
RED ALL

SOP

Standard Operating Procedures

For ICRC air operations in areas affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19)

ICRC Air Operations



International Committee of the Red Cross
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
(for all RED Ops)

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1 Introduction

This special Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document defines the measures applicable to the air transport of a passenger or staff suspected or confirmed of Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection on ICRC chartered aircraft or to a flight to a zone where cases have been confirmed.

A suspect case is a person who has symptoms like fever, dry cough, dizziness/vertigo and a history of travel in a zone where coronavirus is circulating or a history of contact with a confirmed/potential case. A suspect case becomes a confirmed case when a diagnostic test has proven the infection by the virus.

Each crewmember and any of the operator's personnel involved in this operation shall be familiar with the contents of this special SOP. It does not replace or form part of the operator's flight operations manual. The flight operations manual takes precedence in all matters, except for any special operating conditions applicable to this contract only which is not specified in the company FOM.

The operator's flight operations manager will deal with any question regarding this operation.

1.1 Distribution

A copy of the SOP shall be distributed to the following:

- ALL ICRC operator's flight operations manager;
- ALL ICRC Aircraft;
- ICRC Air Operations Geneva;
- ICRC Air Operations bases DYU, DJI, JUB, SOK, KIN, BKO, ABV, MIU, BGF, TUN, GOM

1.2 Certification and acknowledgement

The present SOP document shall be reviewed and approved by both the ICRC and the operator. It thereby becomes part of both parties' internal regulations, both of which pledge to respect its terms and enforce their respect by their employees and subcontractors.

Representatives of both parties shall confirm their acceptance of the above in the form of a written document referring to this SOP's title.

All personnel assigned to the contract are to read this document. The ICRC shall therefore keep a copy readily accessible at the operations base and ensure that the said personnel acknowledge that they have read and understood the contents of this SOP.

2 Transport of a person with suspected Coronavirus 'COVID-19' infection

2.1 Application

These instructions shall apply when a suspected case of COVID-19 infection is discovered during or after a flight, either in a passenger or in a crew member.

The term "Coronavirus" aka 'COVID-19' refers to a virus with a potential for a severe pandemic, such as the novel Influenza A (H1N1) virus that emerged in April 2009.

Due to the ongoing outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), persons travelling from areas where there is a high risk of COVID-19 local transmission and who present symptoms of flu (fever, dry cough, difficulty breathing, dizziness/vertigo, tiredness, etc.) should not travel. They should delay their travel and not board an ICRC aircraft. Such person should isolate themselves, stay home, avoid contacts with others and call health professional to explain symptoms and seek help. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.

However, if someone (passenger or crew) onboard ICRC aircraft is detected with flu-like symptoms, this person should strictly follow the protection measures described below.

If, in an exceptional case, a person with a novel coronavirus illness must imperatively be transported, to protect the crew and other passengers - the following guideline apply. The aircraft must be prepared for the flight and all the mentioned items in this SOP made available beforehand. In any case, such a request must be authorized by ICRC medical staff ([fit to fly certificate](#)) and must be in accordance with the COVID-19 rules set-out by the national health and civil aviation authorities at concerned stations as appropriate.

The instructions contained here are based on recommendations issued by [WHO](#). Together with the briefing given by ICRC Staff health, this will assist the crew and ICRC AirOps to react appropriately when they detect a suspected Coronavirus case during flight or if a patient with suspected Coronavirus is approved for carriage on RED flight.

2.2 General protection measures for all flights ¹

These recommendations are based on standard hygiene practices and should be implemented systematically to protect passengers and staff. All Operator and AirOps personnel should follow the practices and instructions described below to avoid becoming ill and prevent spreading of infectious disease.

Transmission of Coronaviruses. Coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person through coughing and sneezing and through personal contact such as touching and shaking hands. People may also become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Hand Washing. Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing and after each contact with a sick person. Use alcohol-based hands cleaners if necessary. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Cough Etiquette. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

Stay Home If You Are Sick. A person who gets sick should stay home from work and limit contact with others to avoid spreading the disease.

Gloves. Crew members should wear impermeable, disposable gloves onboard aircraft if they need to have direct contact with potentially contaminated surfaces such as airplane seats, tray tables, and lavatories used by ill travellers. They should avoid touching their face with gloved or unwashed hands. Improper use of gloves may increase transmission.

3 Special measures in the event of suspected COVID-19 traveler

3.1 Identify a passenger or crew who may have Coronavirus ²

Flight and cabin crew sometimes encounter ill passengers while performing their duties. During a flu outbreak, any passenger who appears ill, or who reports not feeling well, should be observed or queried for the following signs or symptoms:

- Feeling feverish or temperature greater than 38° C (100° F) if measured. For children, feeling warm by parent's report.
- Dry cough dizziness/vertigo
- Muscle pain, diarrhea and vomiting.

¹ https://www.who.int/ith/Repatriation_Quarantine_nCoV-key-considerations_HQ-final11Feb.pdf?ua=1

² <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/air/managing-sick-travelers/commercial-aircraft/infection-control-cabin-crew.html>

Any passengers observed to have or who report having one or more of these symptoms should be considered as a possible case of COVID-19.

3.2 Take the appropriate protection measures

Implement these measures and control them during all the flight.

General measures

- All ICRC contracted aircraft shall carry a Universal Precaution Kit and/or a customized hazmat spill management kit to control/deal with sick travelers.
- Persons who have symptoms of flu (fever, persistent cough, difficulty breathing, muscle pain, tiredness, etc.) compatible with COVID-19 should not travel. They should delay their travel and not board an ICRC aircraft.
- If symptoms appear during flight, minimize the number of personnel and passengers directly exposed to the sick person.
- Separate the ill person (1.5 m) from others. The adjacent seat(s) should be left unoccupied, if feasible.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as medical or surgical mask and gloves when dealing with ill travelers.
- The sick person shall be provided with mask. If the patient cannot tolerate the use of the mask, those adjacent must be provided with masks.

Passengers or crew who develop symptoms en route should:

- Cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, use tissues to contain respiratory secretions, dispose of used tissues in the nearest waste receptacle.
- Wash their hands after coughing, sneezing and other contact with respiratory secretions or contaminated objects or materials.
- Wear a facemask, if tolerated, to reduce the number of droplets coughed or sneezed into the air.

Crew assisting a sick person should:

- Wear a facemask (medical and/or surgical masks), or, if available, a respirator. Disposable facemasks and respirators should not be reused.
- Use hand sanitizers when assisting / dealing with a passenger suspected to be infected with coronavirus disease.
- Wear waterproof disposable gloves when assisting / dealing with a passenger suspected to be infected with coronavirus disease.
- Provide surgical mask to the sick person if not wearing one already.
- If a pilot becomes ill or displays symptoms of flu, all persons in the cockpit should wear masks.
- Crew member who develops symptoms compatible with COVID-19 should discontinue his/her duty as soon as it is safe to do so and follow procedures outlined for ill-passengers.

3.3 Report to the public health authority at the destination airport

If a passenger shows symptoms compatible with novel coronavirus while on a flight, the captain can be required by law to notify Air Traffic Control on the first contact who would subsequently alert the concerned health departments.

Depending on the country, the national authority might take number of measures, including disease control and containment activities, passenger and crew surveillance and aircraft disinfection procedures.

The flight crew should ensure that the aircraft air conditioning/ventilation system are kept on until all passengers and cabin crews have disembarked to maximize continued removal of virus particles from the cabin air.

3.4 Report to ICRC and get advice from ICRC medical staff

During this ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the ICRC AirOps and aircrews should consult the ICRC Staff health whenever they detect a passenger displaying respiratory problems compatible with coronavirus.

3.5 Management of Crew Exposure after Flight Completed

Flight and cabin crew members and ground personnel who may have been exposed to a passenger suspected of having coronavirus, should monitor their health for 14 days after the exposure (including temperature check twice daily). If they become ill with coronavirus-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea they should immediately take the following steps:

- Stay home except to seek medical care; do not report to work.
- Notify their employer.
- Contact their personal physician.
- Inform the physician before visiting about the possible exposure to influenza.
- Do not travel, unless it is critical to travel locally for health care.
- Limit contact with others as much as possible.
- When not alone or in a public place, wear a mask to reduce the number of droplets coughed or sneezed into the air.

All people who have been in close contact with a confirmed case should consult their doctor and check their temperature and symptoms of flu twice per day for 14 days. A self-quarantine at home for 14 days is a measure that can be applied after discussion with local healthcare provider and based on local public health recommendations.

Incubation period for coronavirus is said to be two weeks. As soon as a person who has been in contact with a confirmed case develops symptoms (axillary temperature > 38°C, cough, shortness of breath) it is important to wear a mask and to seek medical advice.

4 Disinfection and Post Flight Measures³

4.1 General

Cleaning and disinfection of the cabin, and disposal of potentially infected materials, are important to avoid spreading of infectious diseases.

All ICRC contracted aircrafts should carry on board Universal Precaution Kit or a customised hazmat spill management kit to be used for cleaning of the aircraft interior in case of spilled body fluids.

The seat and the area where the ill traveller used (seats, arm rests, tray tables, lavatory, etc.) shall be noted.

Body fluids shall be treated as though they are infectious.

³ Source: CDC. Interim Guidance for Aircraft Cleaning When Pandemic Influenza is Suspected in a Passenger or Crew Member. http://www.pandemicflu.gov/travel/cleaning_aircraft.html

Cleaning crew shall be informed of the requirement to use personnel protective equipment and to take all precautionary necessary.

Notify cleaning staff about areas that might have been contaminated which might need additional attention. If the ill-traveller changed seats, ensure both areas are cleaned

4.2 Surface disinfection

The first step is routine cleaning with soap or detergent and water, to remove soil and organic matter. It is followed by the proper use of disinfectants to inactivate any remaining virus are the basic components of effective environmental management of influenza. This is the recommended active ingredients against Coronaviruses¹.

[interim list of household products and active ingredients for disinfection of covid-19](#)

Table 1. Active Ingredients and Their Working Concentrations Effective Against Coronaviruses

S/N	Active Ingredient (A.I.)
1	Accelerated hydrogen peroxide (0.5%) ⁵
2	Benzalkonium chloride (0.05%)* ⁴
3	Chloroxylenol (0.12%) ³
4	Ethyl alcohol (70%) ¹
5	Iodine in iodophor (50 ppm) ⁴
6	Isopropanol (50%) ⁴
7	Povidone-iodine (1% iodine) ¹
8	Sodium hypochlorite (0.05 – 0.5%) ^{1,2}
9	Sodium chlorite (0.23%) ⁴

*Alternative name: alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium chloride

Disinfection of surfaces is very important in the presence of highly contiguous viruses (such as in operating rooms and intensive care units). Therefore, the surface disinfection shall be concentrated on the risk areas. These risk areas are surfaces that were near the patient during the whole transport time, including armrests, seatback, tray tables, seat belt latches, adjacent wall and ceiling, carpet, lavatories, and possibly stretchers, medical appliances etc.

4.3 Disinfection instructions

Always wear non-sterile, disposable gloves that are recommended by the manufacturer of the detergent/disinfectant while cleaning the cabin and lavatories and when handling cleaning and disinfecting solutions. Dispose of gloves if they become damaged or soiled or when cleaning is completed; never wash or reuse the gloves.

Eye protection, such as goggles, may be required if splashing is expected.

For disinfection to be effective, adherence to the following parameters is essential: impact time, application concentration and the action spectrum of the applied disinfection product.

All materiel used to disinfect contaminated areas (including gloves used) shall be placed in biohazard bag and disposed in accordance with local regulations for infected solid waste.

ⁱ Source: <https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/public-cleanliness/environmental-cleaning-guidelines/guidelines/interim-list-of-household-products-and-active-ingredients-for-disinfection-of-covid-19>