

ICS launches new guidance for seafarers and shipowners to navigate ongoing pandemic challenges

London, Monday 13 September – On the first day of London International Shipping Week, the International Chamber of Shipping has published new and updated guidance to protect seafarers and shipowners against the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

The free resources include guidance on vaccinations, manning agents, mental health issues, and shore leave.

Despite [noted improvements](#) in rates of vaccination for seafarers, only 25% are fully vaccinated, and most are not in line to receive a vaccine through their national programmes until at least 2022. Meanwhile, severe travel restrictions across the world have led to seafarers being stranded on board, some for more than 18 months. This deterrent to existing workers and potential new recruits has stretched global supply chains to breaking point, with shortages of key goods reported, and shipping costs approaching all-time highs.

Now, ICS has worked with a coalition of industry partners to produce new and updated guidance, which aims to empower seafarers and shipowners with the knowledge to protect and support themselves through the next stage of the pandemic.

The guides were produced in association with International Maritime Health Association, INTERTANKO, International Transport Worker Federation (ITF), European Community Shipowners' Associations (ESCA), Intercargo, InterManager, International Association of Ports and Harbors, International Christian Maritime Association, International Marine Contractors Association, International Maritime Employers' Council Ltd., Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA), and the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC).

Guy Platten, Secretary General of the International Chamber of Shipping, commented:

"Throughout the pandemic, the shipping industry has time and again come together to support its own.

"The sector has been more united and effective in its response to the pandemic than most sectors. But we must ensure that we maintain this spirit of collaboration and all pull together to anticipate and meet the needs of the world's hidden key workers – seafarers.

"As the Delta variant threatens the global south, a part of the world that supplies nearly half of the seafarer workforce, with greater urgency, it is critical that seafarers and shipowners have the resources needed to navigate the next stage of the pandemic."

The new seafarer guides address acute issues faced by seafarers during the pandemic.

Seafarers are required by the nature of their job to travel across the world to locations which have different levels of COVID-19 infections. *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccination for*

Seafarers and Shipping Companies: A Practical Guide answers pressing frequently asked questions in an approachable and informed way.

A reality of the pandemic is that shore leave has been heavily impacted and crews have been forced to remain on board their ships for extended periods without relief. *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Seafarer Shore-Leave Principles* sets out principles for providing shore leave while navigating draconian travel restrictions across the globe.

Recruiting for non-existent jobs at sea is on the rise, as dubious manning agents take advantage of the current environment. Losing seafarers to poor manning experiences is something that must therefore be stamped out. *Manning Agency Guidelines* was produced to help shipping companies choose reputable manning agencies and to ensure that seafarers are recruited in line with the requirements of the ILO.

Tragically, seafarers have suffered more from mental health struggles during the crew change crisis. The pandemic has also increased job stress that can impact seafarers' mental health, including family pressures and limited shore leave. *Handling a Mental Health Crisis or Emergency and Spotting Suicidal Behaviour in Seafarers* lays tools out for companies to create a caring on-board culture to address mental health matters.

Platten concluded:

"Seafarers have made enormous personal sacrifice over the last 18 months. While admirable, it has put enormous pressure both on them as individuals and on the global supply chain. ICS and our partners hope that our new guidance will provide protection and assurance to seafarers around the world, and help improve their experience on board and on shore."

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Notes to Editors:

About ICS

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) is the principal international trade association for merchant shipowners and operators, representing all sectors and trades and over 80% of the world merchant fleet.

The published guides are:

- *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccination for Seafarers and Shipping Companies: A Practical Guide - Your Questions Answered* ([LINK](#))
 - It was created in collaboration with International Maritime Health Association, INTERTANKO, and International Transport Worker Federation (ITF).

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Seafarer Shore - Leave Principles (LINK)
 - This guide was supported by European Community Shipowners' Associations (ESCA), Intercargo, InterManager, International Association of Ports and Harbors, International Christian Maritime Association, International Marine Contractors Association, International Maritime Employers' Council Ltd. and INTERTANKO.
- Manning Agency Guidelines (LINK)
 - It was produced in partnership with Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA), ECS, and The International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC).
- Handling a Mental Health Crisis or Emergency and Spotting Suicidal Behaviour in Seafarers (LINK)

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