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19 March 2020

To: States, Territories and International Organizations

Subject: **Air Navigation Services (ANS) COVID-19 Recommendations**

Action

Required: **Note recommendations**

Sir/Madam,

The outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) presents a complex scenario for Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs) and Air Navigation Services Providers (ANSPs), in order to promote the reduction of public health risk and to ensure the continuity of air operations.

Taking into consideration that the need to ensure the availability of ANS goes beyond the State's own borders, and that ANS technical/ operational personnel is of strategic importance for the safety and continuity of air transport, even when air operations have been limited, we would like to recommend the following measures, specifically proposed to address key personnel of ANS. These recommendations should be considered as a complement to those established by the health authorities corresponding to each State, other related ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), and the recommendations made by both the World Health Organization (WHO)/Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and ICAO.

### **ICAO SARPs related to ATS Contingency Arrangements**

Annex 11 – *Air Traffic Services* to the Chicago Convention requires air traffic services authorities to develop and promulgate contingency plans for implementation in the event of disruption, or potential disruption, of air traffic services and related supporting services in the airspace for which they are responsible. Such contingency plans should be developed in close coordination with the air traffic services authorities responsible for the provision of services in adjacent portions of airspace and with the affected airspace users.

The various circumstances surrounding contingency situations preclude the establishment of exact detailed procedures to be followed. Annex 11 Attachment C offers guidelines to assist States in providing for the safe and orderly flow of international air traffic in the event of disruptions of air traffic services and related supporting services, and in preserving the availability of major world air routes within the air transportation system in such circumstances.

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GREPECAS Conclusion 13/68 – *ATM CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR CAR/SAM REGIONS*, requires CAR/SAM States/Territories/International Organizations to develop Air Traffic Management (ATM) contingency plans for the airspace under their jurisdiction, conclude bilateral and/or multilateral agreements with States/Territories /International Organizations responsible for the adjacent airspace, in coordination with the ICAO Regional Offices, to prepare an ATM Contingency Plan using the guidelines presented by ICAO and send to the corresponding ICAO Regional Office a copy of their ATM Contingency Plan.

The planning and response to contingencies and emergency situations by the ATS providers is a responsibility of the States, which must have adequate coordination and the support of the ICAO NACC Regional Office, with the objective of ensuring safety, minimizing the impact on users and ensuring a prompt recovery of operations.

Time is essential in contingency planning if hazards to air navigation are to be reasonably prevented. Timely introduction of contingency arrangements requires decisive initiative and action, which again presupposes that contingency plans have, as far as practicable, been completed and agreed among the parties concerned before the occurrence of the event requiring contingency action, including the manner and timing of promulgating such arrangements.

States need to ensure that ATS providers have published and updated contingency plans that adequately reflect their context and consider potential threats to their system. On our ICAO NACC website under this link <https://www.icao.int/NACC/Pages/edocs-atm.aspx>, you may review your ATS Contingency Plan status and proceed accordingly.

In relation to aerodromes, an aerodrome emergency plan shall be established, commensurate with aircraft operations and other activities conducted at the aerodrome. The plan shall provide for the coordination of the actions to be taken in an emergency including public health emergencies such as a severe outbreak of a communicable disease potentially affecting a large proportion of aerodrome staff.

The plan shall also coordinate the response or participation of all existing agencies which could be of assistance in responding for an emergency.

In this respect ICAO has introduced the Collaborative arrangement for the prevention and management of public health events in civil aviation (CAPSCA) which is a global programme to improve preparedness planning and response to public health events that affect the aviation sector. ICAO has worked closely with States, the WHO, the International Air Transport Association, Airports Council International and other partners, to develop relevant provisions in a number of Annexes to the Convention on International Civil Aviation i.e. Annex 6 — *Operation of Aircraft*, Annex 9 — *Facilitation*, Annex 11 — *Air Traffic Services*, Annex 14 — *Aerodromes*, Annex 18 — *The Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air*, as well as *Procedures for Air Navigation Services (PANS) — Air Traffic Management*. Guidance material has been produced to support these provisions.

There are also guidelines to assist States in developing an aviation related plan for any communicable disease posing a serious public health risk, such as an influenza virus with human pandemic potential. A preparedness plan for aviation is required since air travel may increase the rate at which a disease spreads, thereby decreasing the time available for preparing interventions.

We encourage you to visit the following web page for more information:  
<http://www.capsca.org/CAPSCARefs.html>

## **Basic protective measures**

The COVID-19 outbreak has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, which puts us all at risk of contagion of this harmful virus. The personnel of the air navigation services is not exempt from this threat, both due to its daily life activities and those related to their job.

Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the WHO website and through your national and local public health authority. Most people who become infected experience mild illness and recover, but it can be more severe for others. Take care of your health and protect others by doing the following:

### ***Wash your hands frequently***

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

**Why?** Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

### ***Maintain social distancing***

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

**Why?** When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

### ***Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth***

**Why?** Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

### ***Practice respiratory hygiene***

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

**Why?** Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

### ***If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early***

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

**Why?** National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

***Stay informed and follow advice given by your healthcare provider***

Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

**Why?** National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on whether COVID-19 is spreading in your area. They are best placed to advise on what people in your area should be doing to protect themselves.

**Additional measures for ANS facilities**

1. Ensure basic risk management procedures are implemented and adequately discussed, considering basic staff requirements to support the ANS. Risk management should also include reactive measures in case any staff member is detected or suspected to be infected.
2. Raise awareness among ANS technical staff about preventing the spread of the virus, both in the workplace and in their daily lives.
3. Establish and implement preventive procedures on workplaces (ATS, AIS, CNS, MET, SAR) such as the use of alcohol gels, disposable cleaning towels, avoid personal contact and any other recommended measures.
4. Establish and implement enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures for all ANS facilities, including door handles, handrails, surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards).
5. Establish and implement enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures for communication equipment (head-set or microphones) as well as equipment and consoles.
6. Provide additional guidance to ANS personnel that need to work in close distance from each other (coordination, active-planner controllers, maintenance technicians, airport operators, etc.).
7. Consider limiting access to areas related to the provision of air navigation services, especially for those units that share their facilities with other ANS and CAA departments.
8. Consider limiting visitor access to facilities and provide information on actions taken to support staff or contractors, who are required to access facilities.
9. Consider special guidance and procedures for ANS technical staff that provides direct services to aviation community (for example, Air traffic services reporting Office (ARO), Flight Information Services (FIS), Meteorology (MET) personnel). It is essential to consider personnel that may be more exposed to contagion or transmit COVID-19 through their interaction with crews, flight dispatchers and other ANS staff. Appropriate measures in these units are essential to reduce the risk of contagion. Use of electronic means for the provision of these services would reduce the need to direct personal contact.
10. Implementation of health monitoring controls (temperature or similar), following WHO and national public health authorities guidelines, supported by appropriate medical staff.
11. Consider the implementation of shifts or schedule arrangements such as "permanent work teams or closed groups" reducing turnover among staff, to reduce exposure.
12. Consider taking steps to ensure the psychosocial adjustment and wellbeing of staff. Factors affecting psychosocial adjustment include: lack of information, rumors or misconceptions, increased stress (particularly sleep deprivation), infection control procedures that severely limit personal contact or hinder communication, etc. Mitigations include clear, honest and regular communications, clear guidance and strong social support networks.
13. Brief regularly all personnel and visitors of the measures taken.
14. Share best practices and lessons learned with other ANSPs, States and ICAO.

If you require any further information regarding these recommendations, or would like to share information regarding measures taken, please contact Eddian Méndez, Regional Officer Air Traffic Management and Search and Rescue (emendez@icao.int).

Accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.



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