

The purpose of the TP&I News is to provide the latest news for the shipowners, charterers, as well as any other maritime interests around the globe. Each issue of TP&I News will include a focused review section of several articles on a topic of current interest.¹

1. COVID-19 and the Port of Puerto Rico

1.1. Vessel arrival requirements

A COVID-19 questionnaire is required by the Puerto Rico Department of Health and US Customs to be completed by each crewmember before arrival. Local agents will provide the questionnaire. I-418 US CBP Crew List Form also should be completed for the signing on date of all crew arriving on board.

Pilots boarding a ship are still required by CDC to maintain social distancing with ship crew.

In case of a positive Covid-19 crewmember, the ship must comply with 42 C.F.R. § 71.21 (Report of Illness or Death) requiring the Master of a ship destined for a U.S. port to immediately report to the Center of Disease Control quarantine station at the nearest port, or at the port at which the ship will arrive, the occurrence, on board, of any death or any ill person among passengers or crew (including those who have disembarked or have been removed) during the 15-day period preceding the date of expected arrival or during the period since departure from a U.S. port (whichever period of time is shorter).

1.2. Port operations

Ships arriving with crewmembers presenting COVID-19 symptoms are usually isolated and PCR Tests are required for all crewmembers. Cargo operations can proceed if measures minimizing contact between crewmembers and stevedores and other personnel are feasible to the satisfaction of local and US authorities.



During scheduled and unscheduled inspections, the USCG is vigilant on the ship's compliance with COVID-19 regulations including the requirement to use face masks in enclosed spaces. USCG safety bulletins on COVID-19 are applicable to Puerto Rico and are enforced by the USCG boarding officers when reviewing ship's compliance with safety manuals and protocols.

Arriving ships must inform, USCG, US Customs, CDC, the Puerto Rico Ports Authority, and the Puerto Rico Department of Health about any symptomatic, or COVID-19 positive, crewmember. Requirements to have the crewmembers quarantined may occur.

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1.3. Medical treatment for COVID and non-COVID issues

Non-Covid patients are customarily disembarked by agents in Puerto Rico for medical examinations and hospital treatment as needed. In cases of COVID-19 positive crewmembers with minor symptoms, or asymptomatic, the Puerto Rico and US authorities may require that they remain on board the vessel in isolation. If they are in serious or critical condition, they will be allowed to be disembarked to receive medical care. USCG will allow ship deviation or air medical evacuation to Puerto Rico of Covid-19 positive crewmembers in case of serious or critical medical condition. In these cases, the USCG acts with close involvement of the CDC and can be hesitant to allow disembarkation in cases of crewmembers with symptoms that they believe can be handled on board.

1.4. Crew change and COVID-19 vaccination requirements

Local Health authorities have discontinued most travel restrictions and testing requirements for arriving or departing passengers. Nevertheless, it has remained as a local maritime industry practice to obtain negative COVID-19 PCR tests before repatriation and in accordance with the current repatriation requirements in each particular country. Vaccination face mask requirements are subject to constant review and government requirements can change depending on variations and increases in COVID-19 positivity rates. Members should always seek updated advice on vaccination and other requirements through their port agents.

1.5. Courts and COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant delays in local civil courts, as well as in the US District Court. Cases are mostly being handled via remote platforms such as Zoom, Skype and Microsoft Teams. Criminal cases and special civil proceedings such as Injunction cases, will still be conducted expeditiously. Some cases filed during 2021 are now being scheduled for trial to take place during 2023. No Covid-19 time-bar extensions are currently in place in Puerto Rico.

We thank to our correspondent, Edgardo A. Vega López, Jimenez, Graffam and Lausell, for providing this information.

2. Shipping industry to remove the Indian Ocean High Risk Area

On 1 January 2023 the Indian Ocean High Risk Area (HRA) for piracy will be removed. The removal of the HRA reflects a significantly improved piracy situation in the region, but voyage preparation, threat and risk assessment are essential when following Best Management Practice 5 (BMP5).

The IMO has been informed of the decision made by International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), BIMCO, International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA), INTERCARGO, INTERTANKO and Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF).



Source: International Chamber of Shipping



3. Türkiye hikes strait transit fees to \$4 per tonnage

Türkiye has increased the transit fee it charges commercial ships to use the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, in accordance with the rights granted to it by the Montreux Convention.

The passage fee increased from around \$0.8 dollars to \$4 per tonne, and the new regulation will enter into force on October 7, 2022.

Following the rights provided by the Montreux Convention, Türkiye has the right to charge ships passing through its straits, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, for service costs, including lighthouses, emergency preparations, and medical services. Straits of Türkiye present a shorter cargo route for big volumes of goods transferred through the regions.



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