COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR FERRIES TO OFF-SHORE ISLANDS
v 1.0, 20.03.2020

This guidance document gives general advice about preventing the spread of COVID-19 for transport services (such as ferries) to the offshore islands in Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Cork

It highlights some specific relevant information and signposts to relevant advice/guidance available on the HSE, Department of Health and/or Government websites. Government advice changes according to latest developments – please ensure you keep up to date by following published advice from the Government and the HSE.

LATEST UPDATES

- Department of Health COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Health advice
- HSE Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Government Departments COVID-19 (Coronavirus) – this includes Advice for Employers and Employees from DEASP

Background

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), which is spread mainly through sneeze or cough droplets. To infect you, it has to get from an infected person's nose or mouth into your eyes, nose or mouth.
This can happen - *if:*

- you come into close contact (<2 metres/6 feet) with someone who has the virus and who is coughing or sneezing
- you touch - with your hands - surfaces or objects that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on, and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes without having washed your hands thoroughly.

Keep this in mind. It will help you remember all the things you need to do to protect yourself and others from the virus.

As it is a new illness, we do not know how easily the COVID-19 virus spreads from person to person. Spread is most likely from those who have symptoms. COVID-19 can be a mild or severe illness with symptoms that include fever (high temperature), cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing.

We do not know for sure which groups are most at risk of complications (or severe illness) if they catch this new coronavirus.

It is likely that you are more at risk if you catch coronavirus (COVID-19) and you: are 60 years of age and older; have a long-term medical condition, *for example -* heart disease, lung disease, high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes or liver disease.

Stopping the spread of COVID-19

The best way to <u>protect yourself and others</u> against COVID-19:

- **Wash your hands frequently***
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth**
- **Practice respiratory hygiene**
- **Maintain social distancing**
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily**

*by doing this you eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth, and nose

The [Updated Measures in Response to COVID-19](#) introduced on Thursday 12th March by Government said the following in relation to <u>transport</u> and <u>public gatherings</u>

- There should be **no** mass gatherings involving **more than 100 people if** located indoors
- Public transport will continue but the public is asked to follow guidelines on social distancing
- Social distancing is keeping a **2m (6ft) space** between you and other people. You should not shake hands or make close contact where possible
- Commuters are advised to travel off peak and practice social distancing. If you are experiencing symptoms, do not use public transport. Self-isolate and call your GP.

How do these Measures apply to ferries to the offshore islands?

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht provides subsidised support via public service contracts for a broad range of ferry services – passenger ferries, light and heavy cargo services, and roll-on/roll-off ferries – to offshore islands in Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Cork[1]. Fifteen of the offshore islands have subsidised public transport services, which carry passengers; there are also private operators on some routes.

Offshore Islands and services provided via DCHG support	
Donegal	Árainn Mhór and Oileán Thoraí – broad range of ferry services
Mayo	Clare Island, Inis Bigil and Inishturk – passenger & cargo ferry services
	Inishlyre, Clynish & Collanmore – modest cargo service only
Galway	Inishbofin and the three Aran Islands of Inis Oírr, Inis Meáin & Inis Mór – broad range of ferry services
Cork	Bere, Sherkin, Whiddy, Cléire, Long & Heir islands – mixture of passenger, roll on/roll off and cargo services
	Dursey island – cargo service only

Service providers operate vessels with varying maximum <u>passenger carrying capacity</u>, e.g. between 12 and 36 for smaller islands (mainly in Cork), 96 for Árainn Mhór (Donegal), and 294 for services to the Aran Islands (Galway). For some vessels, this is mostly <u>indoor seating</u>.

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[1] https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/08/21-subsidised-ferry-services-to-the-offshore-islands.pdf

It is public transport, but also – at times, by sheer virtue of numbers – it <u>can be</u> a mass gathering of people within an indoor space.

Any transport service provider would therefore need to look at **how it would implement the Measures** outlined by Government in response to COVID-19 in order to achieve **social distancing** and protect staff and passengers, while ensuring that the service can continue.

What ferry services can do to help protect customers and employees

Social distancing

- look at strategies to avoid crowding of passengers on ferries (e.g. encourage internet/ phone booking by travellers so it's easier to manage numbers)
- reduce passenger numbers to enable **at least 1 metre/3 feet space (ideally 2m/6ft)** between people and ensure less than 100 people in a confined space on the ferry and in waiting areas
- have a clear system to manage passenger traffic on and off ferries
- for roll-on/roll-off ferries – allow customers to remain in their vehicles for the duration of the journey, if on an open vehicle deck
- reduce cash handling between customers and staff as much as possible

Raise awareness – *remind staff to*

- **wash hands** frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub if hands are not visibly dirty
- **wash hands** before eating, drinking, smoking, preparing food and using the toilet and arriving at the workplace after using public transport
- practice good **respiratory hygiene,** i.e. when coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately into a closed bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
- **avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth** – if you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your contaminated hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself
- exercise a common sense approach to interaction with passengers and other staff, e.g. avoid shaking hands, avoid making close contact if possible, especially with those who are coughing and sneezing; reduce cash handling
- stay home if they are feeling unwell, are in regular contact with someone who is unwell, or are concerned they may have been exposed to coronavirus

Raise awareness – *share information*

- display <u>COVID-19 information/advice posters</u> from the HSE or Department of Health in prominent places – on the ferry, in waiting rooms, booking offices etc. – including posters advising what to do if people feel unwell
- use Department of Health [floor graphics explaining social distancing as part of COVID-19](#) - on board the ferry, in waiting rooms/ booking offices etc, to help people to maintain distance in these areas
- put notices on the back of toilet doors advising to wash hands thoroughly

- reminder messages over the tannoy system (e.g. about queuing at safe distances, using bins provided for tissues etc.)
- show COVID-19 information <u>videos or screen posters</u> on TV screens

COVID-19 videos	
Department of Health YouTube channel	New Measures in Response to COVID-19 for the General Public https://youtu.be/8xrKcmgyORI
	Protect Yourself from COVID-19 (Coronavirus) https://youtu.be/ztj7JhMt3Wc
	Why is Soap so Effective against COVID-19? https://youtu.be/vVzHGLqf5YU
HSE YouTube channel	Learn about hand hygiene and preventing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) https://youtu.be/5JYhm9oa-DM

COVID-19 posters	
Click on **Language** at the top right hand corner of the screen/webpage for Irish language versions	
Information posters for public use	https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/ee0781-covid-19-posters-for-public-use/ (includes A3 posters, A5 leaflet, and Screen posters) *e.g. posters for airports & ports, posters for public offices etc*
	Printable materials for workplaces & communities https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/
Public Health advice (multiple topics)	https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/472f64-covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-and-advice/#public-health-advice-posters
Cough hygiene	*'Cover your cough and sneeze'*: https://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/HPS01325.pdf https://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/HPS01324.pdf
	'Clúdaigh do chasacht agus do shraoth'': https://www.education.ie/ga/An-Roinn/Fogra%C3%AD/comhairle-o-fss-maidir-le-coronavirus.html
Hand hygiene	Hand hygiene posters in Irish and English https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/
Department of Health floor graphics	These explain social distancing as part of COVID-19 (indoor/outdoor) https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/472f64-covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-and-advice/#social-distancing-graphic

Cleaning regimes and hygiene measures

- take a pro-active approach in undertaking extra cleaning and sanitation in terminals/ waiting areas, in booking offices and on board ferries
- increase the frequency and extent of cleaning regimes and ensure that they include:
  - extra measures to clean and disinfect all touch points (touch point cleaning focuses on common areas and locations that are touched frequently by people throughout the day)
  - especially all hard surfaces in high-contact areas such as:
    - door handles, grab rails/ hand rails in corridors/stairwells, plastic-coated or laminated worktops, access touchpads, payment PIN pads, ticket machines, telephones/keyboards in offices, and toilets/taps/sanitary fittings
  - clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using a household cleaning product/**bleach**
  - wear rubber gloves when cleaning surfaces, wash the gloves while still wearing them, then wash your hands after you take them off
- ensure soap and hot running water, paper towels for drying hands and bins for disposal of paper towels in all toilet facilities/ washrooms (not shared towels or hand-dryers, see WHO myth-busters)
- install hand-sanitation points with alcohol-based hand sanitiser (at least 60% alcohol) in passenger areas (e.g. at points of entry to/exit from the ferry, beside any food/drink outlet, in the toilets) and booking offices/ waiting rooms - encourage passengers & staff to use these
- ensure sufficient bins available for disposal of tissues (preferably covered bins, lined with a bin bag, replace when three-quarters full)
- disinfectant desk wipes in booking offices/ reception desks.

Help with timely Contact Tracing

In the event of a person with COVID-19 travelling on a ferry, Public Health doctors and teams will need specific information on passengers/ crew who were on the same ferry in order to quickly assess the risk to others travelling.

Having a list of people travelling on each ferry with each person's name, contact phone number and email address (ideally in MS Excel spreadsheet format) would help Public Health doctors and teams to **trace contacts** much more quickly – speed is essential here to help prevent onward transmission of infection.

Dealing with someone who possibly has COVID-19

- Anyone who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should not be travelling or working
- However, in instances where this is necessary (e.g. needing access to testing/ healthcare on the mainland), the following should apply:
  - ensure employees on-board know what to do to manage the situation safely in order to minimise contact between passengers and crew with the ill person

- o if the ill traveller has been initially assessed on the island by the National Ambulance Service (NAS), they may be travelling in a NAS car and/or have a NAS crew member with them who will be able to advise on and help institute appropriate measures
- o the ill traveller should ideally be separated from others by a physical distance of **at least 1m (3 ft)**
- o if travelling via car on a roll-on/roll-off ferry, this self-isolation could be in the car during the ferry crossing to minimise contact with other passengers and crew
- o if a passenger-only ferry, it may be necessary to identify a space on the ferry where the ill traveller can be separated from other passengers and crew by 2m (6 ft) – preferably in the open air (weather permitting), or an area with shelter on open deck
- *for the ill traveller –*
  - o use of a surgical face mask is recommended, if available and can be tolerated
  - o if a surgical face mask is not available or cannot be tolerated, the ill traveller should be asked to cover their mouth and nose with tissues when sneezing or coughing
  - o used masks and tissues should be disposed of safely, and toilets cleaned after use
  - o the ill passenger should be asked to wash hands frequently during the journey.

Is there a risk from transporting freight or cargo on board the ferry?

From experience with other coronaviruses, we know that these types of viruses don't survive long on objects, such as letters or parcels.

Is there a risk from transporting pets on board the ferry?

At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals including pets can spread COVID-19.