



Quarantine Unit, Ministry of Health Sri Lanka

Title: Standard Operating Procedure for Operations of Offshore Crew Transit Hub

SOP No.: PHS COVID-19 SOP-14

Version: 01

Effective Date: 2020.12.09

Prepared by: Quarantine Unit of Ministry of Health

Standard Operating Procedure for Operations of Offshore Crew Transit Hub

General

1. The scope of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to provide the health guidelines for the operations of newly immersed concept of 'Offshore Crew Transit Hub'. Understanding the nature of the operations, the offshore crew transit hub is a passenger vessel at stationed in the sea and provides a temporary stay for seafarers during the bulk crew change operations. A designated intermediate care facility maintained by the Nawaloka Hospital PLC will provide treatment for Covid-19 positive seafarers from the 'Offshore Crew Transit Hub'.
2. The crew changes taken place in Offshore Crew Transit Hub (OCTH) should be only on the basis of direct bulk crew change facilitated by charter flights. Disembarkation of crew from a vessel and send them directly to the OCTH and once the charter flights are available they will be transferred directly to the airport for repatriation. The on signers who arrive to the country by charter flight will be directly sent to the OCTH from the airport and then embarked to the vessels as per the schedule. No crew transfers using commercial flights, transfer to isolation/quarantine centers in the mainland or disembarkation of Sri Lankan seafarers and sending for quarantine is not permitted.
3. Approval for the maintaining and operation of OCTH and designated intermediate care facility is subjected to necessary approvals or clearance from other relevant authorities.

The Crew Change Operations

4. Approval for every bulk arrival of seafarers via airports will be granted by Director Quarantine. 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



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details and any available evidence to prove that they are not infected/low risk (eg: PCR results, details of quarantining).

5. 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.
6. PCR test should be done for every on-signer within 72 hours prior to boarding the flight and should be made available to respective Port Health Officer (PHO) prior to their landing in Sri Lanka.
7. The Charter flight should transport only the on signers to the vessel and off signers from the vessel where bulk crew change took place. No other seafarer should be transported in the charter flight. Seafarers travelling in commercial flights are not permitted under this bulk crew change operation.
8. 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.
9. The health clearance of PHO is subjected to the approvals or clearances taken from all other relevant authorities including Secretary to the Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Defense, Department of Immigration and Emigration, Sri Lanka Customs, Sri Lanka Navy, Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Civil Aviation Authority and Airport and Aviation Services (Sri Lanka) Limited.
10. Since the seafarers are directly transferred from airport to the OCTH and vice versa, they are exempted from PCR testing conducted at the Points of Entry. However, if any on-signer has a potential to have contact with local personnel for longer period other than the contact during the crew change process, they need to undergo on arrival PCR for COVID-19 at the Points of Entry (eg: embarking to a lay-up vessel which can have a longer period of contact).



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11. Both on-signers and off-signers should fill the Health Declaration Form (HDF) and submit to the Port Health Office via email prior to their arrival. The PHO will grant 'No Objection' for the embarkation/disembarkation once all the requirements are fulfilled.
12. When a team of seafarers are transferring from the OCTH to the airport to repatriate by a charter flight, the list of their names should be submitted to the Port Health Office.
13. The representatives of the agent who will physically in contact with the on-signers for bond signing/releasing process should wear recommended Personnel Protective Equipment (face mask, face shield/goggles, coverall/overall, disposable gloves, and head cover). They shall maintain recommended physical distancing (currently 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.
14. All crew members should wear face masks during the entire period of crew changing process.
15. Recommended disinfection procedures will be carried out on crew members and their baggage. Any charges incurred for disinfection process has to be paid by the Agent to the relevant authority.
16. 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 recommended PPE (face mask, face shield/goggles, coverall/overall, disposable gloves, and head cover).
17. Crew change should be done under the supervision of Sri Lanka Navy and they should escort the crew transport vehicle.
18. Security forces of Sri Lanka shall take over the access control, supervision and monitoring of the OCTH to ensure they operate in line with the Health Ministry guidelines.
19. In the event of conducting PCR test for the seafarers is a requirement of repatriating flight or by the embarking vessel or ordered by Sri Lankan health authorities, the collection of samples



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should be done by the trained staff of the designated intermediate care facility and the samples should be sent for testing to a Health Ministry approved private sector laboratory adhering to the safety precautions.

20. Testing laboratory shall send all the results immediately to Epidemiology Unit (chepid@sltnet.lk, samithag@hotmail.com) and Quarantine Unit (quarantinelk@gmail.com). If there is a positive result, testing laboratory shall immediately contact Dr. Samitha Ginige of Epidemiology Unit (0777664036) and give details immediately, followed by an email.
21. The drivers and the helpers of crew transporting busses should wear recommended PPE (face mask, face shield/goggles, coverall/overall, disposable gloves and head cover), maintain recommended physical distance with each other and with the crew members and the busses should be disinfected after transporting the crew.
22. Crew members of barges/boats and other persons travelling in the barges/boats to facilitate the crew change should wear recommended PPE (face mask, face shield/goggles, coverall/overall, gloves and head cover) and should take all precautions during the crew transfer process and the barges/boats also should be disinfected after each event.
23. Land transportation of the seafarers should be done according to the latest version of the SOP for 'Transportation of Seafarers' (SOP No. PHS COVID-19 SOP 09)
24. If any seafarer becomes positive for COVID-19 PCR test, provision for treatment should be done in the designated intermediate care facility established as suggested in the proposal for the treatment purposes adhering to ministry guidelines. The Covid-19 patients are not permitted to be brought into the country.
25. In case of a death of a person in OCTH or designated intermediate care facility the human remains are not permitted to be brought into the country.



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Health conditions for the OCTH, Designated intermediate care facility and Transporting boats

26. The passenger vessel used as the OCTH should function as an isolation center. The relevant conditions stipulated in the latest version of the SOP on ‘Setting up and maintenance of an Isolation Center for seafarers/sea marshals (SOP No. PHS COVID-19 SOP 08)/ any future versions is applicable with modifications to suit the offshore center.
27. There should be a dedicated fleet of boats to transfer the seafarers between the port and OCTH or designated intermediate care facility. Adequate number of boats should be available according to the daily turnover.
28. The crew/staff of the OCTH, designated intermediate care facility and the transferring boats should not have any physical contact with the shore and shore passes are not allowed unless they leave the vessels after completing the working period. They should work in the vessel for a minimum period of 14 days continuously.
29. The provisions for the OCTH, designated intermediate care facility and to the transferring boats should be done without the boat crew getting on board and not having any physical contact with the persons in OCTH or designated intermediate care facility.
30. The OCTH, the designated intermediate care facility and the transporting boats should strictly adhere to the regulations and guidelines stipulated by the Marine Environmental Protection Authority (MEPA) on waste disposal.
31. No locals are allowed to get onboard the OCTH, designated intermediate care facility and the transferring boats without prior approval form the Port Health Officer (PHO). In case of government authority needs to get on board for an essential formality, they should be in full PPE and practice recommended COVID -19 preventive measures.



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Quarantine requirement for crew/staff of OCTH, Designated intermediate care facility and transferring boats

32. The Sri Lankan crew/staff of OCTH, designated intermediate care facility and the transferring boats who complete at least 14 days work period should undergo COVID-19 PCR testing before disembarkation. Those who have negative PCR test results are allowed to disembark and should undergo a mandatory 14 days quarantine in a government approved paid quarantine center. They should undergo a second PCR test around the 10th -12th day of the quarantine period. With negative results for the second PCR test they can be released to home.
33. If any one of them are detected positive for the PCR test they should be sent for treatment as per the protocols of Ministry of Health.
34. Testing laboratory shall send all the results immediately to Epidemiology Unit (chepid@sltnet.lk, samithag@hotmail.com) and Quarantine Unit (quarantinelk@gmail.com). If there is a positive result, testing laboratory shall immediately contact Dr. Samitha Ginige of Epidemiology Unit (0777664036) and give details immediately, followed by an email
35. Foreign crew of OCTH or designated intermediate care facility should follow the foreign crew disembarkation pathway. Once the PCR test done prior to disembarkation is negative, they can be sent directly to the airport for repatriation or to a government approved isolation center until the flights are available.
36. 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.



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Applicability of the SOP

37. 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.
38. Any changes to this SOP will be published in the website of the Quarantine Unit as the next version.