

Basic Guidelines for dealing with occurrence of COVID-19 in fisheries and continuing fishery operations

- This document is intended to provide the basic guidelines for continuing fishery operations while preventing the spread of COVID-19 infection in cooperation with Public Health Centers, in the event that one of employees of a fishery operator (including crew members and fishers) is infected with COVID-19. The guidelines were formulated based on the knowledge available up to May 8, 2020, and to be updated with new knowledge available.

(Note) Public Health Center

The Public Health Center is a core facility that supports the health of local citizens. It offers daily healthcare support for the citizens such as health consultation and prevention against infectious disease. As of April 2020, there are 469 Public Health Centers within Japan.

- The main infection routes of COVID-19 are considered to be droplet infection and direct contact infection. As of April 1, 2020, we have no reports of infection cases via food (including fresh raw seafood). As far as general hygienic control to prevent food poisoning (including monitoring physical conditions of food handlers, frequent hand washing, disinfection of fingers with alcohol, observance of cough etiquette, etc.) is practiced at each stage of manufacturing, distribution, cooking, sales, there is no need to worry too much.
- To effectively prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection while sustainably maintaining socio-economic activities, fishery operators need to take voluntary efforts to prevent COVID-19 infection. We would like to ask all fishery operators to take appropriate measures to prevent the spread of infection, including the avoidance of “Three Cs” described later, based on the characteristics of the industry.

Chapter 1. Thorough implementation of COVID-19 preventive measures

- The main infection routes of COVID-19 are considered to be droplet infection and direct contact infection. Under a certain environment, such as close-range conversations with many people in a confined and enclosed space, there is a risk of infection even without coughing or sneezing. A potential risk of infection from a person without symptoms is also pointed out.

From above findings, keeping physical distance between people (social distancing) is supposed to substantially reduce the risk of infection. In particular, we recommend avoiding (1) Confined and enclosed spaces with poor ventilation, (2) Crowded places with many people nearby, and (3) Close-contact settings, especially where people have close-range conversations (hereinafter, collectively “Three Cs”), which pose high risk of spreading infection.

- A fishery operator should ask his/her crew members to take the following infection prevention actions.

- (A) Measure and record body temperature.
- (B) Report to the fishery operator and strictly stay at home if the crew member falls under one of the followings.
 - (a) The crew member has a fever.
 - (b) The crew member has close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.
 - (c) The crew member has close contact, within the past 14 days, with a person who lived or traveled from the countries or areas where Japanese government restricts the entry to Japan or requests a certain quarantine period after entry.
- (C) If the crew member falls under any of the following, immediately report to the fishery operator and consult with the Public Health Center.
 - (a) The crew member has strong symptoms, such as respiratory difficulty (dyspnea), strong fatigue (lassitude), or high fever.
 - (b) The crew member is prone to serious illness (*) and has relatively mild cold symptoms, such as fever and cough.
 - * (A senior citizen or person who has underlying diseases, such as diabetes, heart failure, respiratory diseases (COPD, etc.), undergoes dialysis, uses immunosuppressant and anti-cancer drugs.)
 - (c) The crew member has relatively mild cold symptoms, such as fever or cough, for a prolonged period.

Please consult with the Public Health Center if the crew member's symptoms persist for four days or more. Symptoms may vary from person to person. So, if the crew member has a strong symptom, please consult with the Public Health Center immediately. The same applies to those who need to continue to take antipyretic.
 - (d) Just to be safe, pregnant women with relatively mild cold symptoms such as fever and cough should contact the Public Health Center as soon as possible, same as those who are prone to serious illness.

- Each fisher should wear a mask and take precautionary measures, such as trying to maintain an appropriate distance from others with a minimum distance of two meters (at least one meter).
- Regardless in office or on board, each fisher should take necessary infection prevention measures to avoid “Three Cs”, such as appropriate ventilation and spacing between people.
- A fishery operator should develop an appropriate system to promptly collect information, such as the results of crew member's diagnosis and COVID-19 testing.
- Each fisher should thoroughly implement the following infection prevention measures,

including hand washing.

- (A) Wash hands and disinfect fingers in the office and on board.
- (B) Wear a mask and thoroughly observe cough etiquette.
- (C) In addition to regular cleaning, wipe and clean the areas frequently touched by people, such as ship navigation equipment, door knobs, switches, stair handrails, tables, chairs, toilet flushing levers, and toilet seats, by using water and detergent.

- Fishery operators and fishery-related organizations are asked to carry out voluntary infection prevention measures, such as formulating industry-based guidelines.

Chapter 2. Practices before departure and during voyage

(1) Checkup and provision of equipment on board

- (A) Understand the basic information about the COVID-19 prevention measures and communicate the information with all crew members.
- (B) Double check the onboard stock of medicines and medical equipment such as thermometers.
- (C) Try to prepare the items required for the COVID-19 prevention measures (including masks, antiseptic solution, vinyl gloves, etc.) as much as possible, in addition to the regular onboard supplies.

(2) Health check before departure

- (A) Measure the body temperature of all crew members before the departure and interview their physical conditions. Also, interview physical conditions of their family members living together. If possible, it is desirable that a manager or designated person measure the body temperature of all crew members by using a non-contact thermometer and conduct interview.

(B) If any crew member or his/her family member falls under any of the following, prohibit the boarding of the said crew member and make him/her stay at home.

- (a) The crew member has a fever.
- (b) The crew member has close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- (c) The crew member has close contact, within the past 14 days, with a person who lived or traveled from the countries or areas where Japanese government restricts the entry to Japan or requests a certain quarantine period after entry.
- (d) If the crew member falls under any of the following, immediately make him/her consult with the Public Health Center and report the results to the fishery operator.

- The crew member has strong symptoms such as respiratory difficulty (dyspnea), strong

fatigue (lassitude), or high fever.

- The crew member is prone to serious illness (*) and has relatively mild cold symptoms such as fever and cough.

* (A senior citizen or a person who has underlying diseases, such as diabetes, heart failure, respiratory diseases (COPD, etc.), undergoes dialysis, uses immunosuppressant and anti-cancer drugs.)

- The crew member has relatively mild cold symptoms, such as fever or cough, for a prolonged period.

Please consult with the Public Health Center if the crew member's symptoms persist for four days or more. Symptoms may vary from person to person. So, if the crew member has a strong symptom, please consult with the Public Health Center immediately. The same applies to those who need to continue to take antipyretic.

- Just to be safe, pregnant women with relatively mild cold symptoms such as fever and cough should contact the Public Health Center as soon as possible, same as those who are prone to serious illness.
- In case of children, it is desirable to seek medical advice from a pediatrician. Please consult with their pediatric doctor by telephone or other ways.

(C) If an infection of COVID-19 is confirmed with a crew member, or if the Public Health Center identifies a crew member as a Close Contact Person, follow the instructions of the Public Health Center and take necessary measures to prevent further infection, including prohibition of onboarding of the said crew member, until the crew member is diagnosed as appropriate for boarding.

[Reference]

“A Close Contact Person” is a person who comes into contact with a patient (confirmed case) within the potentially infectious period and falls under the following.

- A person who lived with a patient (confirmed case) or had contact with him/her for a long time (including in a car, aircraft, etc.)
- A person who examined, nursed, or cared a patient (confirmed case) without appropriate infection protection
- A person who was likely to have directly contact with pollutants such as airway secretions or body fluids of a patient (confirmed case)
- Any others who have contacted a patient (confirmed case) for 15 minutes or more without taking the necessary infection-prevention measures, at a distance such that they could touch him/her with their hand (one meter, as a rough guide). They will be comprehensively determined of their potential infection from individual situations such as surrounding environment and contact conditions.

(3) Practices during voyage

(A) Fishing vessels operating in waters surrounding Japan

- (a) Thoroughly inform all crew members to implement the infection prevention measures, such as hand washing, disinfection of fingers with alcohol, and observance of cough etiquette.

Also, throughout the voyage, regularly check crew members' physical conditions by means of measuring body temperature.

(b) If any crew member has a symptom such as fever, immediately take measures to prevent the spread of infection, such as avoiding contact with other crew members as much as possible. Also, strengthen the health monitoring practice, such as measuring body temperature of other crew members every day.

(c) If any crew member falls under any of the following, immediately consult with the Public Health Center at the port of registration or the nearest port, report the details of symptoms, such as date of occurrence and current status, and ask instructions regarding future action plan, patient transportation method/destination, and infection prevention measures to other crew members.

- The crew member has strong symptoms such as respiratory difficulty (dyspnea), strong fatigue (lassitude), or high fever.

- The crew member is prone to serious illness (*) and has relatively mild cold symptoms such as fever and cough.

* (A senior citizen or a person who has underlying diseases, such as diabetes, heart failure, respiratory diseases (COPD, etc.), undergoes dialysis, uses immunosuppressant and anti-cancer drugs.)

- The crew member has a relatively mild cold symptoms, such as fever or cough, for a prolonged period.

Please consult with the Public Health Center if the crew member's symptoms persist for four days or more. Symptoms may vary from person to person. So, if the crew member has a strong symptom, please consult with the Public Health Center immediately. The same applies to those who need to continue to take antipyretic.

- Just to be safe, pregnant women with relatively mild cold symptoms such as fever and cough should contact the Public Health Center as soon as possible, same as those who are prone to serious illness.

(d) Call at the port of registration or the nearest port, disembark the crew member with the above (c) symptoms, and implement the measures based on the instructions from the Public Health Center.

(e) Until the infected crew member disembarks, continue implementing the measures to prevent infection to other crew members, such as disinfection and cleaning the inside of the ship according to the instructions from the Public Health Center.

(B) Fishing vessels operating in distant waters

In principle, follow the same instructions described in above (A) if a crew member has a symptom of suspected COVID-19 infection within a distant-waters fishing vessel. In that case, promptly take measures to avoid contact with other crew members and immediately report to the Fisheries Agency of Japan through the belonging fisheries cooperative.

When you return to Japan, please consult the Public Health Center for instructions.

If you want to call at the nearest foreign port, immediately start the necessary port-call procedures through your agent. If the port-call is refused, or is expected to be refused, please immediately report to the Fisheries Agency of Japan through your belonging fisheries cooperative to discuss the matter.

Chapter 3. Dealing with COVID-19 patient and Close Contact Person

(1) Occurrence of COVID-19 cases

If occurrence of COVID-19 cases is detected in the office or on board, a fishery operator should immediately report the cases to the Public Health Center and receive instructions from the center. The fishery operator should also inform his/her crew members of the detected cases, and once again ensure strict implementation of infection prevention measures described in Chapter 1.

(2) Identification of Close Contact Person

- When a patient is identified by a doctor's notification, under the current measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infections, the Public Health Center conducts an active epidemiological investigation and requests Close Contact Persons to observe their health and refrain from going out, based on the Infectious Diseases Control Law.

Accordingly, the fishery operator cooperates with the Public Health Center for investigation and promptly take measures to prevent the spread of infection, such as self-quarantine of Close Contact Persons.

- We must note that the local governments are requested, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and experts, to conduct an active epidemiological investigation to identify Close Contact Persons, observe their health, request them to impose self-quarantine, as well as exactly figure out the scale of outbreak and take appropriate countermeasures against infection.

(3) Dealing with Close Contact Person

(A) A fishery operator must stop the attendance of the crew member identified as a Close Contact Person at work for 14 days and carry out the crew member's health observations.

(B) A fishery operator must inform the Close Contact Person of contact information of the

Public Health Center.

(C) If a crew member identified as a Close Contact Person has fever or respiratory symptom (including mild cases), the crew member must contact the Public Health Center and receive a COVID-19 test. The fishery operator is informed of the crew member's testing results.

(4) Report to the Fisheries Agency of Japan

A fishery operator should immediately report to the Fisheries Agency of Japan through its belonging fisheries cooperative, if he/she discovers an infection on board or difficulties in operation due to such infection.

Chapter 4. Cleaning of the inside of the ship and equipment

(A) As deemed necessary by the Public Health Center, a fishery operator must disinfect the areas where the infected person had worked. The areas include, but not limited to, cabin, dining room, wheelhouse, engine room, kitchen, warehouse (including refrigerator and freezer, the same applies hereinafter), and office.

(B) It is desirable to disinfect according to the instructions of the Public Health Center. However, if it is urgently needed and a fishery operator must conduct disinfection by himself/herself, focus on the areas where frequently touched by hands and fingers, such as door knobs, switches, and stair handrails, among the areas where the infected person had worked.

The areas include, but not limited to, cabin, dining room, wheelhouse, engine room, kitchen, warehouse, and office. Disinfect such areas by wiping off with alcohol (ethanol or isopropanol) (70%). If alcohol (ethanol or isopropanol) (70%) is not available, use ethanol (60% level) or sodium hypochlorite (0.05% or more).

(C) As far as general hygienic control is practiced, it is not necessary to take additional measures such as suspending fishery operations and discarding the catch.

Chapter 5. Continuation of operations

To continue operations after identification of a fisher or a crew member infected with COVID-19, a fishery operator must consider the following operational system and ensure the necessary preparations in advance.

(A) Nomination of persons in charge of COVID-19 measures on board

(B) Securing and arranging masks, disinfectant, vinyl gloves, creation of disinfection procedures, and selection of disinfection operators

(C) Securing replacement crew personnel