



International Civil Aviation Organization

Tel.: +1 (514) 954-8220/8221 Fax: +1 (514) 954-6376

Website: www.icao.int

ICAO NEWS RELEASE

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ICAO DRIVES PANDEMIC CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR AVIATION SECTOR

MONTREAL, 20 May 2009 – The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has intensified efforts to assist Member States in developing effective and globally harmonized national contingency plans in the event of a pandemic caused by Influenza A (H1N1).

“Air transport is a potential vehicle for the transmission of communicable diseases as well as a vital component of today’s closely-knit global society. Our overall objective is to collaboratively strike a delicate balance between minimizing health risks while maintaining international travel and trade,” said Dr. Tony Evans, ICAO’s Chief of Aviation Medicine.

Work on guidance for aviation contingency plans began with the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2003 and increased a couple of years later over concerns that the Avian Flu might develop into a human influenza pandemic. Related guidelines were subsequently developed and have been continually updated to reflect the growth of knowledge concerning pandemic preparedness planning.

In the process, ICAO has drawn on expertise from a wide variety of sources, including the World Health Organization (the lead United Nations agency for preparedness planning), several other UN agencies, the European Civil Aviation Conference, the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the International Air Transport Association, Airports Council International as well as Member States of the Organization.

Much of the work continues to be carried out under a *Cooperative Arrangement for the Prevention of Spread of Communicable Disease through Air Travel* (CAPSCA). Launched in the Asia/Pacific region after the SARS outbreak, the project provides training for local officers, as well as airport evaluations against the ICAO guidelines and relevant articles of the International Health Regulations (2005). The CAPSCA has also enhanced inter-agency cooperation within the United Nations system in assisting States to develop preparedness plans for the aviation sector. Dr. Evans emphasizes that cooperation, collaboration and effective communication between all stakeholders, public and private, are essential elements in developing effective preparedness plans for aviation.

Recognizing the critical importance of contingency planning commensurate with the level of health risk, the Council of ICAO has adopted a Declaration regarding the current health threat of the Influenza A (H1N1) virus and also reinforced the WHO recommendation that advises travel restrictions are not warranted, as they would have little effect on stopping the virus from spreading but would be highly disruptive to the global community.

Accordingly, the Declaration emphasizes that measures adopted by Contracting States should be proportionate, appropriate, non-discriminatory and strictly limited to meet health risks. Additional health measures should be based on available scientific evidence of a risk to human health or, when such evidence is insufficient, the available information including from the WHO and relevant intergovernmental organizations and international bodies.

Note to editors:

ICAO Guidelines for States Concerning the Management of Communicable Disease Posing a Serious Public Health Risk can be consulted on www.icao.int/icao/en/med/AvInfluenza_guidelines.pdf

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A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created in 1944 to promote the safe and orderly development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency and regularity, as well as for aviation environmental protection. The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 190 Contracting States.

**DECLARATION OF THE ICAO COUNCIL
ON THE INFLUENZA A (H1N1) OUTBREAK OF 2009**

“Whereas Article 14 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation states that ‘Each contracting State agrees to take effective measures to prevent the spread by means of air navigation of cholera, typhus (epidemic), smallpox, yellow fever, plague, and such other communicable diseases as the contracting States shall from time to time decide to designate, and to that end contracting States will keep in close consultation with the agencies concerned with international regulations relating to sanitary measures applicable to aircraft’;

Whereas ICAO Resolution A35-12 states that ‘the protection of the health of passengers and crews on international flights is an integral element of safe air travel and that conditions should be in place to ensure its preservation in a timely and cost-effective manner’;

Whereas Article 44 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation states that ‘The aims and objectives of the Organization are to develop the principles and techniques of international air navigation and to foster the planning and development of international air transport so as to ...[m]eet the needs of the peoples of the world for safe, regular, efficient and economical air transport’;

Whereas Annex 9 (Facilitation) to the Convention on International Civil Aviation contains Standards and Recommended Practices relating to health measures that should be taken by Contracting States to prevent the spread of communicable disease by air;

Whereas the ICAO Cooperative Arrangement for the Prevention of Spread of Communicable Disease through Air Travel (CAPSCA) project is an appropriate measure to improve global harmonization of preparedness planning, and Contracting States should be encouraged to support it;

Whereas Article 2 of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations (2005) states that ‘The purpose and scope of these Regulations are to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade’;

Whereas during the current outbreak of Influenza A(H1N1) the WHO has consistently advised against travel restrictions, which would have very little effect on stopping the virus from spreading, but would be highly disruptive to the global community;

Whereas some States have nevertheless imposed restrictions which are not in accordance with WHO advice;

THE COUNCIL THEREFORE DECLARES THAT:

i) during the current outbreak of Influenza A(H1N1), Contracting States should make every effort to ensure that air transport services remain uninterrupted, so as to avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade;

ii) Contracting States should implement relevant Standards and Recommended Practices, take account of additional guidance material issued by ICAO, and facilitate the exchange of relevant information between airport and aircraft operators, and public health authorities;

iii) Contracting States should comply with the International Health Regulations (2005) and the WHO’s recommendations and advice issued with regard to this outbreak. Measures taken by Contracting States should be proportionate, appropriate, non-discriminatory and strictly limited to meet health risks;

iv) those Contracting States which are considering introduction of health measures in addition to those recommended by WHO shall do so in accordance with the International Health Regulations (2005), including Article 43, which states in part that, when determining whether to implement the additional health measures ‘States Parties shall base their determinations upon:

(a) scientific principles;

(b) available scientific evidence of a risk to human health, or where such evidence is insufficient, the available information including from WHO and other relevant intergovernmental organizations and international bodies; and

(c) any available specific guidance or advice from WHO’ .

v) Contracting States that have imposed restrictions which are not in accordance with WHO advice, are urged to withdraw these restrictions.”

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