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5 May 2021

To : Shipowners, Ship Managers and Masters of Hong Kong registered ships

Dear Sir/Madam,

Prevention of COVID-19 and protection of seafarers' health on board ships

Recently, a few COVID-19 confirmed cases were reported on Hong Kong registered ships and some of them involved mutant strains.

2. In view of the significant impacts on the shipping industry and on seafarers' health, on 31 January 2020 the International Maritime Organization (IMO) issued a [Circular Letter \(No.4204\)](https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/PublishingImages/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204%20%20Novel%20Coronavirus%202019-Ncov%20Secretariat.pdf) [https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/PublishingImages/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204%20%20Novel%20Coronavirus%202019-Ncov%20Secretariat.pdf] to provide information and guidance on the precautions to be taken to minimize risks to seafarers, passengers and others on board ships from the novel coronavirus. Thereafter, the IMO supplemented with updated information on the implementation and enforcement of relevant IMO instruments, operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases/outbreak, and mitigating the risks of cases on board ships via [circular letter No.4204/Add.27](https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204-Add.27.pdf) "Protocols to mitigate the risks of cases on board ships" [https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204-Add.27.pdf].

3. In addition to IMO circular letters, other UN agencies, IMO members, seafarer unions, international maritime organizations have also issued various

recommendations and guidelines on the prevention of COVID-19 and protection of seafarers' health. The links for those informations could also be found on the same IMO webpage. [<https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>]

4. In order to avoid or minimize the impact of COVID-19 case, your attentions are drawn to the above circular letters and guidelines which may be updated or revised from time to time. Furthermore, we appeal for your efforts in this difficult time to protect and safeguard the health of the seafarers, with appropriate measures including but not limited to:

- sufficient personal protection equipment to be provided on board
- adequate arrangement to be taken for port operation, such as information of affected region prior calling the port, precaution with shore personals during port stay
- ongoing shipboard crew health monitoring after a port call, reporting infected or suspected cases immediately, and asking for assistance where appropriate
- crew change arrangement to include the COVID-19 test, isolation and vaccination

5. Should you have any question or require assistance, please feel free to contact this office at telephone number (852) 2852 3056, 2852 4383, fax number (852) 2545 4669, or email: mmo_mdd@mardep.gov.hk.

Yours faithfully,

(No signature on website copy)

(Z.J. Kuang)

Hong Kong Marine Department
for Director of Marine

c.c.: Hong Kong Shipowners Association
Hong Kong Seamen's Union
Merchant Navy Officers' Guild
Amalgamated Union of Seafarers, HK