

Covid-19 related actions and measures – information from the Swedish Transport Agency as regards shipping (2020-03-19)

There is an ongoing outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which causes the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The Swedish Transport Agency (STA) is following developments carefully and is in continuous contact with other responsible authorities – nationally within Sweden, within the EU and internationally.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten) is leading the Swedish government response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The STA want to underline that it is essential for everyone to stay up to date on information and adhering to the most recent advice and guidance from the Swedish government, in particular the Public Health Agency of Sweden as well as other government agencies. Specific guidance on e.g. travel may also be given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

General information

Decision to temporary restrict non-essential travel to Sweden from countries outside of the European Union

On 17 Mars 2020, the Swedish government decided to temporary restrict non-essential travel to Sweden from countries outside of the European Union, EES countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) and Switzerland. United Kingdom nationals are still to be treated in the same way as EU citizens until end 2020. The temporary travel restriction will enter into force on 19 Mars 2020 and will apply for 30 days. If this period is to be extended will be assessed depending on further developments.

The temporary travel restriction does not apply to:

- Swedish citizens and citizens of the Schengen Associated States and their family members,
- third-country nationals who are long-term residents or national law or who hold national long-term visas

Other travellers with an essential function or need, such as e.g. transport personnel engaged in haulage of goods and other transport staff to the extent necessary, passengers in transit and passengers travelling for imperative family reasons, are also exempted from the temporary travel restriction.

For information on the application of the temporary restriction of non-essential travel to Sweden, see:

<https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2020/03/fragor-och-svar--inresestopp-till-eu-via-sverige/>

Ships calling at Swedish ports

Regular routines/procedures are in place and still appropriate. In short, a Marine Declaration of Health (MDH) is mandatory according to Swedish law – the Master shall make such a declaration before calling on a Swedish port (usually through Maritime Single Window (MSW)). The law also provides the possibility for the Swedish Health Authorities to designate “certain areas” as especially affected (by hazards such as the COVID-19 virus). However, no such decision has been made by the Swedish Health Authorities at this time (this is continuously under review). In conclusion; if a ship is carrying or suspects it is carrying disease – regular routines for handling the issue are to be followed. The MDH can also be found through the Swedish Coast Guard – email: lc@kustbevakningen.se Tel: +46 776-70 60 00.

Furthermore, the Public Health Agency of Sweden has issued detailed instructions to personnel working in ports and airports, in regards to hygiene and disinfection measures. Please note that the English webpage might not contain the most up to date information:

<https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/communicable-disease-control/covid-19/>

Quarantine ports in Sweden

If a vessel has a suspected communicable disease outbreak aboard, the captain of the vessel is obliged to notify the port, the Swedish Coast Guard (Kustbevakningen), or Swedish Customs (Tullverket).

When such notification is received from a vessel, the County Medical Officer and other authorities are contacted. The County Medical Officer

decides what action needs to be taken. One measure may be to place the vessel in quarantine, or in other words limit the ability to get on or off the ship.

There are eight quarantine ports in Sweden. A quarantine port has an obligation to accept a vessel that has declared a suspected communicable disease outbreak aboard. To be able to deal with this there are defined procedures and the relevant authorities work together.

The eight quarantine ports in Sweden are:

- Gävle
- Göteborg
- Helsingborg
- Luleå
- Malmö
- Stockholm
- Sundsvall
- Umeå

Ship sanitation certificates

Ship Sanitation Certificate (SSC) is a document that verifies a ship's compliance with maritime sanitation and quarantine rules specified in Article 39 of the International Health Regulation (IHR). The certificate serves as proof that the ship is free of clear sources of contagion and may be a requirement for permission of entry into port in some jurisdictions.

In Sweden, it is the municipalities (kommuner) that issue SSCs. Those municipalities that has authority to issue SSC are listed in annex 2 to regulation HSLF-FS 2015:8 adopted by the Public Health Agency of Sweden. The municipalities has designated ports where SSCs can be issued. WHO maintains a list of ports where SSCs can be issued:

https://www.who.int/ihr/ports_airports/IHR-list-of-Authorized-ports-to-issue-Ship-Sanitation-Certificates.pdf?ua=1

In case a ship requests an SSC at a Swedish port that is not on the list, the ship will be referred to a port where this can be done.

Information on services provided by the Swedish Transport Agency

The Swedish Transport Agency (STA) will continuously provide information about all relevant guidelines published to date – such as the recommendations published by the EU Health Gateways and by the IMO.

Extension of statutory supervision, issuance/endorsement of statutory certificates and certification of seafarers due to COVID-19

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease in 2019 (COVID-19), the STA has received inquiries from, e.g., seafarers, shipowners and Recognized Organizations (RO), regarding the postponement of supervision and extension of validity of mandatory certificates. This includes an extension of statutory certificates or postponement of hull surveys as a result of unavailable dry-dock facilities.

The STA has also received several indications that seafarers will have problems with completing refresher courses, etc., required for the renewal of personal certificates. This could be caused by cancelled courses, quarantine or travel bans at the venue.

For the STA, the main focus at this time, is to take all possible measures to ensure that ships registered in Sweden and Swedish seafarers, to the greatest extent possible, will not be negatively affected due to the expiration of certificates because of the current COVID-19 situation. In Sweden, we are working on a solution that will allow for an extension of the validity of necessary certificates (ship as well as personal certificates). It is expected this solution will be in place in near future. If any problems arise before this solution is in place, you are advised to contact the STA (see contact details below) that will then consider these issues on a case-to-case basis.

Ship surveys and flag/port state inspections by the STA

The STA has adopted specific instructions for its employees, especially personnel involved in ship surveys and flag/port state inspections. These instructions specify specific precautionary and hygiene measures to be taken before boarding a ship.

Also, the STA is working through its international contacts (for example within the EU, the IMO and the Paris MoU) to find consensus on a pragmatic approach to inspections and survey.

Contact

Shipowners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters, Owners' Representatives, Recognised Organisations and seafarers may encounter a range of difficulties, as many States are closing borders and/or ports. The STA will continuously work, within our mandate, to provide assistance to those affected and endeavour to help minimize disruption.

Please use the specific email address below to get in contact with the STA on Covid-19 issues, to discuss possible solutions.

Questions regarding ship:

sjofartstillsyn@transportstyrelsen.se

Questions regarding seafarers and manning:

sjofart.behorighet@transportstyrelsen.se

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