



Manchester Port Health Authority Response to Covid 19

Initial Response

At the start of the pandemic, a decision was made to split the team into two groups to reduce the likelihood of all staff members becoming infected. As a small team this would have been catastrophic therefore, each team remained separate and worked on a rota basis (office/home) with additional cleaning implemented in-between.

As the pandemic developed and lockdown was announced, the Business Continuity Plan was implemented, and all work was relocated to home.

A mutual support agreement was formalised with Mersey Port Health Authority to ensure a continued service delivery of statutory services during the COVID 19 outbreak and provide additional support to each other's staffing resources, where possible.

Maritime Declaration of Health

An early decision was taken by the Authority to request Maritime Declarations of Health for each vessel arriving at the port. Maritime Declarations of Health are required to be submitted under Section 15(1) of the Public Health (Ships) Regulations 1979 (as amended) either.

- Where there has been any suspected infectious disease or death on board amongst crew, passengers or animals/birds;
- If directed to do so by the medical officer.

This document is submitted in advance of arrival at the port and contains information on ports visited within the last 30 days, anyone who has joined the vessel within the last 30 days and the presence or absence of illness, infection, death (amongst crew or animals) and any sanitary measures applied on board. Each declaration of health was checked and recorded to ensure that any vessels arriving with symptoms on board are identified and addressed appropriately. This was later reinforced by government guidance and the issuance of a Marine Notice to Mariners by the Harbour Master.

Ship inspection

A decision was taken to suspend all non-emergency physical ship inspections on 23/03/2020. This decision was taken to prevent the potential spread of Covid-19 to crew members (on non-passenger vessels) who have limited interaction with other people and to reduce our close interaction with others in line with the announcement of a UK lockdown. In the absence of Port Health Specific advice and guidance, this decision was made after discussion with the Association of Port Health Authorities and other Port Health Authorities.

In addition, it was unclear initially what PPE was appropriate and only limited stocks were held at the Authority. A decision was taken to use this for emergency visits until a sustainable supply of suitable PPE could be obtained.

To protect our staff, ships' crews, and other service users, MPHA began to write enhanced Covid-19 risk assessment/Procedures etc. to enable continued contact with visiting ships, contact with service users re. complaints, service requests and inquiries, day to day tasks such as pest control operations, 'shoreside' water sampling and mosquito monitoring. This document was circulated to and is being used by Port Health Authorities across the UK.

As a port Authorised to issue Ship Sanitation Certificates by the World Health Organisation, we have a duty to issue Ship Sanitation Certificates upon request. This would usually be done

after a thorough inspection of the vessel, its documents, and systems. As it was not possible to board vessels to do this, we conducted virtual ship inspections by obtaining copies of documentation (certificates, water analysis reports, health certificates, medical logs), photographs and where appropriate video/telephone calls with ships Masters. These certificates were issued with an Evidence Report Form to state that a physical inspection had not been completed.

This method of inspection was further expanded to cover not only ships requesting sanitation certificates but also vessels which had never been inspected by the Authority or had not been seen within the last 12 months. This gave us the opportunity to make contact with crews, provide advice and assistance and make sure they had suitable controls in place.

In May 2020, in line with our risk assessment, we recommenced boarding vessels to issue ship sanitation certificates and undertake water analysis. Water analysis is essential to ensure that the water on board is suitable for human consumption. Many vessels had been unable to access this service for many months.

From 1 September 2020, the Authority will begin to cautiously increase the number of physical ship inspections undertaken.

Emergency Planning

Manchester Port Health Authority are Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. As such we have a duty to.

To assess the risk of emergencies occurring in our area and use this to inform contingency planning.

- To put in place emergency plans.
- To put in place Business Continuity Management arrangements.
- To put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency.
- To share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination.
- To co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency.
- To provide advice and assistance to business and voluntary organisations about Business Continuity Management.
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Representation was therefore provided throughout the emergency response with officers attending Cheshire Resilience Form Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) and Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG). In the initial phase of the response, these meetings were held daily. This enables us to raise any specific port health concerns or emerging risks and access guidance from SAGE.

Other areas of work

Other areas of work have remained unaffected as it has been possible to conduct this in a safe manner (pest control, environmental protection, emergency planning, shoreside water sampling etc.).

During the lockdown period we received a significant number of complaints relating to dust due to dry cargoes, high winds, and very hot weather. This involved a significant amount of resource to investigate.