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To : Shipowners / Ship Managers / Masters of Hong Kong registered ships

Dear Sir/Madam,

Guidance on the prevention and control of COVID-19 on board ships

The purpose of this circular is to share information and guidance, based on the recommendations developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), on the precautions to be taken to minimize risks to seafarers, passengers and others on board ships from the transmission of COVID-19.

1. **Management System:** Shipping companies should develop management plans to prevent and control COVID-19, including designating the primary responsible person for the overall epidemic prevention and control measures of the ship. An onboard outbreak prevention and control management plan should be developed.
2. **Prevention and Control Measures:** Shipping companies should provide ships with necessary epidemic prevention materials in a timely manner. Shipboard crew members should monitor any suspected symptoms, strictly control the gangway access by temperature measurement and minimize ship-shore personnel exchange.
3. **Personal Protection of Crew Members:** All crew members should take appropriate personal protection measures by keeping personal hygiene such as proper hand washing, wearing medical mask, avoiding unnecessary contact with outsiders and keeping safe distances whenever possible.
4. **Emergency Response when suspected COVID-19 case is identified:** When a suspected case is identified on board, the outbreak prevention and control management plan should be activated and the procedures should be strictly followed.

5. **Reporting Case(s):** Master / shipping company should immediately report to HKMD if COVID-19 cases are suspected or confirmed on board, or any crew members are ordered by a port authority to carry out quarantine on board as part of the COVID-19 control measures.

6. **Crew Members' Mental Health:** The Master should organize psychological intervention and health adjustment for the crew where necessary. During the epidemic period, the normal work arrangement on ship may be affected by the COVID-19 development at shore. Frequent overtime work, extended services at sea, together with insufficient information may result in crew members' negative emotions, such as anxiety, paranoia, irritability, depression, sadness, fear, blind optimism, loneliness, impulsiveness, which should be addressed properly and timely.

7. **Information and Guidance by IMO:** IMO has issued a series of Circular Letters offering specific guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers and relevant information on its dedicated webpage. This webpage is regularly updated:
<https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Should you have any question, please feel free to contact the undersigned on Tel: (852) 2852-4383, Fax: (852) 2545 4669, or email: mmo_mdd@mardep.gov.hk.

Yours faithfully,

(No signature on website copy)

(Z.J. Kuang)
Mercantile Marine Office
for Director of Marine