



# Crew Testing: Safely Enabling the Global Air Transport Supply Chain During the Covid-19 Pandemic

## Position paper

### Background

The impact of COVID-19 on the global air transport supply chain continues to be significant, with airlines struggling to cope with the unpredictable and ever-changing border restriction measures implemented by States.

From the outset of the pandemic, these fluctuating border regulations impacted both the traveling public and the transportation of crucial medical supplies. As a result, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) made public their initial "Harmonized Guidance on Facilitating Cargo Flights and Protecting Crew during the COVID-19 Pandemic".

The CAPSCA guidance was intended to facilitate the movement of freight, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), aircraft spare parts and the positioning of qualified engineering personnel and recognizes that specific health and sanitation measures that have been implemented protect the risk of crew becoming exposed to COVID-19.

These measures are consistent with the revised guidelines recently published by the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART). IATA and industry partners have worked closely with ICAO in the development of these guidelines and recommended best practices to ensure its member airlines are well versed in the adoption of this multi layered risk-based approach to mitigate virus transmission.

The CART guidance specifically recommended that airline crew (already categorized as "essential workers" within ICAO Annex 9) should NOT be subject to the same restrictions that are applied to the general traveling public:

*"Crew members who are involved in flights with a layover, should not be medically quarantined or detained for observations while on layover or after returning, unless they were exposed to a known symptomatic passenger or crew member on board or during the layover"*

This is further emphasized in the following CART guidance:

*"Crews are not subject to screening or restrictions applicable to other travelers. health screening methods for crew members are as non-invasive as possible"*

## Current issues

Despite the CART guidance, we are seeing an increasing trend whereby States are applying the same public health measures for crew that are applied to the general traveling public. Such measures could include providing proof of a negative COVID test prior to departure and in some cases a second negative COVID test is required on arrival. Clearly, both have a significant operational and financial impact on airlines. There are already several Civil Aviation Authorities which only allow crew members with a negative COVID-19 PCR test certificate to layover in the respective countries.

One global airline has estimated to IATA that the additional cost of complying with such requirements is approximately US \$2,600 per flight. For a daily flight that would add up to an additional US \$950,000 per year-- and that is for a single flight.

These measures not only contravene the recommended CAPSCA and CART guidance, they may significantly impact the ability of the aviation industry to restart and rebuild connectivity.

Therefore, States should acknowledge that crew present a different risk profile than passengers and that more flexibility and relaxation of testing requirements and/or quarantine could be considered (including exemptions), in accordance with PHA recommendations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ATTACHMENT B to State letter AN 5/28-20/97 – Appendix A, 23 Sep 2020