



Press release

Saint-Denis, March 3rd 2020

Coronavirus outbreak Health security measures in force at *Port Reunion*

The Coronavirus outbreak has raised growing concern among harbor workers and the population as to the potential public health hazards posed by passenger traffic at *Port Reunion*. In order to provide clear answers to some of the issues raised, the Prefecture wishes to specify health security measures currently in force in the port area.

1st level of control : More stringent conditions for the delivery of Ship Sanitation Certificates

Under routine procedures, ships calling at *Port Reunion* are only granted entry into the harbour after they have been issued a Ship Sanitation Certificate by competent health authorities. The certificate is delivered after it has been verified that the ship is free of clear sources of contagion, on the basis of detailed information which the vessel has to provide 48 hours prior to arrival.

With a view to reinforcing prevention and control of public health risks, it is now required for all ships entering Reunion island to provide the details of all passengers and crew members activity and travels before they boarded the vessel.

2nd level of control : Cross-checking before entering port

In addition, port authorities and Reunion MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Center) systematically contact inbound vessels shortly before their arrival to check with the captain that there has been no change whatsoever in the sanitary situation on board since filing their health declaration.

Ship masters, who are responsible under international maritime law for ensuring that all measures are taken on board to protect crew and passenger health, must report to authorities any passenger or crew member showing any of the typical Covid-19 symptoms. In the particular case of cruise ships, this information has to be confirmed by the ship's doctor.

There are then 2 scenarios :

- **In the case of a suspected case on board : the ship has to stay at anchor and wait for an inspection to be conducted by health authorities.**

In this particular case, disembarking passengers or crew members is strictly forbidden. Berthing shall not be allowed until it has been ascertained that the ship is free of clear sources of contagion.

If a patient is found to be infected by the virus, the ship shall stay at anchor until a medical evacuation plan is arranged. All other crew members and/or passengers shall then be transferred directly to the hospital (CHU Nord) and placed into quarantine.

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- **If there is no suspected case on board : the ship shall be allowed to berth in port**
Disembarking passengers shall be welcomed by a team of health professionals who will answer their questions and provide them with documentation and information on the virus.

On-board information broadcasts

All merchant ships calling at *Port Reunion* shall broadcast all relevant health information for their crew and passengers attention prior to docking.

All persons on board will be reminded that any individual who has travelled in an area where the virus is actively circulating (China, Singapore, South Korea, Korea, Provinces of Italy such as Lombardy, Venetia and Emilia-Romagna, Iran) over the last 14 days is not allowed to disembark. Any passenger or crew member in that situation shall be accommodated in a contained area of the ship, prior to any harbor worker's boarding and for the entire duration of the call at Port Réunion.

All above-mentioned measures are taken in application of the World Health Organisation's and the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control's recommendations. They are based on expertise, common sense and scientific consensus. It should be kept in mind that:

- Temperature checks of disembarking passengers are ineffective. Infected people showing no symptoms and therefore unaware that they are carrying the virus will go undetected. Their sense of physical health could even cause them to be less careful.
- No effective screening test have been developed to diagnose infected but symptom-free patients. It is therefore irrelevant to enforce systematic testing.

At this stage of the epidemic, the government strategy is to inform visitors and citizens on how to react in case of suspected infection :

- Do not consult your regular doctor or go to the hospital's Emergency Room ;
- Contact Emergency Medical Assistance Services (SAMU) if you show any symptoms of the disease ;
- Avoid contact with other people.

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