



National Standard Operating Procedure

NSOP 503

COVID-19 - Helicopter Operations Personnel

Purpose

The purpose of this national standard operating procedure (NSOP) is to outline the steps to be followed if a helicopter operations employee is suspected to have COVID-19 or meets the exposure criteria described in this document.

Procedures

Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) helicopters may be used to transport employees who are suspected to have COVID-19 from CCG vessels or remote locations owned by CCG. When this takes place, a rescue specialist will be on board the helicopter.

All personal information collected is to be managed according to Protected B protocols.

Procedure for helicopter operations personnel

Step	Procedure
1.	<p>1. If the employee is experiencing a sudden onset of any of the following symptoms which may be attributed to COVID-19 rather than for example seasonal allergies or a known medical condition¹:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new or worsening cough • shortness of breath or difficulty breathing • temperature equal to or over 37.5 °C • feeling feverish • chills • fatigue or weakness • muscle or body aches • new loss of smell or taste • headache (new, persistent, unexplained, unusual or long-lasting) (not related to other known causes or conditions) • gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting) • feeling very unwell <p>2. And/or if the employee meets any of the following exposure criteria:</p> <p>2.1. has returned from travel outside of Canada in the last 14 days</p> <p>2.2. has had close contact with a person who has returned from outside Canada within 14 days of the helicopter personnel's close contact and who are symptomatic for COVID-19</p> <p>2.3. has had close contact with a suspected, confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days</p>
2.	<p>If shore-based, employee or supervisor may determine that an employee poses a potential risk to their own well-being or the well-being of other employees. On this basis, the supervisor may ask the employee to leave the workplace. Should the need arise, the employee who is suspected to have COVID-19 would be provided a procedural or surgical mask, be immediately separated from coworkers, encouraged to perform hygiene/cough etiquette (by using hand sanitizers for example) and sent home. For further information on contact tracing, see NSOP 526 COVID-19 – Canadian Coast Guard Contact Tracing Activities.</p>
3.	<p>If helicopter personnel are working from the ship, please refer to NSOP 505 COVID-19 – Seagoing Personnel for guidance.</p>

¹ [Government of Canada – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Symptoms and treatment](#)

Step	Procedure
4.	Contact between pilots, maintenance staff, crew members and clients should be minimized.

Procedure for shore-based helicopter personnel

Step	Procedure
1.	If helicopter personnel are shore-based, the employee who is suspected to have COVID-19 must wear a procedural or surgical mask at all times, encouraged to perform hygiene/cough etiquette and be confined to only necessary areas for their departure.
2.	<p>Employees who are sent home due to suspected COVID-19 are directed to contact their local public health authority to find out more about self-assessment, quarantine and testing.</p> <p>Pilots and maintenance personnel are directed to contact their respective managers at Transport Canada Aircraft Services Directorate (TC ASD). The manager will require the employee who is suspected to have COVID-19 to provide an update of their testing and condition as soon as received. For further information on contact tracing, see NSOP 526 COVID-19 – Canadian Coast Guard Contact Tracing Activities.</p>
3.	<p>The supervisor is to contact the Regional Operations Center (ROC) as outlined in Operations safety bulletin 04-2020 Canadian Coast Guard Guidelines for Increased Awareness of the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Disease and Sanitation Practices to Control the Spread of Communicable Disease.</p> <p>The ROC must then inform the National Command Center.</p>
4.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If a local public health authority deems that an employee requires to be tested, the employee must notify their supervisor and remain in self-isolation as directed by health professional until results are received. Public health authorities will provide a procedure to follow if the employee is confirmed to have COVID-19. 2. For the safety of fellow employees, once test results are obtained, regardless of the outcome, the employee must contact their supervisor for further direction: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. If the employee is confirmed to have COVID-19: protocols identified by the local public health authorities are to be followed. 2.2. If the employee's results are negative for COVID-19: a return-to-work plan and date is to be discussed with the supervisor.

Step	Procedure
5.	If an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, any workspaces used or occupied by affected employees are to be disinfected (refer to NSOP 518 COVID-19 – Cleaning and Disinfection Routine of the Workplace).

Procedure for helicopter operations on board vessel

Step	Procedure
1.	<p>1. If helicopter personnel are working from vessels, the onboard rescue specialist is to contact the local telemedical assistance service (TMAS) for advice on further assessment, protocols, and procedures. Should the rescue specialist require close contact with an employee who is suspected to have COVID-19, they must encourage the employee to perform hygiene/cough etiquette and wear the appropriate PPE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. medical mask (procedural or surgical mask) 1.2. long-sleeved gown or disposable coverall (for example, Tyvek)² 1.3. gloves 1.4. eye protection <p>Note: N95 mask is required when providing direct care to COVID-19 patients in settings where aerosol-generating procedures are frequently in place. Aerosol-generating procedures are: tracheal intubation, non-invasive ventilation, tracheotomy, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, manual ventilation before intubation, bronchoscopy.³</p> <p>2. Pilots and maintenance personnel are directed to contact their respective managers at TC ASD. The manager will require the employee to provide an update of their testing and condition as soon as received.</p>
2.	<p>The commanding officer will advise the Regional Operations Center (ROC) as outlined in Operations safety bulletin 04-2020 Canadian Coast Guard Guidelines for Increased Awareness of the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Disease and Sanitation Practices to Control the Spread of Communicable Disease. Refer to NSOP 507 COVID-19 – Managing COVID-19 Outbreaks On Board Vessels.</p>

² When there is a risk of getting wet during operations and waterproof protection is required, the disposable coverall (for example, Tyvek) is the best choice.

³ [World Health Organization – Publications detail – Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) and considerations during severe shortages](#)

Step	Procedure
3.	<p>1. Vessel will arrange through the ROC the best way to get an employee who is suspected to have COVID-19 off the vessel.</p> <p>2. The commanding officer will advise the employee who is suspected to have COVID-19 to provide an update of their testing and next steps once disembarked.</p>
4.	All other employees must be confined to the vessel until other direction has been provided.
5.	<p>Any workspaces used or occupied by employees who are suspected to have COVID-19 are to be disinfected as per NSOP 518 COVID-19 – Cleaning and Disinfection Routine of the Workplace.</p> <p>If the rescue specialist donned PPE for close contact with an employee who is suspected to have COVID-19, they must follow NSOP 502 COVID-19 - Instructions for Rescue Specialist and Marine First Responders in Assisting a Suspected COVID-19 Patient.</p>

Procedure for helicopter in-flight missions

Step	Procedure
1.	Helicopter personnel carrying out regular flight operations are directed to return to home base upon termination of their mission. In special circumstances where this is not possible, the pilot in command will request permission for overnight accommodation from the Deputy Director, Flight Operations at TC ASD.
2.	Where operationally possible, pilots are directed to complete flight planning from home.
3.	If during the course of an in-flight mission, or if a pilot, crew member or client develops any symptoms listed in Step 1 of the Procedure for helicopter operations personnel (on page 1), the protocol for shore-based personnel is to be followed upon return to base (NSOP 506 COVID-19 – Shore-based Personnel).
4.	If, in a special circumstance, the helicopter had to terminate a mission outside of base and a pilot, crew member or client developed symptoms listed in Step 1 of the Procedure for helicopter operations personnel (on page 1), the pilot in command is directed to contact the Deputy Director, Flight Operations at TC ASD and the protocol for shore-based personnel is to be followed. The pilot must also contact the ROC aviation desk.

Step	Procedure
5.	The Deputy Director, Flight Operations at TC ASD will coordinate with the CCG's manager, Air Support to have the aircraft returned to base.

The regional incident command centers have the authority to make a decision on facility closures.

It is normal to be concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic, especially if you or those you know are directly affected by the situation. If you have any concerns and would like to talk to someone, contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-268-7708 and/or speak directly with your supervisor.

Enquiries

Enquiries regarding this procedure should be directed to:

Director, Operational Personnel and Force Generation
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