

Changes to suspected communicable disease notification procedure

Commanders of aircraft involved in international air transport hold the responsibility to notify the Authorities at their destination of any cases of communicable disease present on their aircraft. Normally this is accomplished by the submission of a General Declaration. If during the journey, the Commander became aware of a case of communicable disease, the only way of informing the destination in advance was by use of company communication channels, to direct a message to the company staff or handling agents at destination for them to inform the Authorities in advance of arrival.

On account of the vagaries of this system and a desire to ensure that early warning of communicable disease is rapidly transmitted, ICAO has published an amendment to PANS ATM which comes into force on 19 November 2009.

From then, the normal Air Traffic Services (ATS) system may be used to transmit details of communicable disease on an aircraft to destination. This will ensure that the message receives appropriate priority and reaches the Authorities at destination in a timely manner. The requirement is that a Commander, on becoming aware of a suspected case of communicable disease, will inform the en route ATS unit with which they are then in contact with details of the aircraft, its departure and destination with ETA, together with the total on board and the nature and numbers of suspected cases on board. This will then be passed directly to the destination using the AFTN. The details of the amendment are copied below.



Amendment 2 to PANS ATM 19 November 2009

16.6 NOTIFICATION OF SUSPECTED COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, OR OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH RISK, ON BOARD AN AIRCRAFT

16.6.1 The flight crew of an en-route aircraft shall, upon identifying a suspected case(s) of communicable disease, or other public health risk, on board the aircraft, promptly notify the ATS unit with which the pilot is communicating, the information listed below:

- a) aircraft identification;
- b) departure aerodrome;
- c) destination aerodrome;
- d) estimated time of arrival;
- e) number of persons on board;
- f) number of suspected case(s) on board; and
- g) nature of the public health risk, if known.

16.6.2 The ATS unit, upon receipt of information from a pilot regarding suspected case(s) of communicable disease, or other public health risk, on board the aircraft, shall forward a message as soon as possible to the ATS unit serving the destination/departure, unless procedures exist to notify the appropriate authority designated by the State and the aircraft operator or its designated representative.

16.6.3 When a report of a suspected case(s) of communicable disease, or other public health risk, on board an aircraft is received by an ATS unit serving the destination/departure, from another ATS unit or from an aircraft or an aircraft operator, the unit concerned shall forward a message as soon as possible to the public health authority (PHA) or the appropriate authority designated by the State as well as the aircraft operator or its designated representative, and the aerodrome authority.

Note 1.— See Annex 9 — Facilitation, Chapter 1 (Definitions), Chapter 8, 8.12 and 8.15, and Appendix 1, for relevant additional information related to the subject of communicable disease and public health risk on board an aircraft.

Note 2.— The PHA is expected to contact the airline representative or operating agency and aerodrome authority, if applicable, for subsequent coordination with the aircraft concerning clinical details and aerodrome preparation. Depending on the communications facilities available to the airline representative or operating agency, it may not be possible to communicate with the aircraft until it is closer to its destination. Apart from the initial notification to the ATS unit whilst en-route, ATC communications channels are to be avoided.

Note 3.— The information to be provided to the departure aerodrome will prevent the potential spread of communicable disease, or other public health risk, through other aircraft departing from the same aerodrome.

Note 4.— AFTN (urgency message), telephone, facsimile or other means of transmission may be used.