Operational Safety Instruction

Date: 12th November 2014  OSI/16/14

Subject: PROTOCOL for the NOTIFICATION of COMMUNICABLE DISEASE or ANY DEATH ON BOARD an AIRCRAFT at HEATHROW AIRPORT

It is the responsibility of all employers to ensure that relevant OSIs are brought to the attention of their staff. However, individuals remain responsible for their own actions and those who are in any doubt should consult their Supervisor or Manager.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This Instruction informs airport organisations, and in particular airlines, of the protocols and actions for the notification of communicable diseases or any death on board an aircraft at Heathrow Airport.

1.2 OSI/25/09 is hereby cancelled

2. AIMS

2.1 To prevent the introduction of communicable disease and disease vectors into the UK.

2.2 To contain and control communicable disease at Heathrow and to prevent further spread within the UK.

2.3 To protect against transmission of such diseases onto outbound flights.

3. LEGISLATION

3.1 International Health Regulations

Public Health Aircraft Regulations

Public Health (Infectious Disease) Regulations

3.2 If an airline/handler suspects anyone on an aircraft is suffering from a communicable disease, or has passed away due to the effects of a communicable disease, the airline/handler are required to notify Port Health as detailed in Section 4 of this document.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 In light of the serious outcomes if some communicable diseases are not reported and adequately controlled, it is very important that the procedures in this document are followed in full. People with a communicable disease usually feel unwell, sometimes markedly, usually have a fever and some of the following symptoms; vomiting, diarrhoea, cough or rash. The symptoms may develop suddenly and worsen quickly.
They may be aware of having been in recent contact with someone with a similar illness.

4.2 **Notification – when it is suspected a passenger or crew member is suffering from, or, has passed away due to a communicable disease.**

4.2.1 The Captain of an aircraft, airline representative/handling agent, airport organisations or Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) must inform the Port Health Team when they become aware of any disease reportable under the above regulations, or any illness or symptoms suggestive of a communicable disease. This applies to passengers, including those who are about to disembark or board at Heathrow, and staff.

4.2.2 Captains of aircraft should inform Air Traffic Control, or their Operations, at the earliest opportunity – this notification should be forwarded as soon as practicable to the Port Health Team.

4.2.3 **Notification of disease must be by telephoned through to Port Health on 020 8745 7209 or faxed on 020 8745 6181.**

4.2.4 The Medical Officer (MO) at Port Health, will make a health protection assessment of the situation and advise on what action to take with respect to the affected person and others. If the ill person requires immediate clinical care, the NHS ambulance will be requested to attend.

4.3 **Notification of death on board – natural causes**

4.3.1 The airline or handling agent should request an ambulance to meet the aircraft by contacting the Airport Operations Centre (APOC) on 222 or 0208 759 1212. The APOC Operations Coordinator will transfer the call to the London Ambulance Service (LAS) and also notify the Metropolitan Police Service.

4.4 **Management of Case/Contacts on Aircraft**

4.4.1 Normal practice should be to remove the ill passenger from the aircraft as soon as possible and allow disembarkation of other passengers immediately afterwards. In some circumstances, the MO may ask for Passenger Locator Cards to be completed prior to disembarkation. It will be very rare for the Medical Officer to ask for an aircraft to be held in a secure area and disembarkation prevented.

4.4.2 In his assessment the MO will assess whether the passenger requires clinical care and, if so, will notify the airport paramedics.

The MO will advise on:

- Management of the passenger, e.g. transfer to hospital by ambulance, advice to contact medical services at destination.

- Information collection from other passengers or crew, e.g. Passenger Locator Cards

- Provision of information and advice to concerned passengers and crew

If necessary, the Port Health Team will assist in the collation of information in relation to any other passengers that may be affected.
4.4.3 In the event of a passenger/staff member needing hospitalisation the Health Control Team will request the ambulance service to transport them to the designated hospital. The Health Control Team will also notify the UK Border Force.

4.4.4 The General Declaration of Health will be examined by the Health Control Team to establish if illness has been recorded.

4.4.5 In some cases the Environmental Health Officer should also be notified immediately (telephone 01895 250190 daytime or 01895 250111 out of hours).

This is when:

- There has been a spillage of bodily fluids connected with the suspect case
- There is an outbreak of suspected food poisoning
- The aircraft has come from a country where there is infectious disease and insect/vermin vectors are involved.

5. **DISPOSAL OF CONTAMINATED MATERIAL**

5.1 Any biological waste must be disposed of in accordance with current health guidelines.

6. **DISINSECTION OF AIRCRAFT**

6.1 Certain flights en-route from areas where mosquito/flea borne disease is prevalent will be subjected to disinfection regimes as detailed in World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

7. **DISINFECTION OF AIRCRAFT (i.e. Biological)**

7.1 There will be circumstances when aircraft will need to be disinfected; it is the responsibility of London Borough of Hillingdon to advise and to supervise this, following notification from the Port Health MO.

8. **DECONTAMINATION OF AIRCRAFT (i.e. Chemical)**

8.1 There will be circumstances when aircraft will need to be decontaminated; it is the responsibility of London Borough of Hillingdon to advise and to supervise this, following notification from the Port Health MO.

9. **PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS**

9.1 Any procedural questions on this OSI should in the first instance be addressed to the Health Control Unit on 020 8745 7209 or HAL Safety Improvement Team on 020 8745 7377.

Issued on behalf of the Airside Director