

COVID-19 - Norwegian protocols regarding crew change on ships

This document outlines Norwegian protocols regarding crew change on ships for foreign nationals signing on or off in Norway.

The document was prepared by the Norwegian Maritime Authority.

The reader should pay attention to the rapidly changing nature of the situation and relevant regulations. Referenced online resources in the document should be consulted for up to date information.

The Norwegian Maritime Authority assesses current regulations to be in line with the *IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.14 Recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic*

Yours faithfully,

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Revision	Published	Changes
1	15.6.2020	
2	08.10.2020	Update after changes in national legislation (covid-19-regulation) in effect 14.9.2020.
3	30.10.2020	Update after changes in national legislation (covid-19-regulation) in effect 27.10.20 and 30.10.20.
4	19.11.2020	Update after changes in national legislation (covid-19-regulation) in effect 14.11.2020.

1 Quarantine requirements

The Norwegian quarantine regulations differ between quarantine after international travel and quarantine after close contact/proximity of a confirmed case.

You can find information about rules and advice from the Norwegian Government regarding international travels (In English) here: <https://www.helsenorge.no/en/coronavirus/international-travels/>

Regulations described below regarding quarantine are applicable to seafarers signing on/off via mainland Norway. There are separate regulations for the Svalbard and Jan Mayen islands.

The general rule is that all persons not residing in Norway that enter the country from an area (“red area”) subject to quarantine should undergo 10 days of quarantine. Quarantine must be completed at a dedicated quarantine hotel or, in the case of work travellers, an employer or client may arrange suitable accommodation in a single room or single cabin. See paragraph 2.2 in this document.

A complete list of areas that are subject to quarantine is available in appendix A to the COVID-19-regulations: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/> (only available in Norwegian).

NIPH Map of Nordic region/Europe with status for entry quarantine (In English):

<https://www.fhi.no/en/op/novel-coronavirus-facts-advice/facts-and-general-advice/travel-advice-COVID19/>

Any period spent outside areas subject to quarantine immediately before entering Norway may be subtracted from the quarantine period.

All persons that have been in *close contact* with a person with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 must be in quarantine for 10 days. More information on requirements and protocols is available at helsenorge.no/coronavirus/quarantine-and-isolation.

Exemption from quarantine after *close contact* may only be granted to safeguard life and health and is generally not applicable to seafarers.

Legal references (in Norwegian):

- <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§4>
- <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§5>
- <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§6e>.

1.1 Signing on in Norway after international trip - Entry restrictions - visa

Seafarers joining or leaving a vessel and holding seaman’s identity card issued in accordance with ILO Convention No. 108 or ILO Convention No. 185, are exempt from visa requirements and entry restrictions. In addition, there is a bilateral agreement for Philippine nationals.

Up to 15 days of transit is accepted (awaiting vessel or transport).

Legal references (mostly in Norwegian):

- Regulation entry restriction for foreign nationals out of concern for public health, Section 3 j)
- [Interim Act relating to entry restrictions for foreign nationals out of concern for public health](#)
- https://www.udiregelverk.no/rettskilder/udi-retningslinjer/udi-2020-009/#2.4.2.4_Sj%C3%B8folk

1.2 Certificate of negative COVID-19 test

Foreign nationals arriving in Norway from a region subject to a quarantine obligation (red countries) must, with certain exceptions, present a certificate confirming that they have had a COVID-19 test (taken with approved test method PCR or the antigen test) with a negative result. The test must have been taken less than 72 hours before entry. The certificate must be written in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, English, French or German.

Seafarers mentioned in [Regulations](#) related to entry restriction for foreign nationals out of concern for public health, Section 3 letter j), are exempted from the requirement of presenting a negative COVID-19 test before entering Norway.

Legal reference (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§4a>

1.3 Exemptions from quarantine

Persons who are exempt from quarantine should, as far as possible, avoid close contact with others during what would have been a quarantine period.

Any exemption from quarantine is not applicable if the seafarer develops symptoms of acute respiratory infection such as a fever, a cough, breathing difficulties, or is assessed by a doctor to be infected by SARS-CoV-2.

Legal reference (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§6>

Alternative 1: Exemption for employees that arrive in Norway to sign on ships in Norwegian ports (§ 6h.) (New)

Persons who arrive in Norway to sign on ships in Norwegian ports should undergo 10 days of travel quarantine during working hours and leisure time until they:

- a. have tested negative for SARS-CoV-2 on a test taken during the first 24 hours after arrival in Norway and
- b. have tested negative for SARS-CoV-2 on a test taken no earlier than three days after arrival in Norway.

When the tests in letter a and b above are negative, the seafarer can start to work on board. Quarantine on leisure time must be maintained for the quarantine period. Quarantine on board must be carried out in one-man cabins.

The employer shall organise and cover cost of testing.

The requirement in letter b above does not apply to a seafarer on his way to a vessel which is to leave the Norwegian port within three days after the seafarer's arrival in Norway, and which is not to call a Norwegian port within 10 days after departure.

This alternative may not be used for seafarers joining coastal cruises, ships engaged in passenger traffic or ships laid up in Norway.

Legal reference (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§6h>

Alternative 2: Exemption from quarantine for seafarers from EEA/Switzerland by testing (§ 6c.)

Legal reference (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§6c>

A seafarer with place of residence in EEA or Switzerland may be exempted from quarantine for work on board when:

- A negative COVID-19 test is taken after arrival in Norway.
- Further testing is done every third day for the first 10 days after arrival in Norway
- The seafarer is placed in a single dorm cabin throughout the quarantine period
- The seafarer in the previous 10 days have not been residing in areas listed in appendix B of the covid-19-regulations: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2020-03-27-470> (in Norwegian).

Quarantine on leisure time on board must be maintained for the quarantine period.

If any of the tests are positive, the person must go into isolation and the employer must immediately notify local health authorities. The employer shall organise and cover cost of testing.

Legal reference (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§6c>

Alternative 3: Exemption from quarantine essential to maintain critical functions in society (§6e.)

When arriving from areas that are subject to quarantine, seafarers that are essential to maintain critical functions in society may be exempted from travel quarantine when traveling to and from work and during work.

The transport of goods and passengers is identified as a critical function for society:

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/samfunnssikkerhet-og-beredskap/innsikt/liste-over-kritiske-samfunnsfunksjoner>.

This exemption may only be used if the personnel is essential and there is not enough time to wait for a negative SARS-CoV-2 test or to use the other exemptions. Vessel operators shall, as far as possible, plan operations to allow crew change under alternative 1.

If the exemption in this alternative shall be used, the seafarer must be tested for SARS-CoV-2 as soon as possible.

NMA withholds that all crew necessary to maintain the requirements set out in the vessels minimum safe manning certificate are essential in order to operate ships. Any deviation from this must be approved by vessels flag state.

Depending on operational requirements owners may assess that further personnel is essential. Such persons should carry a statement from the owner confirming that such an assessment has been made.

This exemption is only valid for work, and the seafarer must quarantine on board outside of working hours for 10 days after signing on.

Legal reference (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§6e>

Alternative 4: Exemptions for seafarers on vessels returning to Norway (§ 6a.)

Seafarers that have signed on in Norway are exempt from quarantine when the vessels return to Norway as long as no crew or passengers have been ashore, and no new crew or passengers have joined the vessel. Trailer drivers following cargo from foreign port may embark if owner has established procedures to avoid close contact with passengers and crew.

Both the crew and passengers may disembark the vessel in foreign port.

Vessels may carry out ordinary cargo operations in port. Close contact must be avoided.

Legal reference (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§6a>

Alternative 5: Exemption for frequent work-related travel between Norway and certain areas in Sweden and Finland (§ 6b.)

Seafarers with place of domicile in areas in Sweden and Finland subject to quarantine that frequently travel to Norway are exempt from quarantine during working hours and for work related travel after a negative COVID-19 test every seventh day.

The test must be taken in Norway. The employer shall organise and cover cost of testing.

Legal reference (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§6b>

1.4 Quarantine after close contact with confirmed case

Persons who have had close contact with a person that has been confirmed infected with SARS-CoV-2 less than 48 hours before the infected person got symptoms, must undergo quarantine for 10 days after close contact.

Legal references (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§4>

1.5 Signing off in Norway

Persons signing off will be subject to travel quarantine if the vessel has visited an area subject to quarantine (cf. paragraph 1 in this document) during the last 10 days.

However, there is a general exemption allowing persons subject to travel quarantine to leave the country during quarantine. Norwegian protocols regarding travel during quarantine must be followed (see paragraph 1.6 below).

1.6 Travel to/from the vessel

Seafarers that are subject to travel quarantine, regardless of exemption, may use public transportation to/from vessel and place of departure.

A face mask must be used when travelling and in public spaces. General advice to the public regarding social distancing etc. should be followed.

Seafarers that are subject to quarantine after close contact may only use public transportation in exceptional cases and after consulting with local health authorities.

Legal reference (in Norwegian):

- <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§5>
- <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§5a>

2 Protocols on board

The Norwegian Maritime Authority has published a general guide on “Risk assessment and emergency preparedness in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic”. This is applicable to Norwegian ships, and it builds on the general framework in regulations on Working environment, health and safety of persons working on board ship. It includes provisions on risk assessment related to the safety or health of persons working on board.

The guidelines establish COVID-19 virus as a biological agent under the regulation and gives advice on practical measures on board. Full text available in English here: <https://www.sdir.no/en/news/news-from-the-nma/risk-assessment-and-emergency-preparedness-in-the-context-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/>.

Further guidance may be found in industry guidelines such as ICS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Ship Operators for the Protection of the Health of Seafarers: <https://www.ics-shipping.org/docs/default-source/resources/covid19-guidance-for-ship-operators-for-the-protection-of-the-health-of-seafarers-v3.pdf?sfvrsn=4>.

Legal reference: <https://www.sdir.no/en/shipping/legislation/regulations/working-environment-health-and-safety-of-persons-working-on-board-ship/>

2.1 Routines on board when exempted from quarantine

Seafarers that have joined the vessel and are exempted from travel quarantine during work should, as far as possible, avoid close contact with other persons. In order to minimise risk, special consideration should be given to mealtimes and other situations where social distancing is challenging. The employer must ensure that it is possible to maintain social distancing when seafarers are undergoing quarantine during leisure time.

Quarantine during leisure time must be maintained for 10 days.

No exemptions from quarantine are applicable if the seafarer develops symptoms of acute respiratory infection such as a fever, a cough, breathing difficulties, or is assessed by a doctor to be infected by SARS-CoV-2.

2.2 Routines on board when subject to quarantine

Seafarers that are subject to quarantine and not exempted must be quarantined for 10 days in a suitable location.

Depending on vessel type and facilities a merchant ship may be a suitable location if it is possible to accommodate the seafarer in a one-man cabin.

Owners must assess whether the facilities on the relevant ship are suitable and if routines may be established on board to maintain the quarantine.

If it is not possible to establish a suitable location on board, the seafarer must undergo quarantine on a quarantine hotel before joining the ship.

Note that a seafarer may only commence work during quarantine if he or she is covered by one of the exemptions to quarantine outlined in paragraph 1.3.

Further note that quarantine on board is not allowed on vessels on coastal cruise in Norway, cf. paragraph 4 below.

Legal references (in Norwegian): <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470/§5>

3 Notification in case of suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

Vessels arriving from abroad or trading in Norwegian waters that suspect or have confirmed cases of COVID-19 should notify Norwegian authorities as soon as possible.

Notification should be by phone to Vardø Traffic on telephone +47 78 98 98 98. In addition, information should be given electronically in SafeSeaNet Norway. Vardø traffic will notify local health authorities at the vessel's destination port and support the vessel further as needed.

It should be noted that health personnel on board Norwegian vessels and foreign vessels in Norwegian waters have a separate obligation to notify health authorities.

Legal reference (in Norwegian):

- <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2007-12-21-1573/§5>
- <https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2007-12-21-1573/§4>

4 Coastal cruise

Legal reference (in Norwegian): [https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470 § 11- 11b](https://lovdata.no/forskrift/2020-03-27-470%20%24%2011-11b)

Norway has established rules and guidelines to allow cruise ships to resume operations along the Norwegian coast. Requirements and guidelines are described in [Guide for coastal cruises along the Norwegian coastline during the Covid-19 pandemic 2020](#).

The guide to coastal cruises along the Norwegian coastline provides advice on how cruise businesses can operate to protect infection and prevent accidental exposure to, and the spread of, covid-19, and advice for managing infection and suspected infection on board.

Before they can start coastal cruises along the Norwegian coast, the various operators must make their own plans for how to comply with the infection control rules in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and national guidelines. The Directorate of Health will review and approve the plans and check that they meet the infection control requirements.

Contact information to the Directorate of Health:

E-mail: postmottak@helsedir.no

Mail: Helsedirektoratet, postboks 220, Skøyen, 0213 Oslo

Website: <https://www.helsedirektoratet.no/english/corona>
