Guidance on ports' response to the coronavirus pandemic

Version 1.0

The operation of ports is of vital importance to face the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. Ports ensure that the world's medical supplies, food, fuel and raw materials, as well as manufactured goods and components vital to the preservation of employment, continue to reach their intended destinations.

In the spirit of international collaboration that drives the World Ports Sustainability Program, this guidance document is meant to help ports worldwide face the challenge, by providing information on best practices from ports worldwide.

The goal is to provide support for the implementation of actions to prepare and alleviate coronavirus-related contingencies for port terminals and other maritime trade players. In addition, the actions could foster open collaboration to mitigate the pandemic.

The guidance document is dynamic and will be regularly updated under the supervision of a dedicated WPSP Taskforce and on the basis of new and updated contributions by ports worldwide.

This first edition of the "Guidance on ports' response to the corona virus pandemic" is largely based on an initiative taken by the Port of Açu to coordinate, collect and summarise input by ports worldwide on their initiatives facing the coronavirus crisis. This has been complemented by further contributions of IAPH member ports. Overall, the following ports and organisations have contributed to the current edition.

BEST PRACTICES

OPERATIONS:

- All ports are assigning **home office** for administrative workers but find themselves in different stages of implementation. IT and telecommunications infrastructure limitations posed challenges for some partners. The remote work authorization regime has its particularities and varies per port. Some ports have assigned home office to their entire administrative workforce while others have dealt with the matter on a case-by-case basis.

- **Domestic and international travel, institutional visits and face-to-face meetings** are prohibited by nearly all ports, with some specific exceptions.

- The **organization of operational teams** varies basically according to port size and type of cargo handled. Some ports have not made changes to their operational workforce, although they have implemented protocols to protect their workers prior to starting and during their daily activities. Most ports have been operating with a rotation system after forming teams A and B, who do not meet each other physically. These teams generally alternate on a weekly basis. In larger organizations, there are examples of reducing the number of people working in shifts A and B to create a standby C team. There is even a more elaborate example of ports that operate with teams A and B while team C is composed of a pool of multidisciplinary professionals who can move through different operational areas.

- To ensure cargo operations, facilitate the creation of operational stand-by teams and/or minimize contagion risks, some ports have ceased non-essential services in order to prioritize and guarantee the **continuity of their core port activities** (maritime access, docking and cargo operations). Most cruise ship operations have been interrupted. There are cases of **increased flexibility in port operations**, such as the expansion of the bunker area into an anchoring area to minimize the need for docking.

- In locations handling containers, a **"fastlane"** was created to prioritize medical cargo throughout the entire port logistics chain — including prioritization of the ship in the line-up, availability of pilots and tugboats, cargo handling, access to trucks, and authorization for vehicles to move forward. This procedure may be extended to different types of cargo in view of urgent demands to respond to the pandemic.

- Regarding the **treatment of ships with suspected or actual contamination cases**, ports have been following the decisions of health authorities in each region. However, some pro-active, voluntary actions have been identified, such as the designation of dedicated berths (when possible) and implementation of quarantine areas on land for treatment.

- Ports are running their operations while being supported by the authorities as they recognise their fundamental role in the logistics chain and in mitigating the coronavirus' impacts. The vast majority of them **have not reported impacts on cargo operations**. Although there are exceptions, on cargo operations because of some constrictions of land transportation. Some ports have proactively implemented specific procedures for truck drivers which consists of checking their body temperature, facilitating identification and access, and establishing social distancing guidelines.

- Carriers also implemented preventative measures aiming to reduce the exposure to risk at ports and at terminals, such as the **temporary suspension of crew changes and prohibiting crews from disembarking** at port terminals.

GOVERNANCE & COMMUNICATION:

- Different levels of governance organization are being implemented. Most ports have started up crisis committees to monitor the crisis' developments and propose mitigation guidelines. Thanks to previously established emergency control plans, some ports have been able to develop more elaborate structures, including thematic subcommittees, such as financial and social responsibility committees.

- Some ports are interacting institutionally and regionally while focusing on strategic dialogue with government stakeholders through professional sector associations. The vast majority of ports are devoting much attention to communication and dialogue with priority stakeholders, by maintaining daily contact with clients, terminals, government agencies and the port community (with special attention to pilots and tugboat crews).

- As seen in a wide variety of the ports, it is highly recommended to create a transparent, agile and pro-active methodology to communicate with the various internal and external stakeholders. The efforts should go towards providing clear information of the status of the operations, the implemented response and contingency measures and the care taken of employees and port community members, and, towards enhancing continuous community engagement as well as fostering dialogue. A wide variety of communication tools can be used to this purpose.

CONCLUSIONS

- Based on the observed international "best practices", it is important to act quickly in order to prevent the spreading of the virus, with a focus on the health and safety of the port community while maintaining the port operational. Rapid, transparent and proactive communicating with the various stakeholders is key in this aspect as well.

- The prioritization of essential port activities should be considered to ensure the preservation of the cargo transportation & logistic chain for the supply of goods necessary towards the community and society, and, towards the containment of the pandemic.

- The creation of a "fastlane" for medical cargo and essential services (oil production, fuel handling, etc.) is a measure of great impact for containment of the pandemic.

- Implementing specific governance systems to mitigate the crisis and organize the strategic dialogue with public authorities establish the foundation for effective actions to combat the pandemic. Collaboration and communication are key elements towards a rapid and efficient response to the pandemic.

Contact us and provide your feedback

To share information about your actions to mitigate the potential impact of Covid-19 or for any questions you may be having, please contact us at covid19@sustainableworldports.org.