



Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) 01-20
March 29, 2020

**Medical Capability Requirements for
Foreign Passenger Vessels Impacted by the Novel Coronavirus**

This MSIB provides guidance to foreign passenger vessels located in the Seventh District Area of Responsibility (AOR) impacted by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Due to the outbreak of respiratory illness caused by COVID-19 and its impact on mariners and vessel operations, an increased number of foreign passenger vessels have required medical evacuations of both stable and critically-ill persons, including those with an influenza-like illness (ILI) such as COVID-19. Although the Coast Guard continues to prioritize the safety of life at sea and the safety of U.S. ports and waterways, the recent increase in medical consultations (MEDICOs), ultimately resulting in medical evacuations (MEDEVACs), has placed, and is expected to increase, strains on local medical resources throughout the Seventh District AOR. Medical facilities in the Port of Miami, for example, are no longer accepting MEDEVAC patients due to limited hospital capacity and it is expected that neighboring counties will follow suit.

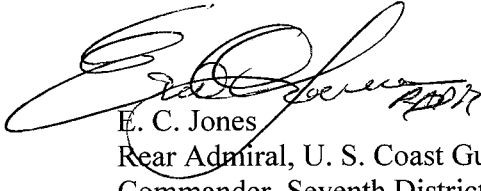
The demand for medical services across the Seventh District AOR is leading to the establishment of improvised field hospitals, whose capacities for dealing with critical patients is unproven at this time. It must be considered that a potential evacuee has better access to comfortable surroundings and medical staff on board the foreign passenger vessel where care is already being provided. To ensure the safety of persons on board and mitigate the potential of overwhelming local medical resources, all vessels operating within the Seventh District AOR with more than 50 persons on board should increase their medical capabilities, personnel and equipment in order to care for individuals with ILIs for a indefinite period of time. This is necessary as shore-side medical facilities may reach full capacity and lose the ability to accept and effectively treat additional critically-ill patients.

To facilitate safe and effective MEDEVACs of those exhibiting ILI, vessels requesting such evacuations shall communicate with either the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) Miami or JRCC San Juan to consult with a Coast Guard flight surgeon who will determine medical needs for each concerned crew member. Only after such consultation, with concurrence by the Coast Guard Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (CG SMC) and confirmed availability of a hospital facility, will MEDEVAC be considered. If a MEDEVAC is deemed necessary by the Coast Guard flight surgeon, the vessel owner or operator will be required to secure commercial transportation ashore, confirm the availability of medical services with local medical facilities, and coordinate a private ambulance prior to the CG SMC authorizing the evacuation.

Foreign flagged vessels that loiter beyond U.S. territorial seas, particularly those registered to The Bahamas, that require a MEDEVAC to a shoreside facility should seek flag state support prior to seeking support from the limited facilities in the U.S.

Vessels within U.S. territorial seas have an on-going requirement to immediately report hazardous conditions to the cognizant Captain of the Port (COTP), including ill persons and fatalities, in accordance with 33 CFR § 160.216 and MSIB 06-20. Additionally, vessels should report the number and condition of any and all ill persons on board to the cognizant COTP daily. Vessels or masters that do not immediately report illness or death among onboard personnel may be in violation of 33 CFR § 160.216, and could be subject to civil penalties or criminal prosecution.

These requirements are effective immediately and are necessary to facilitate navigation and vessel safety, protection of the marine environment, and the safety and security of crew, vessels, ports, and waterways with the Seventh District AOR.



E. C. Jones
Rear Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commander, Seventh District