COVID-19 Maritime Industry Update 58

4 December 2020

This guideline is for the maritime industry and port supply chain
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1. A message from Paul Craven, Maritime NZ’s COVID Recovery Team Leader

As the pandemic continues, the impacts on our daily lives begin to weigh on New Zealanders. When the pandemic began we looked upon essential workers and those on the front line with admiration. However, in recent times there has been a shift in how many in the community view those who have increased exposure to the virus, and we are seeing cases where they now encounter discrimination. Paul Craven addressed this in an internal Maritime NZ article earlier in the week.

Say thanks to a border worker

We all know how lucky we are to live in New Zealand and probably more so now with the global pandemic.

I contemplated this today (last Friday) while having lunch in the sun in the park across the road from work. Looking around everyone is pretty much going about their normal lives and while COVID-19 is always in the background, for most New Zealanders it’s impact at the moment is minimal. It’s ok to go on holiday, it’s ok to have friends round, it’s ok to go to a concert or sporting match, it’s ok to have Christmas! Freedoms much of the world doesn’t have at the moment.

Which is why I have been very disappointed to hear over the last few days of the rising cases of border workers being stigmatised by the general public. Air, maritime and managed isolation workers are running into problems like being told their local school doesn’t want to take their children any more or their local long term GP has asked them to go somewhere else.

The reason we New Zealanders have as much freedom as we do at the moment is firstly due to the great work everyone has done during the lockdowns and alert level changes as well as all the tremendous work the border workers are doing to keep our borders safe. Add to this, the efforts of the AoG COVID Response team, Maritime NZ staff and our stakeholders in the maritime industry. The work they have done to educate port workers and provide systems to help the country manage the pandemic, has been world leading.

Our economy survives on our exports and many of the clothes you wear, the car you drive and the foods you eat, arrive on ships. To keep these vessels running, people who work in the port environments are putting themselves at risk of catching COVID-19 every day. They are tested for it every 7 or 14 days and I’m sure those that have had this test will agree, it’s not pleasant to do once, let alone every week.

We are not just talking about stevedores; there’s marine pilots, shipping agents, seafarer welfare providers, our own Maritime NZ Port State Control Officers and Maritime Officers, along with Customs, Immigration and Health staff; anyone that works at the borders really. They’re all working to keep our ports and airports open and have beds ready in isolation facilities for New Zealanders to come home to.

So it’s really sad to hear that some of these workers, and in some cases their families, are being stigmatised for the jobs they do. They are keeping New Zealand safe, our economy running and making sure our Christmas Amazon purchases are getting through. And they are going to great lengths to ensure that they are not bringing COVID-19 back into the community. So in my view there is only one thing these people deserve and that’s our thanks.
1. **A message from Paul Craven (continued)**

So if you know a Stevedore, a Pilot, a Maritime NZ PSCO/MO, a managed isolation worker, a Customs worker or anyone working at our borders, can I please ask that you give them your thanks. Send them an email, shake their hand, shout them a beer or just say thank you! They deserve it.

The Maritime Industry Update is issued weekly, usually in the second half of the week. However, publication days might change when there is a need to provide a quick update.

If you have any questions about updates, or suggestions for what you would like included, please contact Maritime NZ by emailing MNZCovid-19@maritimenz.govt.nz.
2. Stakeholder contribution – Shipping Agent

Effective crew changes in NZ under COVID-19 Regulations

The following was written by Keith Thompson, President, Shipping New Zealand.

Last week I wrote about the need for crew changes and the importance of seafarer welfare. This week I will talk through the process for managing a crew change bearing in mind that the process is always being fine-tuned and subject to change.

It is important to note that as agents we do take a proactive approach with owners by actively advising them that we have facilities in NZ to manage crew changes. Once we have been advised by the vessel’s owners or the manning company of the need to make a crew change here in NZ, we take the following steps.

- Under the Essential Workers guidelines an application is made for an Exemption to Travel to NZ.
- Once the Exemption has been approved an invitation to apply (ITA) is given so the crew members can then apply for an NZ Entry Visa (even in the case of visa waiver countries).
- Vessel arrival times must be worked through with the port so that airfares can be purchased to line up with the vessel’s arrival.
- An application is made for an “Accommodation Voucher” via an MIQ for a bed in a MIF (Managed Isolation Facility). Without this voucher the Crew member will not be permitted to board the plane for NZ.
- MIQ needs to be kept advised at all times of the full list of crew to be changed with continual updates as changes occur with flight times, vessel arrival times and port delays that affect the ship schedules.
- An application is then made for an approved MIQ Transport plan from airport to ship and vice versa. This plan describes who will be transporting the crew, the safety precautions taken in line with MOH guidelines on the wearing of PPE and distancing onboard the transport, (driver and crew), time for collection and arrival at destination, along with the route being taken by the transport operator.
- The next step is requesting approval from the local PHU (Port Health Unit) for the crew movements to take place. This includes sign off of crew by seeking an updated MDOH (Maritime Declaration of Health) from the Master along with the completion of individual crew medical assessments for each crew member departing the vessel and personal temperature logs.
- Advising all concerned stakeholders of the pending crew exchange including, PHU, Customs NZ, MPI, Port Security, Stevedores working the Vessel and Port Operations (for Pilot awareness).
2. Stakeholder contribution – Shipping agent (continued)

Changes are constant and continuous management is needed to keep crew changes on track. Flight cancellations and restricted flight availability for both arriving and departing crew is one of the many challenges faced along with the need for Australian transit visas which are often required. Some airlines and destinations require a negative COVID test result that is no older than 92 hours while some ports are now requiring crew to complete 14 Days isolation in MIF prior to boarding at their respective Ports which can be difficult to enforce.

Port schedule changes due to congestion, delays affecting the crew change vessel, and weather delays can all affect the vessel’s port call timings. Changes to the availability of beds at MIF’s can be a factor which subsequently alters the transport plan.

One thing that is certain in the Shipping World is change and whilst all planning starts with the best intentions based on information available at the time, it usually ends up with a number of changes that need to be worked through.

Cooperation and understanding from all parties involved is crucial to ensuring crew exchanges can go ahead with minimal disruption without any contact with the community. Being able to manage crew changes is a critical component of the maritime system and key to ensuring the supply chain continues uninterrupted.
3. Crew change update

Maritime NZ along with other government partners are working together to design and implement a standardised national process for crew changes to replace the existing ‘case-by-case’ approach.

The aim of the crew change process is to keep NZ safe from COVID-19 and minimise the impact of the pandemic on the supply chain and maritime sector. A formalised process will also give certainty and clarity to everyone involved.

Health, Maritime NZ, MIQ and MoT are actively working on the end-to-end process to facilitate crew change in key international ports. The process is informed by two principles: keep New Zealand safe, and keep the ports and the flow of goods functioning. End-to-end means from planning for a crew change, to the moment a crew member (on-signer) arrives in New Zealand and undergoes testing, through to the pilot disembarking from the vessel after finishing pilotage. The process will also include steps for both off-signers and shore leave.

Once the process is agreed, MNZ will check this with the sector, including shipping company representation, to ensure that it is robust from the maritime sector’s point of view. The Ministry of Health will similarly verify it against the requirements of DHBs and PHUs.
4. Answering your questions

There are a huge number of stakeholders in the maritime industry and ports’ supply chain, and all of you are affected in different ways by COVID-19 and New Zealand’s response to it.

If you have questions you would like answered, please email MNZCovid-19@maritimenz.govt.nz by 5pm, Friday each week.
5. Key sources of information

The following links provide you with key sources of information.

- For all your questions, and to provide information and make suggestions – Maritime NZ
  MNZCovid-19@maritimenz.govt.nz
- Port and maritime guidelines and other information
  www.maritimenz.govt.nz – click on the COVID-19 banner on the home page
- Official health advice, including PPE guidance – Ministry of Health
  www.health.govt.nz/
- Up-to-date information across the transport sector (land, sea and air) – Ministry of Transport
  www.transport.govt.nz/about/covid-19/
- All New Zealand COVID-19 legislation
- New Zealand’s campaign to stamp out COVID-19
  www.covid19.govt.nz
- Information for businesses operating under alert levels
  www.business.govt.nz/covid-19/operating-at-alert-levels/
- Wage Subsidy Scheme information
- Managed Isolation and Quarantine
  www.miq.govt.nz/

Stamp it out

- Practise good hygiene
  Wash your hands with soap. Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Clean surfaces.
- Keep track of where you’ve been
  If COVID-19 reappears, help our health services reach people quickly to stop any further spread.
- Stay home if you’re sick
  If you have cold or flu symptoms, you should stay home and call your doctor or Healthline.