provide disposable disinfectant wipes, cleaner, or spray so employees can clean and disinfect surfaces as needed.
- Follow all applicable local, state, and federal regulations and public health agency guidelines.

Maintain healthy business operations

- Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices. Consider drafting non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies if sick leave is not offered to some or all employees.
- Provide information on who to contact if pilots or employees become sick. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Where can I get more information?

Stay informed. Talk to your pilots' association or designated person responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Utilize these sources for more information on worker exposures to COVID-19:

- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Ships on Managing Suspected Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic website](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 website](#)
- [OSHA COVID-19 website](#) [↗](#)
- [USCG Marine Safety Information Bulletin 2020 website](#) [↗](#)
- CDCINFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348 | [website](#)

