



BORDER EXECUTIVE BOARD

Briefing

Maritime COVID-19 Scenarios for Cruise Ships

Date due to MO:	27 September 2022	Action required by:	N/A
Security level:	IN CONFIDENCE	BEB Report:	BEB RPT 22-038
To:	Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Minister for COVID-19 Response		

Contact for telephone discussion

Name	Position	Telephone
Christine Stevenson	Chair of the Border Executive Board	s 9(2)(a) OIA

Minister's office to complete:

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|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs change | <input type="checkbox"/> Seen | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's Notes | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn | |

Comment:

Maritime COVID-19 Scenarios for Cruise Ships

Security level: IN CONFIDENCE **Date:** 30 September 2022

To: Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Minister for COVID-19 Response

Purpose

1. To provide visibility of agency and industry operational planning that has been completed to respond to potential COVID-19 scenarios in the cruise pathway.

Key Points

2. Maritime NZ and Customs have worked with public health units, ports and cruise industry representatives on a tabletop exercise to confirm operational readiness and response arrangements for COVID-19 scenarios in the cruise pathway.
3. The tabletop exercise was run at a time when vaccination and isolation for household contacts were still mandated. While the framework for some of the processes identified has changed, the general agreement with stakeholders and operational agencies is expected to remain. Work will continue in coming weeks if new processes and mitigations are required.
4. Appendix 1 summarises the tabletop exercise of scenarios where COVID-19 is present onboard a cruise ship. The opportunity was taken to review arrangements for other vessels and non-COVID-19 scenarios on cruise ships.
5. We ask you to note that agencies are operationally ready for the 2022/23 cruise season.
6. Maritime border agencies will continue fortnightly reporting on joint agency operational coordination and preparedness in the lead up to cruise season 2022/2023 to the Border Executive Board through the Maritime Border Programme. Any issues or risks will be raised with you via the COVID-19 weekly report.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

- a) **note** border agencies, ports, public health units and cruise line representatives have worked together to be ready to respond to Covid-19 scenarios in the cruise pathway **Noted**
- b) **note** appendix 1 provides a summary of scenarios and likely responses **Noted**
- c) **note** post Cabinet decisions announced on 12 September 2022, operational agencies are now moving back to business-as-usual functions at the maritime border, and **Noted**

- d) **note** agencies are operationally ready for the start of cruise season 2022/23 and are now working through activities in line with recent Cabinet decisions to remove restrictions at the maritime border.

Noted



Christine Stevenson
Chair of the Border Executive Board
Date: 23 September 2022



Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall
Minister for COVID-19 Response
Date: 4/10/22

Scenario Planning and Readiness for Cruise Season 2022/2023

1. In preparation for the 2022/23 cruise season, Maritime NZ and Customs workshopped scenarios for readiness planning and operational arrangements for the cruise pathway with public health units (PHUs), ports, and cruise industry representatives.
2. While most of the scenarios were focussed on COVID-19 in the cruise pathway, the opportunity was taken to review arrangements for other vessels and non-COVID-19 scenarios on cruise ships. The table at appendix 1 describes each scenario, decisions to be made, the lead for any response, legislation and tools (e.g. frameworks and plans) that support actions to be taken, and expected outcomes.
3. The discussions mainly focussed on the first two scenarios:
 - a cruise ship underway to New Zealand reports it has **several** COVID-19 cases on board
 - a cruise ship calls into a port with **many** COVID-19 cases on board.
4. **Scenario 1: several cases on board.** This scenario will form the operational baseline for all cruise ships visiting New Zealand during the 2022/23 season, as it is likely that all cruise ships will have several COVID-19 cases on board. Exercise participants are confident there are appropriate tools in place to support cruise operations, and the obligations and health measures are understood and will be applied consistently.
5. **Scenario 2: many cases on board.** This scenario develops out of the baseline, and was deliberately progressed through increasing case numbers, and finished with a request to off board a large number of cases to complete self-isolation requirements on land. Discussion focussed on when and whether it is appropriate for a local Medical Officer of Health to place a cruise ship into quarantine, and how the response would be led by the All-of-Government Maritime Response Team. The progression of the discussion confirmed that PHUs and ports had proportionate responses to increasing levels of public health risk, and that Health Act 1956 powers would only be used when necessary, and in line with the all-of-government response framework.

6. The exercise was held on 2 September 2022 based on health settings under the Minimisation and Protection Strategy. Amendments to the Self-isolation Requirements Order (as announced on 12 September 2022) removed the isolation requirement for household contacts which may have implications for responding to Scenario 1 and 2. Household contacts are now encouraged to test daily for five days and to wear a mask when leaving home. For cruise ships, passengers who share a cabin with a COVID-19 case are considered household contacts, and no longer are required to self-isolate on board. Agencies will continue to work through any implications with stakeholders.
7. The revocation of the Maritime Border Order has also removed the vaccination requirements for cruise ship passengers. The scenario considering non-compliance of the previous vaccination requirement is no longer applicable but is still useful reference if such requirements are reinstated.
8. Agencies are confident they are operationally ready for the start of the 2022/23 cruise season, and appropriate operational response arrangements are in place to respond to COVID-19 cases in the cruise pathway.

Recent Policy Changes

9. Cabinet decisions to move to post-winter domestic and border health settings were announced on Monday 12 September 2022. The significant implications of these decisions for the maritime border include the following.
 - The revocation of the Maritime Border Order as of 11:59pm Monday 12 September 2022.
 - Vessel categories 1 and 2 (as were defined in the Maritime Border Order) cease to exist with the associated entry processes and requirements including vaccination and testing removed.
 - COVID-19 cases are still required to self-isolate for seven days however household contact isolation requirements cease to apply. RAT tests are encouraged and will be made available for cruise passengers by Customs.
 - No contact tracing requirements are in place at the maritime border.
 - The New Zealand Traveller Declaration (NZTD) maritime solution will not be implemented for cruise season 2022/2023. This means travellers arriving to New Zealand by sea will not have to complete a NZTD until the Tranche 3 rollout (planned to be completed in June 2023).
 - The Director-General Notice on Pratique remains in place, continuing the direction that COVID-19 presence onboard vessels is not a reason to withhold pratique.

ENDS.

Appendix 1: Summary of scenarios from cruise ship COVID-19 readiness planning exercise, 2 September 2022

Scenario	Decision(s)	Lead Agency	Legislation and tools used to support cruise operations	Outcomes	Tabletop Exercise Comments
1 Cruise ship is underway to New Zealand and notifies officials about confirmed or suspicion of several COVID-19 cases on board. Vessel intends to travel coastwise and call into other ports.	Pratique is granted, despite COVID-19 cases onboard.	Medical Officer of Health (MOoH)	<p>Director-General of Health Notice exempting ships liable to quarantine in relation to COVID-19.</p> <p>Self-Isolation Requirements Order requires COVID-19 cases to self-isolate on board a cruise ship and provides permitted reason to disembark if positive for COVID-19.</p> <p>Vessel Management Framework (VMF).</p> <p>Cruise Operator Guidance.</p> <p>Advanced Notice of Arrival (ANA).</p> <p>Cruise operators Outbreak Management Plan (OMP) for managing diseases onboard vessels.</p> <p>Guidance issued by Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) to National Public Health Service (previously Public Health Units).</p> <p>Director-General of Health Notice for permitted means of travel.</p>	<p>Cases are managed on board as per the Vessel Management Framework (VMF) and cruise operator's Outbreak Management Plan (OMP).</p> <p>Cases must self-isolate under the Self-isolation Requirements Order.</p> <p>Cases may leave the vessel to complete self-isolation requirements on land (under Self-isolation Requirements Order and DG Health Notice for permitted means of travel).</p> <p>Cruise operator may require household contacts (those who share a cabin) to self-isolate.</p> <p>Master notifies status of COVID-19 for each port of call.</p> <p>Persons boarding for ship servicing need to adhere to the VMF, OMP, and associated protection protocols (PPE etc).</p>	<p>This scenario will be the baseline for all incoming cruise ships (including the <i>Pacific Explorer</i>). All cruise ships are likely to have COVID-19 cases on board, and to be granted pratique in line with the DG-Health exemption.</p> <p>Cruise ships will manage COVID-19 cases on board in line with their Outbreak Management Plans.</p> <p>Cases choosing to leave the vessel to complete self-isolation requirements on land are responsible for identifying suitable accommodation and transport arrangements (at their cost), prior to leaving the vessel.</p> <p>Cruise ships are expected to engage with local PHUs and to report COVID-19 case numbers on board, as they travel from port to port.</p> <p><i>Note: when the exercise was held, a person who shared a cabin with a COVID-19 case was considered a household contact and was also required to self-isolate for seven days. This requirement was removed on 12 September 2022 with the amendments to the Self-Isolation Requirements Order. Household contacts are now encouraged to test daily for five days and to wear a mask when leaving home (i.e. the cruise ship).</i></p> <p><i>One cruise operator has advised that a person who shares a cabin with a COVID-19 case will also be required to self-isolate as a condition of carriage.</i></p>
2 Cruise ship calls into port with many COVID-19 cases on board (note that definition of many depends on variables such as proportion of cases to total passengers, local health system capacity, local port infrastructure).	<p>Pratique is granted, despite COVID-19 cases onboard.</p> <p>Medical Officer of Health quarantines vessel (no persons allowed off or on the vessel).</p>	<p>MOoH</p> <p>AoG Maritime Response</p>	<p>Same as scenario 1.</p> <p>Same as scenario 1.</p>	<p>Same as scenario 1, noting that under the DG-Health exemption, pratique can only be declined on the basis of the presence of another quarantinable diseases such as norovirus.</p> <p>If the health risks change after arrival (e.g., a large outbreak occurs on board, or a new variant is suspected on board) the government and agencies have the power to require information, direct vessels and people, and manage the public health risk under the Health Act 1956.</p> <p>Cases are managed on board under the OMP.</p> <p>The Master regularly updates the PHU on the status on board.</p> <p>Te Whatu Ora to lead comms response.</p>	<p>This was the main scenario discussed at the tabletop exercise, and was progressed in stages of increasing case numbers, cases causing disruption to critical services (scenario 3), possibility of a variant of concern on board, and finally a request from the Master to offboard a large number of cases to complete self-isolation requirements on land.</p> <p>Te Whatu Ora and the Director of Public Health have discussed the use of quarantine powers with Medical Officers of Health, and in line with the DG-Health exemption, it is unlikely that a vessel would be placed into quarantine due to COVID-19 cases on board.</p> <p>The tabletop exercise progressions determined that ports and PHU's had proportionate responses to the increasing levels of risk, that Health Act powers would only be used when necessary, and that responses would align with all-of-government incident response framework. This might include use of quarantine powers or directing the vessel</p>

Scenario	Decision(s)	Lead Agency	Legislation and tools used to support cruise operations	Outcomes	Tabletop Exercise Comments	
	Port or Harbourmaster denies entry (as a PCBU seeking to exclude a H&S risk).	AoG Maritime Response	Harbourmaster powers under the Maritime Transport Act 1994.	Ports unlikely to exclude the vessel and will follow the MOoH for the health response. Cruise ship diverts to another port that will accept the vessel.	or passengers to divert to other ports/hospitals, (while unlikely, the conversations were risk-based and appropriate).	
3	Cruise ship report that critical crew or bridge officers are COVID-19 cases and are in self-isolation.	AoG Maritime Response	Vessel Management Framework (VMF) Cruise operators Outbreak Management Plan (OMP) Vessel's Safe Management Plans Maritime NZ's Maritime Incident Response Team (MIRT) plans MNZ Piloting Guidance	Vessel is successfully piloted to port and berthed. COVID-19 cases are managed as per scenario 1. Replacement crew join the vessel.	The vessel may be directed to quarantine or other safe anchorage until replacement crew can board. This scenario is responded to under the vessel's Safe Management Plan and Maritime NZ's MIRT processes to ensure safe navigation of the vessel.	
4	Emergency on board the vessel.	Category 2 SAR response. Maritime NZ's Maritime Incident Response Team response.	RCCNZ (MNZ) MIRT (MNZ)	Vessel's Safe Management Plans. Vessel's SAR Plan. Mass Rescue Operations Plan. MIRT plans.	Response as for a SAR or MIRT incident.	Incident responded to by Maritime NZ, either RCCNZ (Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand) for a ship in distress situation or by the MIRT for a safe navigation situation.
5	Passengers (and cruise operator) non-compliant with vaccination requirements.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	This was discussed at the exercise. <i>Note: the vaccination requirements have now been removed with the revocation of the Maritime Border Order on 12 September, so this scenario is no longer applicable.</i>
6 7 8	A person tests positive for COVID-19 on/after arrival into New Zealand.	Person is passenger on a cruise ship (on a day trip).	MOoH	Same as scenario 1.	Once a person has tested positive, they must return to their place of self-isolation as soon as practicable, either on board the vessel or on land (if the vessel is unsuitable for self-isolation).	Same as scenario 1.
	Person has arrived on a recreational vessel (yacht or small craft).	MOoH	Self-isolation Requirements Order.			All other people on the recreational vessel are likely to be considered household contacts and should test daily for five days and wear a mask if leaving the vessel.
	Person is crew member on a cargo or fishing vessel.	MOoH	Self-isolation Requirements Order. Vessel Management Framework.			All other crew may be considered household contacts and should test daily for five days and wear a mask if leaving the vessel (this will depend on the actual vessel).
9	A COVID-19 case on board a cruise ship requires hospitalisation.	Medical evacuation.	PHU RCCNZ	Guidance issued by Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) to National Public Health Service (previously Public Health Units). Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) SOPs.	Passengers are able to access New Zealand's health system if they require medical care that cannot be provided on the vessel.	Standard operating procedures used to transport the passenger to hospital, either by road ambulance if the vessel is at berth, or by medevac coordinated by RCCNZ if the vessel is in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region.
10	Many people on board a cruise ship require hospital treatment.	Medical evacuation.	PHU	Guidance issued by Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) to National Public Health Service (previously Public Health Units). Mass Casualty Plan.	Response as for a mass casualty incident.	Considered very unlikely within current Public Health Risk Assessment for COVID-19, though may occur for other illnesses (e.g. gastrointestinal illnesses).