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Guidelines

Border management measures for passengers and Cargo at Land Crossings

Objective

This document aims to provide guidelines / SOPs for both the authorities and health officials in land border management measures to protect health and ensure the safe deliveries of critical goods and essential cargo services

Rationale

The COVID-19 outbreak is a new public health challenge around the globe, causing acute respiratory illness leading to high mortality and morbidity. The current COVID-19 outbreak has spread across several borders, which has prompted the demand for the detection and management of suspected cases at Points of Entry (PoEs). Lockdowns and other coordinated restrictive measures are necessary to save lives. However, these measures may also severely slow down our economies and can delay the deliveries of essential goods and cargo services. These guidelines have been developed to regulate measures to ensure continued and uninterrupted land crossing for passengers and cargo services.

General preparations at Land crossings/ Border Check Points

It is of utmost importance that necessary preparations are made at land crossing to effectively deal with the challenge, following are to be estimated/ensured: -

- Average number of travelers crossing the borders per day.
- Demarcation of screening premises, temporary Isolation areas, waiting areas and quarantine facilities for suspected or infected travelers
- Availability of necessary equipment such as thermal guns, thermo scanners, PPEs etc.
- Identification and employment of trained staff at health counters.
- Clear guidelines to the staff for their roles and responsibilities
- Establishing coordination with following agencies / Departments: -
 - LEA
 - FIA
 - Relevant Provincial DG Health
 - District Health Officer
 - Availability of ambulances through relevant dept

General Operating Procedures

Immediately after Crossing Zero Line

- On arrival of travelers after crossing the border, proper queuing shall be ensured by LEA keeping them at least 2 meters apart from each other in view to maintain Social distancing.
- All travelers and staff should wear appropriate surgical/medical mask
- Hand Sanitizers to be placed at arrival points and travelers are advised to rub and sanitize their hands.
- Provision of surgical/medical masks for travelers
- Handing over of Health Declaration Forms (HDF) and travel history forms to all the travelers by the Health Check post staff and ensuring that both forms are submitted to Port Health Officials

Health check post reception desk / health declaration counter (CHE)

- Health counter shall serve as a point of first contact for the travelers with their filled-in HDFs
- Filled HDFs shall be collected at the counter and analyzed as per the questions; helping segregation and preliminary decisions
- The travelers are screened with thermal guns/scanner by health staff and are inquired about symptoms, if any
- Results of screening should be evaluated by the Health Staff
- Travelers with fever shall be marked on HDF and report to this effect is made immediately to In-charge Health Check Post for action
- Travelers with no fever shall go through routine quarantine process (Ideally, every traveler entering Pakistan should be kept under Quarantine equal to Incubation Period of COVID-19. It is therefore recommended that all travelers shall be kept under Quarantine for 14 days and at the termination of this period a COVID RT-PCR will be performed for clearance of traveler)
- However, in case of lack of resources and logistic constraints, following would be a viable option:

Disposal of Travelers

Once all travelers have passed through the above said process, there will be two classes of travelers:

Symptomatic Travelers:

Either of the following signs/symptoms should initiate the protocols of suspicion of COVID-19:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty in breathing

If either of these symptoms is present, as per the prescribed SOPs, the traveler shall be sent to Isolation Area at Health Check Post. A detailed verification shall be done by medical officer who will take a detailed Travel History from any endemic zone or contact evidence of the traveler with COVID-19.

Following actions will be taken by Health officer:

- Immediately provide PPEs to the traveler.
- Report to the on-spot immigration /Law enforcement agency (LEA) officials as well as Govt Health Officials
- In case any relatives/family is accompanying, examine them immediately with provision of surgical/medical masks to them
- MO/psychologist will conduct a brief awareness session and reassure the travelers by counseling session on the disease modality and current protocols for such patients thereby instilling confidence and facilitating evacuation
- The Incharge Health Check post shall then coordinate with: -
 - Rapid Response Team designated by Provincial Govt for evacuation of the suspected patient.
 - Designated hospital focal person
- The LEA shall then escort the suspected patient/traveler to designated ambulance and further to the designated hospital
- In case of more than one traveler with suspicion of the COVID-19, multiple ambulances might be required therefore an assessment based on the need be done to ensure smooth running
- Finally, all staff coming in contact with a suspected case shall ensure full protection and use of PPEs like surgical/medical masks, gloves

Asymptomatic Travelers

All such travelers will be carried by specific buses parked at borders and will be placed under quarantine at designated centers. This operation will be carried out by local administration

PCR swabs will be taken in quarantine facilities and travelers will be detained there until the outcome of their results of RT-PCR tests. They will be detained at Quarantine subject to Result of RT-PCR with two possibilities:

- In case of positive result, send to designated facility through RRT for Isolation OR Home Isolation as per protocol of the provincial government.
- In case of negative result, traveler would be advised to go home. However, he will be directed and educated to remain home-confined for at least 14 days with information materials and contact numbers.

Safety Measures for staff

- Clear policy for staff as to when and how quarantine may apply - For example, if a staff member has been in contact with an infected person
- Developing staff training specific to Covid-19 e.g. how to protect themselves, how to deal with the various situations they will face in the course of their work, how to avoid discrimination, learn appropriate measures for taking care of a sick person (e.g. to wear a mask or not), etc.



- All staff should be reminded to wash their hands frequently, ideally with soap and water or alternatively using a hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol
- Vulnerable staff should be protected and not allowed to come in contact with general public

Data Collection

- The Data will be entered on Covid-19 Travelers Surveillance Management Information System-TSMIS and sent to the Directorate of Central Health Establishment (CHE) daily. It will contain the traveler screening data and contact tracing details as per template.

Disinfection of Cargo and Vehicles

To date, there is no epidemiological information to suggest that contact with goods or products shipped from countries affected by the COVID-19 outbreak have been the source of COVID-19 disease in humans (this excludes live animals, animal and biological products). WHO is continuing to closely monitor the evolution of the COVID-19 outbreak and will update recommendations as needed.

Disinfection of passenger cabin of vehicles

As far as preventative disinfection is concerned, it is recommended that all passenger cabins (Trucks, Buses, Vans, Cars) be disinfected by any of the following chemicals at border crossings:

- Use compound quaternary ammonium salt, double-chain quaternary ammonium salt, hydrogen peroxide or chlorine-containing disinfectant.
- For hydrogen peroxide, concentration should be no higher CAAC than 3% and reaction time be 20 minutes; effective concentration of chlorine should be within the range of 250mg/L-500mg/L, and reaction time be 10 minutes

Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international recommendations and best practices.

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References

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4. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/88238>

For more information, please contact:

HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH, PM National Health Complex, Islamabad

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