

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE**

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee on COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-79

Subject: Health Guidance - AFP

Asked by: Rex Patrick

Question:

When was health guidance relating to the coronavirus outbreak first distributed to AFP personnel, especially AFP personnel at airports and ports, and AFP personnel overseas? Please provide the Committee with a copy of that advice/guidance?

Answer:

The AFP first issued formal advice to staff on 22 January 2020 – this was directed to staff and their families deployed overseas and in Commonwealth territories (including China and Christmas Island) as well as to those working in aviation roles. Broad advice was issued to all AFP staff on 28 January 2020. The AFP has continued to provide the workforce with regular, comprehensive information and advice about the impacts of COVID-19.

A copy of advice distributed to staff is at **Attachment A**.

The AFP has continued to provide the workforce with regular, comprehensive information and advice about the impacts of COVID-19.



Minute

Addressee International Operations and Aviation Operations

Title Recommendations Regarding Novel Coronavirus 2019-nCoV for AFP Members

The advice below relates to the current Novel Corona respiratory virus.

Advice for Aviation members

Aviation members may be called upon to assist members of other agencies in managing an unwell person in the airport setting. AFP Organisational Health's Injury Prevention team is sending P2 masks to each airport to be available for AFP members should they be asked to assist with unwell members. Disposable gloves should also be worn.

- Patrolling members should follow the Department of Health recommendations regarding if/ when P2 Masks should be worn.
- Members should wash their hands (or use their hand gel) regularly throughout their shifts, wash their hands prior to eating and avoid touching their faces.

The Australian Government Department of Health is working across agencies to implement additional measures to manage the risk of [novel coronavirus](#) (2019-nCoV) from the region of Wuhan in China

The Australian Government has well established mechanisms to detect and respond to ill travellers, and processes in place to implement further measures if the risk increases. The commonwealth state and territories governments are now undertaking evidence based, proportionate additional border measures, particularly in relation to the three weekly direct flights from Wuhan to Sydney. All passengers on these direct flights will receive information about the virus on arrival requesting that they identify themselves to biosecurity officers at the airport if they are unwell. If they have symptoms of an infectious disease they will be assessed.

- Additional information will be displayed at all major international ports around Australia, with instructions on what to do if travellers have symptoms or if symptoms develop.
- The Department of Health is currently working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to update the [travel advisory to Wuhan](#).
- The Department of Health is also preparing updated advice for doctors and other health professionals in Australia and will be providing advice on the Department of Health's website <https://www.health.gov.au/news/statements/novel-coronavirus-update>
- Australia has world-class public health systems in place to manage any cases, including isolation facilities in each state and territory.

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Advice for deployed members and their families

Please consider regularly reviewing the ISOS site which will provide contemporary information under their *news releases* section. <https://www.internationalsos.com/>

To access up-to-date notifications you will require your ISOS membership number and in the top bar find the *members login button* or double click on "Members" at the top of the page

- **AFP's membership number** [REDACTED] (need to type this in, not cut and paste).

On the left blue box there is an email subscription link. Please register and you will be kept up-to-date with alerts.

An example of the information posted today at this site is below.

Asia & the Pacific: Anticipate travel disruption following increased Novel Coronavirus cases; abide by all official directives

Level: **Advisory**

Location: China,Hong Kong (China SAR),Macao (China SAR)

Category: Travel restriction

Last Updated: 22 Jan 2020 00:12 GMT

The authorities imposed increased travel restrictions and comprehensive screening measures at various urban centres on 21 January following an increase in reported 2019-Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) cases. These measures follow a government announcement on the day confirming that the virus can be transmitted by humans. More than 300 confirmed cases have been reported nationwide, with the majority detected in Wuhan (Hubei province). Disruption will likely be exacerbated by the influx of travellers during the Lunar New Year holiday period **until 8 February** (see our *separate report*). Members should maintain flexible itineraries, allow additional time while passing through transport hubs and follow all official directives.

ADVICE

- Maintain flexible itineraries accounting for additional time required for health and temperature screening at airports, railway stations, docks and long-haul bus stations. Arrive early at transport hubs.
- Do not travel if you are sick. Note that some locations have implemented screening and travellers may face quarantine and testing.
- Do not visit wet markets or farms. Keep some distance from people who are obviously sick. Maintain good personal hygiene. Avoid direct contact with animals (live or dead) and their environment. Do not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with droppings. Seek medical attention if you develop symptoms, especially fever or shortness of breath. For further detailed medical advice, see the current International SOS medical alert on [2019-nCoV](#) within the [Pandemic Information Site](#).
- Monitor the latest information on the virus, as well as any quarantine and isolation procedures being implemented at both your origin and your destination.
- Monitor our alerts on China for further notable updates.

MORE DETAIL

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Affected areas

The authorities confirmed the first cases of the pneumonia-like coronavirus on 31 December 2019 in Wuhan. On 20 January, more than 100 new cases were announced in China, sparking concerns ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday period and leading to increased screening measures imposed in both China and nearby countries. At least six fatalities have been confirmed since the outbreak, all in Wuhan. 2019-nCoV cases have also been reported in the capital Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin municipalities, Guangdong province and Hong Kong.

Screening measures, travel restrictions

In Wuhan, local tourist groups have been banned from travelling outside of the city and private cars will be checked by the local police to prevent the import and export of animals. The authorities have installed 35 fixed temperature screening stations at Wuhan Tianhe International Airport (WUH), train stations and bus stops. Travellers with symptoms of the virus will be quarantined and directed towards designated hospitals.

Several airports in Zhejiang province, including Hangzhou Xiaoshan International ([HGH](#)), Ningbo Lishe International ([NGB](#)), Taizhou Luqiao (HYN), Wenzhou Longwan International ([WNZ](#)) and Yiwu (YIW), began conducting temperature screenings on travellers from Wuhan on 20 January. The authorities in Shenzhen (Guangdong) have also started conducting temperature screenings at airports, docks and railway and bus stations. Guangzhou (Guangdong) will start temperature checks at metro stations from 22 January. Those travelling to Hong Kong from Wuhan by air will have to fill out Health Declaration Forms as part of the screening procedure.

Australian authorities have raised their travel advice for Wuhan to Level 2 (second-lowest on a four-tier scale), suggesting that travellers exercise a 'high degree of caution'. India, Indonesia and Singapore have released advisories regarding travel to Wuhan, but have not yet imposed any travel restrictions.

For any additional enquiries, please contact Org Health Triage [REDACTED]

The information provided has been sourced from the Commonwealth Department of Health, Smart Traveller and ISOS

22 Jan 2020 AFP Organisational Health

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From: [REDACTED]
To:
Subject: Novel Coronavirus Outbreak [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Tuesday, 28 January 2020 3:50:04 PM
Attachments: [Information for Border Workers - Novel Coronavirus \(nCoV\) - 23 January 2020 -PDF.pdf](#)
[Coronavirus Factsheet January 2020 FINAL.PDF](#)

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Dear Colleagues,

Organisational Health is closely monitoring the recent outbreak of a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Wuhan, Hubei Province China. The risk to members of the Australian Federal Police is considered **low**.

What is 2019-nCoV?

Coronaviruses are a type of virus that can affect humans and animals. Some cause illness similar to the common cold, while others can cause more serious illness. 2019-nCoV is primarily affecting people who have recently been in the city of Wuhan, China, or had contact with sick people from Wuhan.

What are the symptoms of 2019-nCoV?

Symptoms of 2019-nCoV are similar to the common cold including fever, cough and sore throat. For those with a weakened immune system there is a chance 2019-nCoV could cause a more serious respiratory illness such as pneumonia or bronchitis. The World Health Organisation and Australian Department of Health advise that human-to-human transmission occurs when individuals display symptoms of the illness.

How can I reduce my risk?

AFP staff should use personal protective equipment when in contact with ill travellers arriving on a flight from a 2019-nCoV risk area (mainland China). The following measures will also help reduce the risk of transmission:

- Practise and promote frequent handwashing
- Where possible, stay 1 metre or more away from travellers who are ill
- Practise and promote good respiratory (cough) etiquette
- Undertake appropriate cleaning and disinfection activities
- Use of PPE if close contact with an ill traveller is required
- The routine processing of paperwork and touching of fingers and hands in the process of handling paperwork like passports is unlikely to be a source of infection

What is Organisational Health doing?

Last week PPE was distributed to AFP post in China and to all airports. Information on PPE and coronavirus was also disseminated. Distribution of PPE to all Asia posts is underway. In addition, AFP participate in an interdepartmental committee meeting which includes representatives from Dept of Health, DFAT, Dept of Agriculture and Dept of Home Affairs amongst others. We are liaising with Dept Home Affairs at all times regarding the health and safety of our members. Data on 2019-nCoV is rapidly changing, we continue to monitor the situation. Additional information is contained within the attachments, please direct any questions to [REDACTED]

Katrina

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CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER
PEOPLE, SAFETY & SECURITY

www.afp.gov.au

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There is currently an outbreak of a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Wuhan, Hubei Province China.

The risk to workers at the Australian border is considered relatively low.

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a type of virus that can affect humans and animals. Some coronaviruses cause illness similar to the common cold while other coronaviruses cause more serious illness, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

The novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) is primarily affecting people who have recently been in the city of Wuhan, China, or had contact with sick people from Wuhan.

What are the symptoms of 2019-nCoV?

Symptoms of 2019-nCoV include fever, cough, sore throat and difficulty breathing. Difficulty breathing is a sign of possible pneumonia that requires prompt medical attention.

What is Australia doing?

Consistent with recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO), no mass temperature screening measures will be implemented at this time. To capture ill travellers who may have been exposed to 2019-nCoV, the Department of Health has included additional questions on the Traveller with Illness Checklist (TIC) for biosecurity officers to administer. The Department of Agriculture is in contact with airlines to ensure compliance with pre-reporting requirements of ill travellers.

The Department of Health is also providing additional communication material for travellers at all international ports. This material informs travellers of the symptoms of 2019-nCoV and encourages them to report to biosecurity officers if they are experiencing symptoms while in the port environment if arriving from China.

The Australian Department of Health is closely monitoring this situation in collaboration with the WHO and the states and territories, and will keep border agencies informed.

Border workers should continue to follow existing processes for screening ill travellers arriving at our international air and sea ports using the updated TIC. This includes identification of ill travellers, isolation and referral to human biosecurity officers where indicated.

How can I reduce my risk?

Border staff should continue to follow existing agency infection prevention work instructions when in contact with ill passengers. Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when recommended by agency work instructions.

If interviewing an ill traveller arriving on a flight from a 2019-nCoV risk area, you may wish to wear a mask, gloves and eye protection in accordance with your workplace guidance.



While the infection does not currently appear to spread easily between people, the following measures will also help reduce the risk further:

- Practise and promote frequent handwashing.
- Where possible, stay 1 metre or more away from travellers who are ill.
- Practise and promote good respiratory (cough) etiquette.
- Undertake appropriate cleaning and disinfection activities.
- Use of PPE if close contact with an ill traveller is required.

Border staff working at the primary line, biosecurity bag inspection areas and other areas of the air and sea ports are not considered to be at a high risk¹. PPE is only recommended when assisting in the processing of ill travellers.

For general infectious diseases advice and information, please refer to the Department of Health *Infectious Disease Information Sheet for Border Staff*.

What should I do if I develop symptoms?

There is no need for alarm, however, the 2019-nCoV outbreak is an emerging concern. If you develop symptoms, see a doctor, call ahead and describe your profession as a border worker with possible contact with travellers from risk areas. If you are coughing, ask for a medical mask to wear while you are at the doctor.

You should also:

- Wash your hands frequently
- Use good cough etiquette – cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and wash your hands afterwards
- Inform your manager of your symptoms

Other information

While 2019-nCoV is of concern and we remain vigilant, it is currently influenza season in the northern hemisphere. It is more likely that travellers displaying infectious symptoms have a common respiratory infection, rather than 2019-nCoV.

¹ Frequent handwashing and cough etiquette should still be practiced in this setting.



There is currently an outbreak of a new coronavirus in Wuhan, Hubei Province China.

The risk to workers at the Australian border is extremely low.

What is coronavirus?

There are many different coronaviruses that can affect humans and animals. Some coronaviruses cause illness similar to the common cold and other coronaviruses cause more serious illness such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). The new coronavirus in China is not thought to be as severe as SARS or MERS.

There has been no evidence to date that this new coronavirus can transmit from person to person in the community or in health care settings.

What is Australia doing?

Consistent with recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO), no additional border screening measures will be implemented at this time.

Border workers should continue to follow existing processes for screening ill travellers arriving at our international air and sea ports. This includes identification of ill travellers, isolation and referral to Human Biosecurity Officers where indicated.

No international travellers suspecting of having coronavirus have been identified at Australia's borders.

The Australian Department of Health is closely monitoring this situation in collaboration with the WHO and the states and territories.

How can I reduce my low risk even further?

The WHO does not recommend any specific health measures for travellers.

Border staff should continue to follow existing agency infection prevention work instructions when in contact with ill passengers.

General infection prevention measures include:

- Practising and promoting frequent handwashing.
- Practising and promoting good cough etiquette.
- Using personal protective equipment when recommended by agency work instructions.

For general infectious diseases advice and information, please refer to the Department of Health *Infectious Disease Information Sheet for Border Staff*.