



ICAO Council endorses new updates to COVID-19 global aviation recovery guidelines

For immediate release

Montréal, 10 November 2020 – The ICAO Council endorsed new updates yesterday to its Aviation Recovery Task Force’s (CART’s) ‘Take-off’ Guidelines for international air transport.

The new guidelines provide recommendations for countries to consider adopting per their current local medical status, and on specific priorities including general hygiene, masks and face coverings, health screening and declarations, air passengers with reduced mobility, and the mental health and well-being of aviation workers and passengers.

They also reacknowledge the sovereignty and authority of each country over its national pandemic recovery priorities, including with respect to the evaluation and use of passenger testing to help alleviate quarantine measures and reconnect destinations globally.

“Countries are urged to follow this updated guidance to align their measures, while upholding each State’s prerogative to implement additional and/or alternative mitigation measures in accordance with their specific needs and circumstances,” underscored ICAO Council President Salvatore Sciacchitano.

“The speed of the evolving global situation requires timely and targeted guidance to effectively support States in their efforts to contain the pandemic while pursuing the restart and recovery of aviation,” he emphasized. “This makes clear the critical importance of global and regional coordination on setting out mutually accepted measures.”

The Chair of the Recovery Task Force, Estanislao Esono Anguesomo of Equatorial Guinea, noted that the latest task force updates focus “primarily on the evolving technological and medical advancements in the fight against COVID-19. They incorporate the continuous feedback ICAO is receiving from national authorities, international organizations including the World Health and Tourism Organizations (WHO/UNWTO), as well as regional organizations and industry.”

The high-level cover document for the new guidelines emphasizes that a combination of measures, coordinated between governments and industry, will be essential to the re-establishment of public confidence in air travel. It points out this is the only sustainable solution to overcome the economic and financial situation that the sector currently faces.

ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu welcomed this viewpoint, and hoped that the latest global guidance outcomes from the countries, UN agencies, industry groups and regional organizations which are contributing to the CART would help get passengers flying again.

“The ICAO Secretariat is providing critical global monitoring, guidance, and coordination resources to help countries implement the CART recommendations,” she commented, “and we’ve been encouraged by recent progress on the establishment of new international travel and health corridors between specific destinations. These are realizing some important and prudent first steps toward increased traveller confidence and sectoral recovery.”

New guideline considerations

Testing and cross border risk management measures

The first edition of the CART Take-off Guidelines document noted that rapid COVID-19 tests available at the time were not recommended due to their relatively low level of efficacy.

Since then, testing technology continues to improve rapidly. In addition, health authorities have gained a greater understanding of how the COVID-19 virus is transmitted and how the effective use of certain tests might contribute to reducing the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission.

Furthermore, it was recognized that introducing testing could — if properly implemented in States that assess it as appropriate for their situation — reduce reliance on measures such as quarantines that restrict air travel or the movement of persons arriving in a country, and which evidence suggests is a disincentive to several important categories of travel.

While testing is not universally recommended by public health authorities as a routine health screening method, it has been implemented by some States for this purpose. CART, therefore, tasked the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) to study available testing methods and advise CART on what factors States could consider regarding testing, as well as guidance on how to implement testing as part of an overall risk management strategy should they wish to do so.

CART therefore recommends that States contemplating testing should apply the approach outlined in the *ICAO Manual on Testing and Cross Border Risk Management Measures* (currently under final review by WHO, with expected publication date 16 November). If doing so, States are also encouraged to consider affordable testing means to minimize travel costs for passengers.

The ICAO Manual provides assessment tools that States can use to evaluate and implement testing and related measures as part of their decision-making process, as well as a guideline on how to assess different mitigation strategies and on how they can contribute to public health risk management.

To support States in developing a risk assessment framework that is adapted to sovereign considerations and integrates with existing national frameworks, CAPSCA also developed a generic decision-making tool which can be used to determine the inherent and residual risk level of transporting potentially infectious passengers.

Each State will need to conduct its own assessment and is encouraged to use the processes outlined in the Manual as the basis for its assessment. Risk tolerance varies between States and depends on many factors. This has an influence on the amount of residual risk a State can accept. The determination of such level, as well as the policies and measures to mitigate the risk, is not universal and is within specific priorities and authority of each individual State.

The Manual has been developed using the most recent information available. The urgency, rapid development, and observed consequences of the current scenario require an expedited approach to modifying the Manual. Consequently, regular updates will be required as the evidence evolves and as technology advances. Data-driven adjustments to the guidance will be made as the situation evolves.

Masks and Public Hygiene guidelines

The guidance on face coverings and medical masks has been updated to allow passengers to travel that cannot tolerate a face covering or medical mask, such as young children or individuals with physical disabilities, respiratory or other medical conditions. It also includes a new section on general hygiene to be followed at airports and on-board aircraft.

Public Health Corridors (PHCs)

When considering the guidance contained in the updated Take-off Guideline document and the *ICAO Manual on Testing and Cross Border Risk Management Measures*, States are strongly encouraged to collaborate with each other regarding the PHC implementation.

A PHC is formed when two or more States agree to recognize the public health mitigation measures each has implemented on one or more routes between their States. To enable such mutual recognition, States are strongly encouraged to actively share information with other States and enter into bilateral or multilateral discussions with each other to implement PHCs in a harmonized manner.

To facilitate implementation of PHCs, the ICAO Implementation Package on Establishing a PHC will be available to States on 16 November 2020.

Aviation safety-related measures

As States work to restart air travel, a large proportion of the global fleet, air crew, airport operations staff, and air traffic controllers that have been inactive for prolonged periods will need to be reactivated and retrained, where appropriate.

To ensure a safe restart, States should take the necessary steps to mitigate the safety risks associated with such reactivation.

States that have filed differences for temporary departures from ICAO Standards under the COVID-19 Contingency Related Differences (CCRD), or that have granted other COVID-19-related regulatory alleviation, are reminded that these differences and alleviations were intended to be temporary in nature.

Prolonged differences and alleviations, such as those related to personnel certification and licensing, could result in an elevated operational safety risk. States should, therefore, put in place the necessary measures to manage those risks and should not extend alleviations (both core and extended CCRDs) beyond 31 March 2021.

States are encouraged to facilitate access to medical and training facilities, including flight simulation training devices used for flight crew to maintain their recency of experience and proficiency.

States also are strongly encouraged to refer their operators to the ICAO Operational Safety Measures website, where links to guidance documents developed by ICAO, ACI, IATA, the ICCAIA, and others, are available.



Resources for Editors

[ICAO's COVID-19 Portal](#)
[Health and Safety Advice](#)
[Operational Measures](#)
[Facilitation Measures](#)
[Economic Analysis and Forecasts](#)

About ICAO

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created by governments in 1944 to support their diplomacy on international air transport matters. Since that time, countries have adopted over 12,000 standards and practices through ICAO which help to align their national regulations relevant to aviation safety, security, efficiency, capacity and environmental protection, enabling a truly global network to be realized. ICAO forums also provide opportunities for advice and advocacy to be shared with government decision-makers by industry groups, civil society NGOs, and other officially recognized air transport stakeholders.

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