



# COVID-19 information for the maritime industry

**This fact sheet applies to international voyages and maritime crew entering Australia. It does not cover oil rig personnel, private sailing or motor craft wishing to enter Australia, cruise ships or cruise ship crew.**

**Additional immigration, reporting and quarantine requirements apply to maritime crew who have been in or transited through another country.**

**Read this fact sheet in conjunction with state and territory information for maritime crew. Web links to this information are included at the end of the fact sheet.**

## What's new?

This fact sheet was updated on 26 October 2021 to provide information on quarantine requirements and infection prevention measures. This fact sheet will be reviewed as international travel restrictions change.

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- fever or history of fever (for example, night sweats or chills)
- coughing
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- loss or altered sense of smell/taste.

Other reported symptoms include:

- runny or stuffy nose
- headache
- muscle or joint pains
- conjunctivitis
- nausea
- diarrhoea

- vomiting
- loss of appetite
- fatigue.

## What is Australia doing?

**Australia's borders are closed.** Travel to Australia is only available if you are exempt or you have been granted an individual exemption. **Maritime crew, including marine pilots but excluding cruise ship crew, are exempt from these travel restrictions.**

All travellers entering Australia must quarantine in the state or territory in which they disembark unless exempt or they have been granted an exemption. **Quarantine requirements for maritime crew are outlined in this document.**

Australian citizens and permanent residents cannot travel overseas, except for eligible air travellers under the quarantine free travel arrangements between Australia and New Zealand. Australia also has pre-departure testing and mask wearing requirements for international arrivals by air. Check the Department of Health's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for international travellers](#) for more details.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) has a COVID-19 fact sheet available for [non-commercial \(recreational\) vessels](#).

Quarantine advice in this factsheet does not apply to oil rig personnel or cruise ship crew. Please seek current state and territory information for applicable advice.

**Quarantine is enforced under state and territory public health legislation.**

**Many states and territories are quarantining people in designated accommodation at the point of arrival. Some states and territories may allow self-quarantine in certain circumstances. The maritime industry should be aware of the individual state and territory requirements before crew disembark.**

**You must apply for exemptions for crew from the relevant state or territory.**

**Go to [www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts](http://www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts) for contact information or see the links at the end of this document.**

## What vessels have COVID-19 requirements?

- Vessels with crew who have left, or transited through, any restricted location in Australia, or any country other than Australia. Even if the crew have been at sea for more than 14 days, these vessels will still have COVID-19 requirements.
- Vessels that have ill crew or passengers on board.
- Vessels that have suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 on board.

If a vessel has sick crew or a suspected case of COVID-19 on board, a state or territory human biosecurity officer will decide the appropriate action. This may include:

- isolating the crew member

- hospitalising the crew member
- testing the crew member for COVID-19
- pratique being withheld, or conditions being placed on pratique, until the risk is managed.

Vessels cannot load or unload goods or embark or disembark crew until a biosecurity officer or a human biosecurity officer clears the vessel.

### What should commercial vessels do if a crew member is ill?

DAWE is in contact with international vessels. This ensures they understand the requirements and comply with pre-arrival reporting of ill travellers.

As per the normal pre-arrival reporting process, it is a legal requirement to report all crew who have been ill through the Maritime Arrivals Reporting System (MARS). Vessels must answer all mandatory questions on the MARS pre-arrival report form. Any ill crew members should isolate on the vessel in single cabins until a biosecurity officer or human biosecurity officer gives further direction.

DAWE may ask the vessel master for information in addition to the MARS questions. This enables DAWE or a human biosecurity officer to assess the COVID-19 risk.

A biosecurity officer may also meet the vessel to further screen for COVID-19 and other serious infectious diseases among ill crew. Biosecurity officers may use the Traveller with Illness Checklist with the ill crew member, and/or discuss the case with the vessel's doctor.

After a human biosecurity officer has conducted a human health risk assessment of the vessel, they will advise the biosecurity officer on what needs to happen next. The biosecurity officer will tell the vessel master what they need to do next. A biosecurity officer or human biosecurity officer may also direct the management of a suspected case of COVID-19 and contacts of that person.

If a human biosecurity officer recommends testing for COVID-19, in most states and territories the vessel will be directed to berth at a port. Depending on the state or territory and the outcome of the risk assessment, the ill person and other crew may be tested for COVID-19. Testing for COVID-19 can occur either at the port or following transfer to a medical facility. In some states and territories, health professionals may carry out testing at anchorage or through self-collected swabs. Health care workers will not board a vessel at anchorage unless they have appropriate training, and it is safe to do so.

### What if a crew member requires medical attention?

Notifying a biosecurity officer of a sick crew member will not stop urgent medical or ambulance services meeting the vessel. The operator of the vessel is responsible for requesting medical or ambulance services. The operator should tell medical or ambulance services if they suspect someone has COVID-19 or has been in contact with someone with COVID-19. The operator of the vessel should also give the travel history of the ill crew member and the vessel over the past 14 days.

## What are the quarantine requirements for international maritime crew on arrival in Australia?

Maritime crew includes anyone needed to be part of a crew operating or providing services to support the vessel's operation. This can be a commercial or government vessel, but excludes cruise vessels. This includes support staff such as livestock handlers and veterinarians. This does not include oil rig personnel.

1. ***Maritime crew must not join a vessel or travel domestically if they have any signs of illness. They should seek medical assistance.***
2. ***Many states and territories require international maritime crew arriving in Australia (via aircraft) to quarantine for 14 days at the point of arrival.***
  - Some states and territories may allow crew to travel directly to the vessel or require that they quarantine until they join a vessel.
  - It is important to check the requirements with the relevant state or territory before the vessel or the crew arrive in Australia. Links to state and territory requirements are at the bottom of this document.
  - Operators or their delegated agent should apply for exemptions from the relevant state or territory.
  - Crew may be subject to additional biosecurity screening and pre-arrival requirements.
  - After quarantine, crew must travel directly to the vessel or domestic flight and practise physical distancing.

**Quarantine means that when not in transit, crew must remain at the required accommodation. Crew must not attend public places or have visitors until they join their vessel, or their 14-day quarantine period is complete (including any testing requirements).**

**Detailed information is available in the quarantine guidance on the Department of Health's website.**

### 3. ***For maritime crew disembarking a vessel in Australia:***

- It is important to check the requirements with the relevant state and territory before the vessel or the crew arrive in Australia. Links to state and territory requirements are at the bottom of this document.
- No matter how much time a crew member has spent on the vessel, foreign crew disembarking a vessel may travel internationally out of Australia. They can travel by sea or air, provided they go directly to the vessel or airport.
  - If there is (or expected to be) a delay between disembarkation and international departure, foreign crew should **stay on the vessel** or in **quarantine accommodation** until they depart. They should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks while in transit. Most states and territories will not allow crew to travel on domestic flights.

- In some states and territories, crew who live in Australia who have visited a foreign port may **quarantine for 14 days** at home or in other private accommodation. They must go directly to their place of residence in this case.
  - Crew should wear PPE (face mask) while in transit. Note most states and territories will not allow crew to travel on domestic flights.
  - Crew may need to have COVID-19 tests while in quarantine.
- Crew who live in Australia and are returning from a round-trip voyage **are exempt from quarantine requirements** on arrival back into Australia, provided:
  - the vessel does not dock in any restricted domestic locations in Australia, or international ports or offshore installations
  - no new crew or other passengers join. (Some states may allow new crew to board if they have completed the required quarantine and submitted to testing before boarding); and
  - there is no illness on board.
- Crew can apply for an exemption from these requirements directly from the relevant state or territory.

**4. *At all times (even if crew have been at sea for more than 14 days) crew on board a vessel:***

- **are** permitted to undertake vessel functions at the port but **are strongly advised to** wear PPE (face masks) while doing this.
- **are strongly advised to** limit interactions with non-crew such as marine pilots and government officers.
- **are strongly advised to** wear PPE (masks), maintain physical distancing and practice hand hygiene in public spaces on-board the vessel when non-crew are on-board.
- **must** report if they have fever (37.5°C or above), cough, sore throat, tiredness, shortness of breath, night sweats, chills, loss of smell or loss of taste.

In many jurisdictions, PPE, physical distancing, hand hygiene and other infection prevention control protocols are mandatory. Always check the requirements of the relevant state or territory.

**5. *The vessel should check any state and territory PPE requirements or restrictions before arrival. Crew should also follow measures to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 at all times.***

- See the [How can the maritime industry reduce the risk to the crew of commercial vessels?](#) section.

## Does time at sea count toward the quarantine period?

Most states and territories do not count the period spent at sea from the last international port towards the 14-day quarantine period. This is because COVID-19 symptoms can be difficult to detect.

Check the full quarantine measures of the state or territory you are arriving in before travelling.

## Will crew have to quarantine more than once if they travel in Australia?

Crew who are not exempt from quarantine need to complete their 14 days of quarantine on arrival. Crew must quarantine in the city they arrive in for 14 days (or the location specified by the state or territory for that place of arrival), even if they plan to travel elsewhere in Australia. Once crew have completed quarantine, they can travel in Australia in line with state and territory domestic travel restrictions.

As long as crew are well, they should not need to complete a second 14 days of quarantine if they fly to another state or territory. Crew who have completed quarantine in a domestic 'hotspot' (an area in Australia where there are COVID-19 clusters), must transit directly from the place they completed quarantine to the vessel or flight. While transiting, crew should practise physical distancing where practical and comply with relevant state or territory restrictions.

If direct travel does not occur, they may need to complete a second period of quarantine on arrival in another state or territory.

**Always check the relevant state or territory directions at the time of travel. Restrictions and quarantine requirements may change at short notice in response to emerging outbreaks.**

## Can crew travel to another state or territory on arrival in Australia and quarantine there?

No. Quarantine must be in the state or territory of arrival.

Only under extenuating circumstances will a crew member be able to travel to a different state or territory to quarantine. This must be arranged **before** arriving in Australia with both state or territory governments. To do this, an exemption will need to be obtained through state and territory processes before arriving in Australia. Crew granted an exemption to do this should wear face masks and any other PPE required and adhere to infection control measures required for domestic travel while in transit, including on domestic flights.

## Are crew exempt from Australia's Safe Air Travel requirements?

No. Maritime crew travelling to Australia by air must comply with Australia's Safe Air Travel requirements. This includes pre-departure testing and mask-wearing on flights.

More information on the current requirements is available in the Department of Health's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for international travellers](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-international-travellers) ([www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-international-travellers](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-international-travellers)).

## How can industry reduce COVID-19 risk to crew?

COVID-19 can spread from person to person through:

- respiratory droplets
- smaller particles (aerosols)

- direct physical contact with an infected individual
- contaminated objects and surfaces (indirectly).

The exact relative contributions of these routes remain unclear. However, those who have been in close contact with a COVID-19 case are at highest risk. It may also be possible for a vaccinated person to contract and/or transmit COVID-19.

Industry should advise crew to:

- continue to follow infection prevention work instructions at all times
- comply with relevant state or territory requirements, regardless of their vaccination status or the vaccination status of the people they interact with.

This includes using PPE when recommended by infection prevention work instructions or when required by state or territory law.

Vessels should provide PPE to their crew to meet Australian requirements.

The following measures will help reduce the risk of illness on board commercial vessels:

- Crew should practise good hand hygiene and good sneeze/cough hygiene:
  - Wash hands often with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser, before and after eating and after attending the toilet.
  - Cough and sneeze into the elbow or a clean tissue, dispose of the tissue and wash your hands afterwards or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Whenever possible, stay more than 1.5 metres from other people.
- Crew should avoid touching the face (mouth, eyes, and nose).
- Crew should use appropriate PPE if they must be in close contact with an ill person and when required by a state or territory authority.
- When crew are using PPE, it should be fitted and worn correctly.
- Unwell crew should:
  - avoid contact with other crew and isolate themselves in a single cabin with their own bathroom where possible. Deliver meals and leave them at their door.
  - if unable to isolate because they must perform essential duties, unwell crew should stay more than 1.5 metres from other people, wear a face mask, and tell the vessel master, a biosecurity officer and/or a doctor immediately.
- Vessels should ensure crew practise the above precautions.
- Vessels should ensure the vessel is cleaned and disinfected often.
- Consider, where feasible, measures to quarantine and test crew for COVID-19 before embarking the vessel in a foreign port. This will help to reduce the risk of introducing COVID-19 onto the vessel.
- Encourage and support the crew to be fully vaccinated.

## What cleaning and disinfection activities are needed for commercial vessels?

Commercial vessels should follow existing cleaning and disinfection protocols.

The following are general recommendations for cleaning and disinfection practices.

### ***Routine sanitation***

Routine cleaning and disinfection are essential in minimising the spread of infection. It is recommended that all vessels increase routine cleaning and thoroughly clean and disinfect high-touch areas. Frequently touched surfaces include:

- hand rails
- guard rails
- dogs
- hatch combings
- shared navigation equipment
- chair backs and arms.

### ***Response to an ill crew member***

If a crew member is diagnosed with COVID-19, you should contact the local public health unit for guidance on areas to be disinfected and disinfection procedures.

### ***Other considerations***

Baggage and packages:

- Take routine precautions for baggage and packages that accompany ill crew members.

Waste management:

- No additional precautions are recommended for handling standard waste. All crew handling waste should use standard precautions and perform hand hygiene after removing PPE.
- Dispose of and destroy waste according to standard protocols, legislation and regulations.

## **Information for maritime industry staff**

### **How can industry reduce COVID-19 risk to maritime industry staff (for example stevedores, marine pilots)?**

Maritime industry staff should not board vessels unless the vessel has been granted pratique or they are otherwise authorised under Australian law. Staff should also contact their local state or territory health authority and the regional DAWE office to confirm any additional requirements before embarking a vessel.

Maritime industry staff should continue to follow infection prevention work instructions and comply with relevant state and territory requirements and directions. This includes the use of PPE, maintaining physical distancing and practising hand hygiene when recommended by employers or required by state or territory authorities.

PPE must be used appropriately to be effective. Staff should be trained in the correct way to put on, remove and dispose of all PPE. Staff should be regularly provided with guidance material to reference.

There are several factors that minimise the risk of crew transmitting an illness to maritime industry staff. These include health screening, risk profiling and the need for crew to wear PPE when interacting with non-crew.

Encourage and support industry staff to be fully vaccinated. In some states and territories, regular COVID-19 testing and screening programs are also available for maritime industry staff.

Evidence suggests the virus may be spread from two to three days before symptoms develop in infected persons. This means it is possible to catch the virus from someone who seems well. It may also be possible for a vaccinated person to contract and/or transmit COVID-19. That's why it is important to always use COVIDSafe behaviours.

Maritime industry staff should use the following COVIDSafe precautions for **all vessels arriving in Australia**. This applies even if the vessel has been at sea for more than 14 days and/or all workers and crew are vaccinated:

- Practise good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene at all times, including:
  - washing hands often with soap and water, or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser, before and after eating and after having contact with a vessel or its environment or using the toilet
  - coughing and sneezing into the elbow or a clean tissue, disposing of the tissue and using alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Avoid touching their face (mouth, eyes, and nose).
- Avoid any unnecessary face-to-face contact with crew. Where possible, use radio, phone, or email communication. This includes interpretation services, if required.
- Take your own refreshments on board, if required. Do not accept food, drink, or PPE from the crew.
- Clean and disinfect work surfaces on board.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment taken on board after leaving the vessel, including phones, laptops, and hard hats.
- Crew are strongly advised to also wear PPE in public spaces on-board the vessel while non-crew members are on-board. Crew not performing essential work are strongly advised to quarantine when non-crew members are on-board and restrict non-essential interactions with non-crew.
- Stay more than 1.5 metres from other people where possible, especially crew. If close contact with crew is needed, it should be for the shortest time possible. During close contact with crew, maritime industry staff should wear PPE recommended by their workplace's guidance.
- Avoid all contact with vessel crew who are unwell. The risk of passing on the virus is higher if a person is unwell. If unwell crew are essential to the vessel, there must be agreement on how staff can avoid close contact before boarding.
- Comply with any requirements and directions from state and territory authorities.
- If maritime industry staff become aware of any ill person on board, they must immediately contact the local port authority and public health authority. They should ask the vessel master to report the illness in their pre-arrival report.
- If staff have been in contact with people with symptoms of COVID-19 while on board the vessel, staff should tell the biosecurity officer.
- The ill crew member or members should isolate on the vessel in a single cabin until a biosecurity officer or human biosecurity officer gives further direction (unless emergency medical attention is needed).

- All crew should remain on-board while a vessel is berthed in Australia. Crew are allowed to conduct essential vessel functions at the port and are strongly advised to wear PPE while doing so.

### More advice for marine pilots:

- Marine pilots should wear appropriate PPE while on board **any vessel** (even if the vessel has been at sea for more than 14 days and/or the pilot or crew are vaccinated). This is recommended for marine pilots because of the length of time marine pilots can be on board and the extended close contact they may have with crew.
- Marine pilots should make sure they have enough masks for the time they are on board. The number of masks will depend on whether they will be in close contact with essential crew for short or long periods.
- Marine pilots should replace masks each time they become damp or soiled.

More information is available in a separate [fact sheet for marine pilots](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-marine-pilots) ([www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-marine-pilots](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-marine-pilots)).

### New COVID-19 variants

New variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have emerged in some countries and appear to spread more easily than other variants. Maritime industry staff should continue with COVIDSafe precautions for all vessels as stated above. The Australian Government and state and territory authorities may implement more precautions in the future, as more is learnt about these variants.

### Are Australian maritime industry staff (for example stevedores, marine pilots) subject to health screening and quarantine?

Australian maritime industry staff are generally exempt from Australia's quarantine requirements when the guidance in this document and state and territory processes are followed. However, some states and territories may require health screening, including regular surveillance testing, for staff at international ports. This will ensure early detection of infections, especially as people working at international ports are at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19.

For the most current testing criteria, please visit the Department of Health's guidelines ([www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19#how-to-get-tested](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19#how-to-get-tested)).

### What should maritime industry staff (for example stevedores, marine pilots) do if they develop symptoms?

If staff develop COVID-19 symptoms, they should tell their doctor's clinic when they make an appointment that they work at an international port.

They should also:

- Isolate at home or in their accommodation and avoid contact with others and follow all requirements of state or territory authorities.
- Get assessed by a doctor or at a COVID-19 clinic or respiratory clinic and get tested for COVID-19.

- Wash their hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and wash their hands afterwards, or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Inform their supervisor of symptoms.

## Other information

The Department of Health is monitoring the situation in collaboration with the World Health Organization and Australian states and territories.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and National Cabinet meet regularly to consider and revise the restrictions on Australians and industry during the pandemic.

## Who should vessels contact for further advice?

For travel restrictions:

Visit <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

For human biosecurity:

- Contact the Australian National Maritime Centre on **+61 8 8201 6185** (operating hours 6:30am-6:30pm Australian Central Standard Time).

For general COVID-19:

- For the latest advice, information and resources, go to [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).
- Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on **1800 020 080**. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you need translating or interpreting services, call **131 450**.
- If you have concerns about your health, speak to a doctor.

For news and information about COVID-19 vaccines:

- Go to [www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines](http://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines).

For information about state and territory requirements and exemptions:

- Contact the relevant state or territory public health agency. Details are available at [www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts](http://www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts).
- Or visit their websites with information relevant to maritime crew (see over).

**State and territory websites****New South Wales**

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/public-health-orders.aspx#maritime>

**Northern Territory**

[coronavirus.nt.gov.au/chief-health-officer-directions](https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/chief-health-officer-directions)

**Queensland**

[health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/border-restrictions/protocol-for-maritime-crew](https://health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/border-restrictions/protocol-for-maritime-crew)

**South Australia**

[covid-19.sa.gov.au/restrictions-and-responsibilities/travel-restrictions](https://covid-19.sa.gov.au/restrictions-and-responsibilities/travel-restrictions)

**Tasmania**

[coronavirus.tas.gov.au/travellers-and-visitors/maritime-crew](https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au/travellers-and-visitors/maritime-crew)

**Victoria**

[dhhs.vic.gov.au/information-overseas-travellers-coronavirus-disease-covid-19](https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/information-overseas-travellers-coronavirus-disease-covid-19)

**Western Australia**

[wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-travel-and-quarantine](https://wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-travel-and-quarantine)

Shipping Australia Limited also regularly provides updates on COVID-19 requirements at Australian ports:

[shippingaustralia.com.au/covid-19-shipping-update](https://shippingaustralia.com.au/covid-19-shipping-update)