

Cruises with Overnight Accommodations

COVID-19 Guidance

Summary of May 13, 2021 changes:

- Restrictions on sailing for cruise ships with 250 passengers or less is removed and new operating guidelines are detailed.

Included Here:

- All commercial, non-cargo, passenger-carrying vessels with a capacity to carry less than 250 individuals (passengers and crew) with an itinerary anticipating an overnight stay on board or a twenty-four hour stay on board for either passengers or crew that originate, visit, or conclude in WA ports. Per the [CDC Technical Instructions](#), cruise ships are considered residential, non-healthcare, congregate settings representing a global population.

Not Included Here:

- Ferries, houseboats, houseboat rentals, day cruises, whale watching tours, recreational fishing trips, commercial fishing boats, research vessels.

Written Plans to Mitigate COVID-19 Onboard Cruise Ships

Cruise ship companies must develop, implement, and operationalize an appropriate, actionable, and robust written plan to prevent, mitigate, and respond to the spread of COVID-19 on board cruise ships. This written plan must be available for review upon request. CDC's [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to COVID-19](#) provides ways to prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19.

Written plans should include the following components:

- Training of all crew on COVID-19 prevention and mitigation
- Onboard monitoring of crew and non-crew for [signs and symptoms](#) of COVID-19
- [COVID-19 testing](#) (onboard or onshore)
- Onboard isolation, quarantine, and [social distancing](#)
- Adequate medical staffing (this can include telehealth or telemedicine providers)
- Maintaining sufficient quantities of [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#), oxygen, and other supplies and the ability to obtain additional resources, if needed
- COVID-19 outbreak management and response information
- Medical arrangements for onshore evaluation and hospitalization
- Screening of embarking or disembarking crew and non-crew
- A system to notify respective national, state, and local public health authorities
- Procedures for passengers to limit unstructured activities and limit exposure to non-passengers on land during port-of-call excursions

Capacity Restrictions

In order to operate at full or partial capacity, cruise ship operators must require passengers to be fully vaccinated with following exception: cruise ship operators may allow two unvaccinated passengers or up to 5% of total passenger capacity to be unvaccinated passengers, whichever is greater. In addition, the cruise ship operator must retain at least 5% of cabins open and available to provide separate

isolation and/or quarantine rooms, with individual bathrooms, for symptomatic, COVID-19 positive, or exposed crew and passengers.

Subject to the limitations described in the previous paragraph, nothing in this section should be read to prohibit a cruise ship operator from providing accommodations to unvaccinated individuals, to include those individuals claiming an exemption protected by state and federal anti-discrimination laws.

COVID-19 Vaccination Protocol

Cruise ship operators must have a vaccination protocol in place for crew and passengers. Cruise ship operators must require that all crew and passengers who are boarding as vaccinated individuals provide COVID-19 vaccination documentation establishing that they are fully vaccinated before boarding the ship.

People who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 by a two-dose mRNA (such as Moderna or Pfizer) or a single dose vaccine (such as Johnson & Johnson/Janssen) are considered “fully vaccinated” two weeks after the final dose of vaccine (the second dose for a two-dose regimen, or the single dose for a single-dose regimen).

Proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 using an U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-authorized vaccine or a vaccine product that has received emergency use listing from the World Health Organization (WHO) may only be established by an official record, such as

- a) a COVID-19 vaccination record card;
- b) documentation from a healthcare provider electronic health record; or
- c) documentation from the Washington State Immunization Information System.

Self-reported vaccination records that are not verified by a health care provider must not be accepted.

Documentation of vaccination status, as described above, of all crew and passengers should be maintained by the cruise ship operator and be available for presentation to public health authorities if requested.

Pre-Departure Quarantine and Testing for Crew and Passengers

Crew

Because the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread from persons without symptoms, cruise ship operators must require embarking crew to quarantine and complete screening testing for SARS-CoV-2 immediately before the cruise to prevent introduction of the virus onto the vessel.

Crew that is NOT fully vaccinated:

For a crew that is NOT fully vaccinated due to being ineligible for vaccination, pre-departure **quarantine should last for 10 days** prior to interaction with passengers or arrival of passengers on the cruise ship.

- Testing for SARS-CoV-2 should be performed at the start of the 10-day quarantine period with a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT).
- Testing should be completed at the end of the quarantine period (NAAT)..
- Anyone who develops symptoms during this 10-day quarantine period should be isolated and tested for SARS-CoV-2 with a molecular test.
- Any crew who test positive at any point during the pre-departure quarantine should not be permitted to board the ship or interact with passengers, and instead should be immediately isolated at a shore-based isolation facility.

Crew that IS fully vaccinated:

For a fully vaccinated crew, pre-departure **quarantine should last for 7 days** prior to interaction with passengers or arrival of passengers on the cruise ship. Quarantine may be completed either on land or on the cruise ship so long as no passengers interact with crew before the quarantine period is complete and end-of-quarantine test results are received. Viral testing for SARS-CoV-2 should be completed at the start of the 7-day quarantine period (NAAT or antigen), as well as less than 72 hours before the end of the quarantine period.

- Testing should be completed using a molecular or antigen test.
- Any crew who develop symptoms during this 7-day quarantine period should be isolated and tested for SARS-CoV-2 with a molecular test or antigen test.
- Any crew who test positive at any point during the pre-departure quarantine should not be permitted to board the ship or interact with passengers, and instead should be immediately isolated at a shore-based isolation facility. If quarantine is being completed on board the ship prior to arrival of passengers, any crew who test positive should be immediately isolated in individual cabins with separate bathroom facilities and then transported to a shore-based isolation facility.

If a crew member's test result is positive, they must be removed from the cruise ship (or prevented from boarding if a shore-based quarantine is completed) and enter isolation. Isolation must be maintained for a minimum of 10 days. Isolation must be maintained for a minimum of 10 days and must be accompanied by symptom improvement and the absence of fever for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medications. Close contacts should quarantine and not board the cruise ship. The cruise ship operator must notify the local health jurisdiction and the Washington State Department of Health, as well as any other required reporting avenues ([CDC Quarantine Station](#), Port Authority, and/or [FDA Interstate Travel Program](#)) within 24 hours of receiving the positive test result. The Washington State Department of Health should be notified by emailing nhcs-covid@doh.wa.gov and/or calling 206-418-5500.

Crew must follow this pre-departure quarantine and testing protocol for their first voyage. Pre-departure quarantine and testing are required regardless of the jurisdiction from which the vessel embarks. A crew member may continue to work subsequent voyages without pre-departure quarantine or testing as long as the crew member remains asymptomatic, no cases of COVID-19 occurred among crew or passengers on the cruise ship in the previous 14 days, and the crew member participates in screening testing. Any new crew who join a cruise ship must complete pre-departure quarantine and testing.

Passengers

Passengers must be tested for COVID-19 with a molecular test no more than three days prior to boarding the cruise ship, regardless of passenger vaccination status. In order to board the cruise ship, passengers must test negative for SARS-CoV-2.

The cruise ship operator must keep a confidential record of all traveler (crew and passenger) test results.

Pre-Boarding Screening Procedures

Before boarding of crew and passengers, conduct verbal or written screening in appropriate languages and in a private environment to determine whether persons have had signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or a known exposure to a person with COVID-19 within the past 14 days. In addition, temperature checks should be used to identify any person with a temperature of 100.4°F or greater. Deny boarding of a crew

member or non-crew member who is suspected of having COVID-19 because they have symptoms, a temperature of 100.4°F or greater, or have had known exposure to a person with COVID 19 within the previous 14 days.

Routine Screening Testing

All crew, both fully vaccinated and unvaccinated, must undergo weekly screening testing for SARS-CoV-2 with a molecular test or antigen test (note, molecular tests are recommended because of a greater sensitivity than antigen tests, especially in individuals without symptoms).

Disembarkation testing

The cruise ship operators are recommended to conduct COVID-19 testing of all passengers and any disembarking crew on the day of disembarkation with same day results, regardless of individual vaccination status. It is recommended that results be available before the passenger or crew member leaves the cruise ship, seaport, or offsite testing location, but specimen collection and testing can occur onboard or shoreside. If a passenger or crew member tests positive, they should enter isolation. Isolation should be maintained for a minimum of 10 days. Isolation should be maintained for a minimum of 10 days and must be accompanied by symptom improvement and the absence of fever for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medications. Close contacts of the infected traveler should be identified and quarantine. The cruise ship operator must report the COVID-19 case to the local public health authority and the Washington State Department of Health, as well as any other required reporting avenues (CDC Quarantine Station, Port Authority, and/or FDA Interstate Travel Program) within 24 hours of receiving the positive test result. The Washington State Department of Health should be notified by emailing nhcs-covid@doh.wa.gov and/or calling 206-418-5500.

Cruise ship operators should consider recommending that passengers and crew be tested for COVID-19 3-5 days post-disembarkation.

Physical Distancing

While indoors in corridors and common areas: if all crew members and passengers are vaccinated and wear a cloth face covering over the nose and mouth, physical distancing of 6 feet is not required.

While outdoors on the ship deck: if masks are not worn, physical distancing of at least 6 feet is required between travel parties.

Cloth Face Coverings

Regardless of vaccination status, cloth face coverings must be worn at all times when indoors on the vessel, except when in individual cabins or for brief periods when eating or drinking. Fully vaccinated crew and passengers engaging in outdoor activities where at least 6 feet of physical distancing can be maintained do not need to wear face coverings. During shore-based excursions, crew and passengers must comply with state and local laws and recommendations for masking and distancing.

Cleaning and Disinfection

In addition to using routine cleaning and disinfection strategies, cruise ships should focus on routine cleaning and disinfection of commonly touched surfaces such as handrails, countertops, and doorknobs with an [EPA-registered disinfectant](#) effective against coronaviruses. Refer to the following resources for cleaning and disinfecting practices:

- Follow CDC's [Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection](#).
- Close off areas used by sick persons after they are vacated and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory aerosols:

- Use the ship’s ventilation system to exhaust as much air as possible from indoor areas and, if possible, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
- Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in all areas (e.g., cabins, bathrooms, and common areas) used or visited by the sick persons.
- Do not use fogging, fumigation, or wide-area spraying to control the spread of COVID-19. These methods are not effective, do not clean contaminated surfaces, and are hazardous to human health.
- In areas where sick persons are being housed in isolation, follow [Interim Guidance for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection for U.S. Households with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019](#). This includes focusing on cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces in common areas where crew members providing services may come into contact with sick persons. To the extent possible, cabins housing sick or quarantined persons should not be cleaned by other crew members. Supplies (e.g., paper towels, cleaners, and disinfectants) can be provided to sick or quarantined persons, to extent possible, so they can clean their own cabins as necessary.
- Always follow the disinfectant instructions on the label:
 - Use the proper concentration of disinfectant.
 - Keep the disinfectant on the surface for the required amount of wet contact time.
 - Follow the product label warnings and instructions for PPE such as gloves, eye protection, and ventilation.

Hand Hygiene

- Promote [hand hygiene](#) and [cough etiquette](#).
- Prioritize hand washing over the use of hand sanitizer, and have facilities available for handwashing in as many locations as possible. Hand sanitizers will not inactivate viruses that are not alive, including norovirus, which has been associated with many cruise ship outbreaks.
- Place hand sanitizer (containing greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol) in multiple locations and in sufficient quantities to encourage [hand hygiene](#).
- Ensure handwashing facilities are well-stocked with soap, paper towels, and a waste receptacle.
- Place [posters](#) that encourage [hand hygiene](#) and [social distancing](#) to [help stop the spread](#) in high-trafficked areas.

Responding to Illness

The cruise ship operator must have a protocol in place and educate crew members how to respond to anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 while onboard.

Per CDC, ships should carry a sufficient quantity of [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#), including facemasks, NIOSH-approved disposable N95 filtering facepiece respirators or higher, eye protection such as goggles or disposable face shields that cover the front and sides of the face, and disposable medical gloves and gowns. Staff should be trained on the proper use and disposal of PPE.

The cruise ship operator must be prepared to isolate and quarantine crew and passengers, if necessary, both on the cruise ship and on shore. It is the responsibility of the cruise ship operator to have agreements and plans in place with on-shore facilities (e.g., hotels) to isolate or quarantine any passenger or crew member as necessary, including ensuring delivery of essential services: food delivery,

laundry services, cleaning and linen change, garbage pick up, and post-quarantine cleaning and disinfection. Isolation and quarantine should be coordinated with public health and the port authority. Crew and passengers may isolate or quarantine at home if they are able to get home without use of public or commercial transport.

The cruise ship operator must have a medical advisor who can coordinate care of persons with COVID-19.

The cruise ship operator must keep records to aid in the response to any possible COVID-19 cases, including vaccination records, test results, and screening responses for all crew and passengers. The cruise ship operator must be prepared to provide the name, date of birth, address of residence, and phone number, as well as a list of cruise activities, shore-based excursions, etc. for everyone on the cruise ship in the event of an outbreak investigation.

If a person develops symptoms of COVID-19 while onboard, the cruise ship operator must:

- Immediately isolate symptomatic passenger(s). Isolation accommodations on board the ship must meet CDC guidelines.
- Consult with the cruise ship operator's medical advisor regarding care for the ill person and next steps.
- Connect the symptomatic traveler with testing using a molecular test either on board the cruise ship or on shore.
- Provide necessary medical services to maintain the traveler onboard upon the recommendation of the medical advisor.
- Transport the ill person to an isolation facility on shore, unless a medical evacuation is required. The cruise operator must have protocols that avoid medical evacuations at sea to the greatest extent possible. Protocols should rely on commercial resources for unavoidable medical evacuation at sea and be designed to minimize the burden to the greatest extent possible on Federal, State, and Local government resources, including U.S. Coast Guard resources. All medical evacuations at sea must be coordinated with the U.S. Coast Guard.

If a person tests positive for COVID-19 while on the cruise, the cruise ship operator must:

- Consult with the cruise ship's medical advisor
- Provide isolation quarters to the traveler onboard. COVID-19 positive travelers must isolate.
- Transport the infected person to an agreed-upon isolation site on-shore, unless a medical evacuation is required.
- Identify close contacts of the infected traveler. Close contacts must be quarantined and should not participate in communal dining, or onboard or off-ship group activities. Fully vaccinated individuals should quarantine for at least 7 days after last exposure with a negative test less than 48 hours before ending quarantine; symptom monitoring should continue through day 14 after last exposure. Unvaccinated individuals should quarantine for 14 days after last exposure.
- Report the COVID-19 case to the local public health authority and the Washington State Department of Health, as well as any other required reporting avenues ([CDC Quarantine Station](#), Port Authority, and/or [FDA Interstate Travel Program](#)) within 24 hours of receiving the positive test result. The Washington State Department of Health should be notified by emailing nhcs-covid@doh.wa.gov and/or calling 206-418-5500.

Coordination with Public Health

When one or more cases of COVID-19 are identified on a cruise ship (including crew and passengers), the cruise ship operator must notify the local public health authority and the Washington State Department of Health in addition to any other required reporting avenues ([CDC Quarantine Station](#), Port Authority, and/or [FDA Interstate Travel Program](#)) within 24 hours of receiving the positive test result. The Washington State Department of Health should be notified by emailing nhcs-covid@doh.wa.gov and/or calling 206-418-5500. Cruise ship operators must cooperate with public health authorities in the investigation of cases, suspected cases, outbreaks, and suspected outbreaks ([Governor's Proclamation 20-25.12](#)). In the event of an outbreak, consult with public health authorities for next steps. It is possible that mass testing, temporary suspension of cruise operations, or other control measures will be necessary to control the outbreak.