

COVID-19 pandemic: The Norwegian health authorities' expectations of shipping company representatives and shipping agents responsible for foreign seafarers in transit across the border

This information concerns foreign seafarers in transit across the border in order to take up work on a vessel at a Norwegian port.

The Directorate of Health expects shipping agents and shipping companies which are responsible for seafarers in transit in Norway to be familiar with the information provided here and to communicate it to their seafarers **prior to** departure to Norway. The information has also been translated into Russian (attached).

The Norwegian health authorities wish to promote cooperation with foreign seafarers, shipping companies, shipping agents and other parties responsible for arranging foreign seafarers' travel to Norway. The Directorate of Health will continue to provide clarification and guidance as and when the industry needs it.

In this information, "shipping agent" means the representative of a shipping company who is responsible for arranging the travel of seafarers in transit. This will normally be a registered shipping agent, but in some cases, it may also be another representative appointed by the shipping company.

Background

Foreign seafarers are permitted to cross the border into Norway when travelling in order to muster on and off vessels. See the exemptions from the Regulations concerning entry restrictions for foreign nationals in order to safeguard public health, Section 3.

(<https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2020-06-29-1423?q=inreise>)

Here, it is stated that the following foreign nationals must not be denied entry under the temporary Act on entry restrictions for foreign nationals in order to safeguard public health, (j): seafarers, on their way to or from active service, subject to certain requirements regarding documentation as stipulated in the provision.

The rules for workers arriving in Norway to take up work on a vessel in a Norwegian port are set out in Section 6h of the COVID-19 Regulation. Reference is also made to the Regulations relating to infection control measures etc. in connection with the coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19 Regulations) (<https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2020-03-27-470?q=covid-19%20smittevern>)

Anyone arriving in Norway to take up work on a vessel at a Norwegian port must go into entry quarantine. This quarantine applies both during and outside working hours until the person concerned has tested negative. See the section below for more details. For coastal cruises, specific rules apply as stipulated in the COVID-19 Regulation and the Guide for coastal cruises along the Norwegian coastline.

Summary of expectations regarding shipping agents and shipping companies

The Norwegian health authorities expect:

- shipping agents to help prevent sick persons from travelling to Norway. All persons must be healthy prior to departure and upon entering Norway.
- shipping agents to help ensure that seafarers in transit are tested at the border, to help communicate positive test results to the individuals concerned, and to contribute to infection tracking through communicating with the captain/person responsible for the ship
- shipping agents to arrange suitable quarantine accommodation in single rooms during the quarantine period. Quarantine onboard the vessel can only be carried out in single cabins.
- shipping agents to arrange travel so that seafarers take the fastest route directly to or from their destination/ship
- shipping agents to arrange private travel by bus or car from the border to or from the destination/ship or airport/railway station
- shipping agents to communicate that seafarers must wear a facemask when travelling on public transport from the point of arrival and throughout their journey to the ship. Seafarers must keep their distance (at least 1 metre) wherever possible. Public transport should be pre-booked with registered seats.
- shipping agents to have pre-booked accommodation at the quarantine hotel/suitable quarantine location, if accommodation is required in order to travel to or from the ship
- shipping agents to help ensure that seafarers are given information on the infection control advice that applies in Norway
- shipping agents to distribute an information sheet (Appendix 1), declaration of consent (Appendix 2) and symptoms form (Appendix 3) to seafarers prior to departure

Clarifications

Seafarers must be healthy upon entering Norway

Seafarers must be healthy when they embark on their journey and when they enter Norway. If they experience any symptoms during their journey to Norway or have symptoms at the border, they must promptly notify the travel manager, agent or border personnel, who will then contact a doctor/healthcare professional.

The shipping agent should ask each seafarer to fill in the symptoms form (Appendix 3) before they cross the border. COVID-19 symptoms may include not only fever, cough, breathlessness, sore throat or loss of sense of taste or smell, but also a cold, muscle pain, headache, abdominal pain/diarrhoea or malaise. Read more on the Norwegian Institute of Public Health's website

<https://www.fhi.no/en/op/novel><https://www.fhi.no/en/op/novel-coronavirus-facts-advice/facts-and-knowledge-about-covid-19/facts-about-novel-coronavirus/coronavirus-facts-advice/facts-and-knowledge-about-covid-19/facts-about-novel-coronavirus/> It is also possible to be infected without having any symptoms.

Quarantine

Section 6h of the COVID-19 Regulations provides for the following exemptions for workers arriving in Norway to take up work on a vessel at a Norwegian port:

"Persons arriving [in Norway] to take up work on a vessel at a Norwegian port shall remain in entry quarantine both during and outside working hours until they

- a) have tested negative for SARS-CoV-2 in a test taken during the first 24 hours after their arrival in Norway, and*
- b) have tested negative for SARS-CoV-2 in a test taken no earlier than three days after arrival in Norway.*

The worker must then remain in entry quarantine outside working hours. Quarantine onboard the vessel can only be carried out in single cabins.

The employer or client is responsible for arranging, carrying out and covering the cost of tests in Norway.

The requirement in the first paragraph (b) does not apply to workers on their way to a vessel which is scheduled to leave a Norwegian port within three days after the worker's arrival in Norway and which will not call at a Norwegian port within 10 days after departure.

In the event of a positive test, the person must go into isolation (see Section 7), and the employer or client must notify the municipality in which the person is staying, or last stayed if the ship has left the port.

This provision does not apply to coastal cruises, ships operating on passenger routes or vessels which are laid up."

Where both tests are negative, workers are still required to remain in quarantine outside working hours. The employer or client must arrange suitable quarantine accommodation in a single room during the quarantine period. Quarantine onboard a vessel can only be carried out in single cabins.

The requirement to have another test three days after arrival (Section 6h first paragraph (b)) does not apply to workers travelling to a vessel which is to leave a Norwegian port within three days after the worker's arrival in Norway and which will not call at a Norwegian port within 10 days after departure. This means that seafarers due to depart from a Norwegian port within three days of arriving in Norway who will not call at a Norwegian port within 10 days after departure need only have a test for SARS-CoV-2 within 24 hours of arriving in Norway.

All seafarers should be tested for COVID-19 on the Norwegian border, even if they have already been tested or been in quarantine in another country prior to departure. Seafarers can continue their journey after having the test, provided that they have no symptoms and that they travel in accordance with the applicable rules and recommendations for travel when in entry quarantine (see below). The period during which the obligation to remain in quarantine during working hours applies will be shortened if the seafarer tests negative on two occasions within the time periods stipulated in the provision.

Where the test for SARS-CoV-2 produces a positive result, the worker must go into isolation, and the employer or client must notify the municipality in which the person is staying, or last stayed if the ship has left the port. Infection tracking and quarantine of close contacts will be initiated. Anyone else who has travelled with a person who has tested positive must be made aware that they must report any symptoms which they develop over the next few weeks.

Seafarers should give their voluntary consent to any positive result being communicated to the shipping agent (consent form, appendix 2) If a seafarer does not wish to consent to the shipping agent being notified of the test result, they must provide their contact details, including their name and contact details for the ship on which they are to muster, so that the healthcare service in Norway can contact you in conjunction with infection tracking. Negative test results will not be communicated.

Transport

Seafarers are in transit and must take the quickest route from the border to their destination/ship. A private car or bus should be used to transport seafarers. Upon arrival in Norway, seafarers will only be permitted to travel on public transport (aircraft, taxi, bus, train, etc.) if they wear a face mask throughout their journey. Seafarers must also keep at least 1 metre away from others wherever possible. Seafarers should be asked to make sure they are carrying a facemask upon entering Norway. Travel by public transport should be pre-booked with tickets with registered seats. See also the advice on using public transport on the Institute of Public Health's website:

[https://www.fhi.no/nettpub/coronavirus/fakta/avstand-karantene-oghttps://www.fhi.no/nettpub/coronavirus/fakta/avstand-karantene-og-isolering/ - raad-til-deg-som-er-i-karantene-men-som-m-reise-med-offentlig-transportisolering/#raad-til-deg-som-er-i-karantene-men-som-m-reise-med-offentlig-transport](https://www.fhi.no/nettpub/coronavirus/fakta/avstand-karantene-oghttps://www.fhi.no/nettpub/coronavirus/fakta/avstand-karantene-og-isolering/-raad-til-deg-som-er-i-karantene-men-som-m-reise-med-offentlig-transportisolering/#raad-til-deg-som-er-i-karantene-men-som-m-reise-med-offentlig-transport)

If an overnight stay is necessary in order to get to or from the ship, the stay must take place in suitable quarantine accommodation arranged by the employer or client.

Follow the infection control rules applicable in Norway

Seafarers should be made aware of the infection control rules that apply in Norway. Everyone has a responsibility to follow these rules. In Norway, the following infection control recommendations apply:

- Stay at least 1 metre away from other people
- Wash your hands or use hand disinfection frequently
- Cough and sneeze into a paper handkerchief or use your elbow if necessary
- If you feel unwell, contact your captain/ship agent immediately so that they can contact a doctor. Stay in your room/cabin and follow further instructions.