



# National Standard Operating Procedure

## NSOP 519

### COVID-19 - Hailing and Boarding Instructions for SAR Responders in an Open Vessel

#### Purpose

The purpose of this national standard operating procedure (NSOP) is to outline the steps to be followed by search and rescue units (SRUs) and Inshore Rescue Boat personnel in an open vessel when tasked to a marine or search and rescue incident with a suspected case of COVID-19.

This NSOP should be used in conjunction with, and to augment, existing Search and Rescue Protocols and Procedures.

#### Procedure

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

#### Procedure for screening and hailing

Step	Procedure
1.	1. Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) / joint rescue coordination centre (JRCC) / maritime rescue sub-centre (MRSC) will carry out screening during the awareness phase of the incident as best as practicable and as the incident dictates. 2. Confirm with MCTS or JRCC/MRSC that screening has been completed. 2.1. If screening has not been completed, and cannot be completed through radio contact or through voice while on scene due to nature of incident, the SRU should proceed as if responding to an incident with suspected COVID-19 exposure and don COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE), as described in this NSOP, when practicable.

Step	Procedure
2.	<p>1. On-scene screening may be required if there is incomplete information, lack of initial screening, or to validate initial screening information.</p> <p>2. Screening questions should be directed to the master of the subject vessel, and must include:</p> <p>2.1. What are the concerning signs or symptoms? Do they fall within known COVID-19 symptoms<sup>1</sup>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or worsening cough</li> <li>• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Temperature equal to or over 37.5 °C</li> <li>• Feeling feverish</li> <li>• Chills</li> <li>• Fatigue or weakness</li> <li>• Muscle or body aches</li> <li>• New loss of smell or taste</li> <li>• Headache (new, persistent, unexplained, unusual or long-lasting). (Not related to other known causes or conditions)</li> <li>• Gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting)</li> <li>• Feeling very unwell</li> </ul> <p><b>Note 1:</b> Children tend to have abdominal symptoms and skin changes or rashes.</p> <p><b>Note 2:</b> Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19.</p> <p>2.2. Has the patient travelled from or transited through a location with confirmed COVID-19 in the past 14 days?</p> <p>2.3. Has the patient been in close contact (respiratory fluids contact possible) with a suspected case of COVID-19 or close contact with someone who has travelled from or transited through a location with confirmed COVID-19 in the past 14 days?</p>
3.	<p>1. Answers from these questions must be logged and reported to the JRCC/MRSC.</p> <p>2. The decision to proceed may be done in consultation between the commanding officer/coxswain and the JRCC/MRSC.</p>

---

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

Step	Procedure
4.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists, conduct pre-job safety assessment and take all necessary precautions to mitigate exposure of responding crew. Keep SRU upwind of incident vessel as much as possible and communicate with incident vessel via radio or cell phone. Board only as necessary wearing appropriate COVID-19 PPE, and limiting number of crew boarding.</li> <li>2. Donning and doffing of COVID-19 PPE must occur in an area separate from incident vessel to minimize the risk of contact with suspected patient or any other personnel on board.</li> </ol>
5.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Persons with suspected COVID-19 should remain on their vessel if at all possible where they can be towed or escorted to a higher level of care/ nearest safe refuge.</li> <li>2. If a patient with suspected COVID-19 is taken onboard the responding vessel for evacuation, as best as practicable:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1. minimize the number of crew assisting the patient</li> <li>2.2. provide a mask and gloves to the patient immediately, by placing it in arm's reach of the patient. Observe that the patient dons the mask appropriately. In the case where patient is in respiratory distress, use of oxygen therapy mask may be indicated, follow protocols for respiratory distress</li> <li>2.3. consider the positioning and placement of the patient on the responding vessel to minimize risk of exposure to suspected COVID-19</li> <li>2.4. if any other persons from the incident vessel are taken onboard the responding vessel, provide a mask and gloves by placing in arm's reach. Observe the individual(s) don(s) the mask appropriately</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. After disembarkation of patient, the vessel must be decontaminated in accordance with <a href="#">NSOP 518 COVID-19 - Cleaning and Disinfection Routine of the Workplace</a>.</li> </ol>

**Procedure for donning PPE**

Step	Procedure
1.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At a minimum, SRUs should carry 2 changes of COVID-19 appropriate PPE for each crew member onboard the vessel at all times. At a minimum, 5 surgical/procedural masks should also be onboard to provide to the crew of the other vessel.</li> </ol>

Step	Procedure
	2. SRUs should carry hand sanitizer and PPE disposal bags on board at all times in the event PPE needs to be doffed and donned between responding to multiple incidents.
2.	<p>1. Appropriate COVID-19 PPE includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nitrile/latex gloves</li> <li>• long-sleeved gown or disposable coverall (for example, Tyvek)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• surgical/procedural mask</li> <li>• eye protection (face shield or goggles)</li> <li>• boots (rubber boots recommended for easy decontamination).</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> 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.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>2. Inspect PPE for suitability; damaged PPE should be replaced.</p> <p>3. Don PPE as recommended to ensure adequate coverage.</p>
3.	Put on long-sleeved gown or disposable coverall.
4.	Put on face mask and eye protection.
5.	Put on gloves, ensuring no gaps between gloves and sleeves (you may make thumb hole in PPE sleeve and cover with glove).
6.	Have a "buddy" inspect the donned PPE to ensure adequate coverage and no seal gaps.

### Procedure for decontamination of responding unit

Step	Procedure
1.	The SRU must be decontaminated immediately after operation in a suspected COVID-19 incident. Notify JRCC, SRU non-operational during decontamination.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

Step	Procedure
2.	Carefully remove PPE as per protocols and procedures using universal precautions and practicing hand sanitization between each piece of PPE. Remove PPE in an open area that may be easily decontaminated after removal.
3.	Remove floatation and place in secondary bag, disinfect following manufacturers instructions.
4.	Unzip gown or disposable coverall.
5.	Remove gloves without touching any area that is likely to become infected, and deposit in garbage bag. Practice hand sanitization.
6.	Remove disposable gown or coverall. Deposit in garbage bag. Practice hand sanitization.
7.	Remove goggles / face shield and place in secondary bag, wash following manufacturers instructions. Practice hand sanitization.
8.	Remove face mask, deposit in garbage bag. Practice hand sanitization.
9.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decontaminate and disinfect all contaminated areas in accordance with protocols (refer to <a href="#">NSOP 518 COVID-19 - Cleaning and Disinfection Routine of the Workplace</a>).</li> <li>2. Decontaminate and disinfect all reusable COVID-19 PPE and all standard PPE and dress/clothes worn during incident, as per manufacturers instructions.</li> </ol>
10.	Shower as soon as possible.

#### Procedure for disposal of PPE

Step	Procedure
1.	The final disposal of all materials must be double bagged and disposed in accordance with <a href="#">Fleet Safety Manual 7.E.6 Handling and Discharge – Solid Waste</a> .
2.	Decontamination team to remove own PPE (in accordance with procedure above), wash clothes and shower.

**Procedure for contact management of probable and confirmed cases of COVID-19**

Step	Procedure
1.	SRUs should continue to follow recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and local public health authorities related to physical distancing.
2.	Should a crew member onboard the responding SRU develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, every attempt should be made to alert any close contact cases (Refer to <a href="#">NSOP 507 COVID-19 – Managing COVID-19 Outbreaks On Board Vessels</a> and <a href="#">NSOP 526 COVID-19 - Canadian Coast Guard Contact Tracing Activities</a> ).

The SRU should be cleaned at the end of every shift. Refer to [NSOP 518 COVID-19 - Cleaning and Disinfection Routine of the Workplace](#) for daily cleaning routines which must be observed.

Public health management of cases and contacts associated with COVID-19 is continually under review, please visit these orders and [PHAC](#) regularly for updates as well as your local public health authorities.

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 speak with 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, Search and Rescue  
[InfoPol@dfm-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:InfoPol@dfm-mpo.gc.ca)



Adelle Ferguson  
 Director General, Response