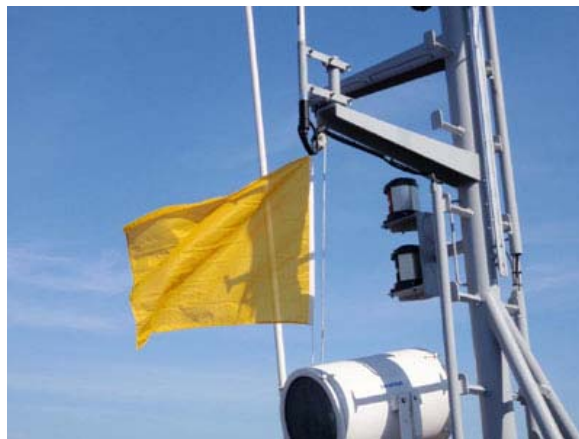


Influenza A H1N1 virus

Introduction

Human Swine flu has made the world's headlines because it is caused by the rarer Influenza A H1N1 virus that has evolved from a swine associated virus. A much smaller number of people are pre-immune to this virus than to previous seasonal flu viruses. The Influenza A H1N1 virus is therefore expected to spread faster and a higher percentage of the population is predicted to become ill than during previous seasonal flu epidemics.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the Influenza A H1N1 virus has now reached pandemic status, i.e. it is global. Members and clients should therefore assume that the virus may be introduced to the vessel at any port of call anywhere in the world.



The presence of Influenza A H1N1 on board working ships presents challenging problems for owners, charterers and operators. Recent press reports indicate that there have been instances of shore side medical authorities not permitting ship's crew/passengers ashore when Human Swine flu cases are suspected and/or confirmed on board. This, in turn, causes logistical problems for the vessel.

Measures to prevent infection on board

The Influenza A H1N1 virus is mainly spread between people through physical contact and air droplets. The spread occurs through coughing, sneezing and close contact with infected individuals. Taking preventive measures against the disease is strongly recommended. It is suggested that, as a minimum, the following should be considered:

- Seek advice from local authorities as to whether the Influenza A H1N1 virus is a particular concern for that port of call. This can normally be done via the company's ships' agent.
- Restrict shore leave in affected areas.
- Limit contact with shore side personnel in affected areas.
- Impose heightened personal hygiene routines.

Guidelines when entering ports with possible infection on board

It is important to mitigate the effects of the Influenza A H1N1 virus on infected crew members as well as to protect the health of those onboard who are not affected. If Human Swine flu is suspected, isolate the crew member from any personnel not directly involved in the care of the sick crew member. Any individual who have been in close contact with the infected crew member, must also be considered potential a carrier of the virus.

For more information please contact Loss Prevention Manager Terje R. Paulsen, email terje.paulsen@gard.no or Loss Prevention Executive Marius Schønberg, email marius.schonberg@gard.no

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Before arrival in port, notify local health authorities if any crew member shows symptoms of Human Swine flu. Be prepared for the possibility that once the port authorities have been notified, they may refuse disembarkation of any/all crew members from the vessel. In this type of situation, attempts should be made to have local health providers (doctor/nurse) attend on board the vessel to take blood samples and to provide anti-viral medication, if required.

It would appear that many ports around the world have introduced screening of all passengers and crew. This is done using thermal imaging cameras in order to detect individuals with a high fever. Local ships' agents can provide further information on this.

The vessel must fully co-operate with any requests made by local health and port state authorities. In the meantime, shipboard crews should contact the company offices to seek guidance on the treatment and care of the sick crew member(s).

Additional information

Most countries have already established websites providing local information and guidelines. Your local agent will normally be able to guide you to these web pages, and also provide information about local rules and regulations. In addition, updated information and general guidelines on Influenza A H1N1 virus and Human Swine flu can be found on the following websites:

www.who.int
www.cdc.gov

Gard is of course also available for additional information should you suspect a case of Human Swine flu on board your vessel.

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