



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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INTERNAL MEMO

Date:	14 December 2020		
To:	The Honorable Dr ZL Mkhize, Minister of Health	From:	Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on Covid-19

COVID-19 TESTING FOR AVIATION CREW AND PERSONNEL

Problem

- A number of countries have abandoned the testing practice on the airline crew due to impracticalities. It is then mandated for airlines to manage the risk by not deploying the crew that are not fit.
- The Department of Transport's (DoT) Aviation Transport Directions contains this clause as an additional layer. The current Department of Health (DoH) Directions does provide an exemption to testing, only if the crew will not disembark the aircraft. However there may be a need for lay overs in hotels to before the return leg of the journey.
- Port Health is enforcing the Directions requiring testing, and thus a number of international airlines are withdrawing the South African routes.

Evidence review

- The South African International Air Services (Covid-19 Restrictions on the movement of air travel) Regulations, 2020 indicates that crew members shall upon arrival in South Africa be subjected to health protocols as contemplated for in Health Directions. This includes following of risk mitigation measures and conduct of risk assessment to ensure that crew members are fit.
- The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) indicates that crew members should monitor themselves for fever, cough, shortness of breath or other Covid-19 symptoms. Crew members should take their temperatures at least twice daily during duty periods and at any time they feel unwell. Crew members are instructed to stay at home or in their hotel, notify employers' occupational health programme and NOT report for work if they develop a fever, shortness of breath or other Covid-19 symptoms. (They should not return to work until cleared by occupational health programmes and public health officials).¹
- The ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) guidelines recommend that crew members should not be subject to screening or restrictions applicable to other travellers, with health screening methods for crew members being as non-invasive as possible. The CART guidelines recommend that crew members be exempt from Covid-19 testing that applies to other travellers.²

¹ <https://www.icao.int/covid/cart/Pages/Crew-Module---Crew-Members.aspx>

² <https://www.icao.int/covid/cart/Pages/Crew-Module.aspx>

Recommendations

It is recommended that the South African Department of Health and Department of Transport align with the recommendations of ICAO and CART guidelines to exempt crew members from testing applied to other travellers. Regular symptom screening of crew members should continue to apply.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

Kind regards,



PROFESSOR SALIM S. ABDOOL KARIM



PROF MARIAN JACOBS

CO-CHAIRPERSONS: MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

DATE: 14 December 2020

CC:

- » **Dr S Buthelezi (Director-General: Health)**
- » **Dr T Pillay (Deputy Director-General)**
- » **Incident Management Team**