



Quarantine Unit, Ministry of Health Sri Lanka

<i>Title: Standard Operating Procedure for Carryout Bulk Crew Changes Facilitated by Charter Flights</i>		
<i>SOP No.: PHS COVID-19 SOP-05</i>	<i>Version: 05</i>	<i>Effective Date: 22.11.2021</i>
<i>Prepared by: Quarantine Unit of Ministry of Health</i>		

### **Standard Operating Procedure for Bulk Crew Changes Facilitated by Charter Flights**

1. This category of crew changes includes the disembarkation of crew from a vessel and transferring them directly to the airport for repatriation via a charter flight and getting down the seafarers via a charter flight to airport and transferring them directly to the seaport to embark to a vessel.
2. Approval for bulk crew changes facilitated by charter flights will be granted only after assessing the request case by case basis. A formal request letter addressed to the Director; Quarantine should be submitted. The letter should contain all relevant details including the date and time of crew change, embarking/disembarking port in Sri Lanka, arrival and departure airport in Sri Lanka, name of the vessel, port of call list, crew list of off signers in the vessel with nationalities, date and place of embarkation, crew list of on signers with country and airport of embarkation, flight details and any available evidence to prove that they are not infected/low risk (eg; PCR results, details of quarantining, vaccination details).
3. A period of 72 hours is required for processing the request and Shipping Agents are required to submit the request letter for health approval well in advance (at least 72 hours before the approval letter is required). Requests to expedite the approval process due to late submission and submission with incomplete details shall not be entertained.
4. PCR test should be done for every on-signer within 72 hours prior to boarding the flight and should be made available to Port Health Officer (PHO) prior to their landing in Sri Lanka.
5. The Charter flight should transport only the on signers to the vessel and off signers from the vessel where crew change took place. No other seafarer should be transported in the charter flight. Crew change with seafarers travelling in commercial flights are not permitted under this bulk crew change category.



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6. Timing of chartered flight and the vessels should be coordinated in such a way that enabling on-signers are directly transferred from the Airport to the seaport and off-signers directly to the airport from the seaport.
7. The vessels should obtain the routine health clearance for berthing or for the operations at anchorage/ OPL by submitting necessary documents to the relevant Port Health Office.
8. Since the seafarers are directly transferred from airport to the vessel and vice versa, they are exempted from PCR testing conducted at the Points of Entry. Crew change should be planned such a way that direct transport to the vessel and charter flight takes place without any delay at the port or airport.
9. Both on-signers and off-signers should fill the relevant health forms (HDF/HCF) and submit to the Port Health Office prior to their arrival
10. The representatives of the agent who will physically in contact with the on-signers for bond signing/releasing process should wear a face mask properly. They shall maintain physical distancing of at least one meter and practice hand washing/hand sanitizing frequently. They should use plastic document folder which can be disinfected. They shall be strictly confined to the area where seafarers are attended to and shall not go to other areas in the airport. They should follow the guidance/instructions given by the Airport Health Officer.
11. All crew members should wear face masks during the entire period of crew changing process.
12. Physical contact with Sri Lankans (including authorities) should be limited only for very essential official formality. All authorities who have close contact with the crew need to wear face masks properly.
13. Crew change should be done under the supervision of Sri Lanka Navy and they should escort the crew transport vehicle.
14. The drivers and the helper of crew transporting busses should wear a face mask properly, maintain a physical distance of at least one meter with each other and the crew members and the busses should be disinfected after transporting the crew.



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15. Crew members of barges/boats and other persons travelling in the barges/boats to facilitate the crew change should wear a face mask properly, and should take all precautions during the crew transfer process.
16. The health clearance of PHO is subjected to the approvals or clearances taken from Director/ Quarantine, Foreign Secretary and all other relevant authorities.
17. A list of all personnel involved in the crew change including their permanent addresses and contact details should be handed over to the Port Health Office at the end of the crew change by relevant agent. This includes the representatives from the agents, drivers and helpers of the busses and other vehicles, personnel worked in boats/barges etc. They should be instructed to be vigilant at least for 14 days after the crew change and inform the PHO in case of having any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
18. Although this SOP is applicable for routine events, Director Quarantine as the Proper Authority under the Quarantine and Prevention of Diseases Ordinance or any other Proper Authority in the port and airport under the same ordinance have the powers to take judgmental decisions at any time for the best interest of prevention and control of diseases.
19. Any changes to this SOP will be published in the website of the Quarantine Unit as the next version.