

 **Ground Operations**

**Operational Safety Instruction
Notification of Medical Incidents, Communicable
Diseases and Death on Board Aircraft**

8th Sept 2020

ASGrOps_OSI_039

v2.1

It is the responsibility of all employers to ensure that relevant OSIs are brought to the attention of their staff. However, individuals remain responsible for their own actions and those who are in any doubt should consult their Supervisor or Manager.

SPECIAL PROTOCOL – COVID-19

Special protocol is currently being enacted through publication of ASGrOps_OAN_035 - Special Protocol for Notification of COVID-19. This is written in conjunction with Public Health England and lists the up-to-date measures in place to help prevent further spread of COVID-19 within the UK.

Special protocol in place under ASGrOps_OAN_035 supersedes section 6.3 and 6.4 of this document.

All other procedures (unrelated to Communicable Disease) found within this OSI must be strictly adhered to.

This document must be read in conjunction with ASGrOps_OAN_035 - Special Protocol for Notification of COVID-19.

Cancellation of the OAN will be promulgated by re-issuing this OSI without the ‘Special Protocol’ prefix to the document.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** This Instruction informs airport organisations, and in particular airlines, of the protocols and actions for the notification of medical incidents, communicable diseases or any death on board an aircraft at or arriving at Heathrow Airport.
- 1.2** Version 1.0 (previously referred as to OSI/16/14) is hereby cancelled.



- 1.3** Version 2.0 introduces the following amendments/additions (shown by red bars):
- Change to title - now includes classification of 'Medical Incidents'
 - Notification for enactment of Special Protocol - Promulgated through an OAN
 - Update to general notification procedures
 - Updated template and editorial improvements
 - Update on identifying and controlling communicable disease
 - Update to quarantine procedure
 - New section for key responsibilities
 - Adds a distinction between medical requests and medical emergencies
 - Adds a procedure for medical incidents/requests; Airside/on-board an aircraft
 - Adds a section highlighting the ability for Heathrow to enact 'Special Protocol'

2. Aims

- 2.1** To deliver a consistent and coordinated response to medical events on board aircraft
- 2.2** To provide appropriate flight priority to flights declaring medical emergencies
- 2.3** To contain and control communicable diseases and disease vectors which are at risk of entering the UK or being transmitted onto outbound flights.

3. Legislation

- 3.1** International Health Regulations (2005)
- 3.2** Public Health Aircraft Regulations (1979)
- 3.3** Public Health (Infectious Disease) Regulations (1988)

4. Definitions

Abbreviation	Description
ACARS	Aircraft Communications, Addressing and Reporting System
APOC	Airport Operations Centre
LAS	London Ambulance Service
MO	Medical Officer
WHO	World Health Organisation
PHE	Public Health England
ATC	Air Traffic Control
MPS	The Metropolitan Police Service
ASD	Airside Safety Department
HCU	Health Control Unit



5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Airlines/Ground Handlers

5.1.1 The Captain of an aircraft, Airline Representative or Handling agent, are responsible for informing the Public Health England, Health Control Unit without delay if they become aware of any disease reportable under the above legislation, or any illness or symptoms suggestive of a communicable disease. This applies to travellers, including those who are about to disembark or board at Heathrow. Notification to PHE should be achieved by contacting ATC or Airport Control.

5.1.2 The Captain of an aircraft, Airline Representative or Handling agent, are responsible for informing Airport Control directly or through ATC where there is a requirement for medical assistance or a death on board an aircraft on the ground or in flight.

5.2 ATC

5.2.1 Air Traffic Control are responsible for ensuring the onward communication to Heathrow Airport Control of any notification of communicable disease, death or request for medical assistance.

5.3 Airport Control

5.3.1 Airport Control are responsible for the management of medical incidents, deaths on board or notifications of communicable diseases, ensuring the appropriate resources are deployed and assistance provided to Airlines/Ground Handlers

5.4 Airfield Operations

ASD are responsible for facilitating the expeditious assistance of medical support to Airlines through the provision of leading and marshalling services, the escorting of emergency services and 'on the ground' management of incidents of communicable diseases.

5.5 London Ambulance Service

5.5.1 LAS are the nominated first responder to all medical incidents on board aircraft.

5.6 Metropolitan Police

5.6.1 MPS will be requested to attend and manage incidents of death on board aircraft and to support other agencies in the response to medical incidents or incidents which have the potential to impact on public health.

5.7 Public Health England

5.7.1 The PHE Health Control Unit at Heathrow are responsible for containing and controlling communicable diseases and disease vectors which are at risk of entering the UK.



6. Procedure

6.1 Medical Emergency

- 6.1.1** In the event of a life threatening, critical medical emergency on board an aircraft in the air, on the ground or inbound to Heathrow; dependant on the severity, a Medical PAN or a MAYDAY should be declared and details of the emergency passed directly to Air Traffic Control.
- 6.1.2** In order to ensure the swiftest response the following information is required for triage:
- 6.1.2.1** Age, gender and medical history of the patient
 - 6.1.2.2** If the patient is awake, conscious and breathing
 - 6.1.2.3** If there is any serious bleeding or chest pain
 - 6.1.2.4** Any other pertinent information as to the nature of the injury/incident
- 6.1.3** Air Traffic Control will pass details to Airport Control without delay via the direct liaison line and seek medical assistance to meet the Aircraft.
- 6.1.4** Ground Handlers or representatives based at Heathrow should inform Airport Control of any subsequent emergencies via 222 or 0208 759 1212 and relay as much information as possible.
- 6.1.5** Airport Control will ensure that an appropriate medical response is provided which may include the attendance of the Airport Fire & Rescue Services until such time as an Ambulance arrives.
- 6.1.6** ASD will be deployed to the location of the incident or to meet the aircraft on arrival and ensure that there is no delay to the parking of the aircraft or access by the emergency services.

6.2 Medical Incidents/Requests

- 6.2.1** In the event of non-life threatening, non-critical medical events on board aircraft on the ground or inbound to Heathrow; requests for medical assistance should be passed directly from Aircraft to Ground Handler or Airline representative via internal communication processes such as ACARS or via the nominated medical advice service subscribed to by the Airline.
- 6.2.2** Ground Handlers or representatives based at Heathrow should pass any subsequent requests for medical assistance direct to Airport Control via 222 or 0208 759 1212 with as much information as possible. Where insufficient information is provided, ambulance requests may be delayed due to Local Authority triaging processes.



6.2.3 Airport Control will coordinate an appropriate response subject to the severity and timeliness of the event and ensure escorting arrangements are in place for any external emergency services.

6.2.4 In events such as this a Medical PAN should not normally be declared, and Air Traffic Control may not be aware of the incident or provide any flight priority.

6.3 Communicable Diseases

6.3.1 A communicable disease (International Health Regulations 2005) is suspected when three or more travellers (passenger or a crew member) has a **fever** (temperature 37.5 °C / 99.5 °F or greater) **AND** one or more of the following conditions:

- Skin rash
- Swollen glands
- Jaundice
- Persistent diarrhoea
- Persistent vomiting
- Persistent cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Headache with a stiff neck
- Decreased consciousness
- Unexplained bleeding

6.3.2 If the combination of the above symptoms are identified Airport Control will allocate resources based on the information given. This may include dispatch of either LAS or a PHE MO.

6.3.3 If two or fewer passengers show a combination of symptoms listed above a request for medical assistance should be made via Air Traffic Control, Airline Representative or Handling agent who will then pass details to Airport Control via a 222 Ambulance request. LAS will triage the passenger and determine what further action is necessary.

6.3.4 If THREE or more passengers show a combination of symptoms listed above the Captain of the Aircraft must inform Air Traffic Control, Airline Representative or Handling agent who must then notify Airport Control via a 222 Ambulance request. Airport Control will inform PHE HCU who will dispatch a PHE MO for further assessment.

6.3.5 If the temperature is normal, but several travellers have similar symptoms, other public health issues such as chemical exposure should not be ruled out and notification to Public Health England should continue.



6.3.6 If a communicable disease is suspected on board aircraft on the ground the Aircraft operator must inform the Ground Handler or Airline representative who must in turn inform Airport Control on 222 or 0208 759 1212.

6.3.7 A MO at PHE HCU will make a health protection assessment of the situation and advise on what action to take with respect to the affected person and other passengers. If the ill person requires immediate clinical care, an Ambulance will be requested to attend.

6.4 Aircraft & Passenger Quarantine

6.4.1 Normal practice should be to remove the ill passenger from the aircraft as soon as possible and allow disembarkation of other passengers immediately afterwards. In some circumstances, the PHE MO may ask for Passenger Locator Cards to be completed prior to disembarkation. It will be very rare for the PHE MO to ask for an aircraft to be held in a secure area and disembarkation prevented.

6.4.2 The PHE MO will advise on;

6.4.2.1 Management of the passenger, e.g. transfer to hospital by ambulance, advice to contact medical services at destination.

6.4.2.2 Information collection from other passengers or crew, e.g. Passenger Locator Cards

6.4.2.3 Provision of information and advice to concerned passengers and crew

6.4.3 If necessary, the Health Control Unit will assist in the collation of information in relation to any other passengers that may be affected.

6.4.4 In the event of a passenger/staff member needing hospitalisation the Health Control Unit will request the ambulance service to transport them to the designated hospital. Airport Control or the Health Control Unit will also notify the UK Border Force.

6.4.5 In some cases, the PHE MO will be required to notify the Environmental Health Officer (telephone 01895 250190 daytime or 01895 250111 out of hours).

6.4.6 This is when:

6.4.6.1 There has been a spillage of bodily fluids connected with the suspect case

6.4.6.2 There is an outbreak of suspected food poisoning

6.4.6.3 The aircraft has come from a country where there is infectious disease and insect/vermin vectors are involved.



6.5 Death [Natural] on Board

6.5.1 In the event of a Death on board the aircraft (not suspected to be related to a communicable disease); The Airline or Ground Handler should request an ambulance to meet the aircraft on arrival by contacting the Airport Control on 222 or 0208 759 1212. The APOC Operations Coordinator will transfer the call to the London Ambulance Service (LAS) and also notify the Metropolitan Police Service.

6.6 Disposal of Contaminated Material

6.6.1 Any biological waste must be disposed of in accordance with guidance and legislation.

6.7 Disinsection of Aircraft

6.7.1 Certain flights en-route from areas where mosquito/flea borne disease is prevalent will be subjected to disinsection regimes as detailed in World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

6.8 Disinfection of Aircraft (i.e. Biological)

6.8.1 Airlines are required to follow their cleaning disinfection guidance which should be in line with agreed national and international guidance. PHE can assist if unclear what type of cleaning is required. London Borough of Hillingdon will be informed as appropriate.

6.9 Special Protocol

6.9.1 In the event of extraordinary circumstance, such as a global pandemic or national epidemic, the above procedure must be adhered to unless a more stringent procedure is deemed appropriate. Special protocol for such an event will be promulgated through the publication of an Operational Advice Notice (OAN), which may supersede the above instructions.

7. References

International Health Regulations (2005)

Public Health Aircraft Regulations (1979)

Public Health (Infectious Disease) Regulations (1988)

8. Enquiries

All question relating to this OSI, please contact the Heathrow Airfield Duty Manager, email – airfield.duty.manager@heathrow.com

Or;

Public Health England Health Control, email - Heathrow.HCU@phe.gov.uk

