



April 28, 2021

Dear Cruise Industry Colleagues,

Since April 12, 2021, senior leadership from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other relevant federal agencies have engaged in twice-weekly meetings with representatives from various cruise lines. The objective of these meetings has been to engage in dialogue and exchange information with individual cruise line representatives¹ regarding the impact of vaccines² and other scientific developments since the Framework for Conditional Sailing Order (CSO) was issued in October 2020. Participants had the opportunity to ask operational questions about the CSO and CDC's published technical instructions for cruise ships.

During these discussions, individual cruise line representatives were able to express their concerns as to the pace and phases of the CSO, ask questions related to the implementation of the CSO, and reiterate their desire to resume cruising as soon as possible. CDC subject matter experts discussed the public health challenges of cruising safely and responsibly during a global pandemic, particularly regarding the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern. These challenges include ensuring cruise ship passenger operations are conducted in a way that protects crew, passengers, port personnel, and U.S. communities. CDC experts explained the rationale behind certain requirements of the CSO and similarities with other requirements and recommendations regarding maritime operations from international public health entities.

We acknowledge that cruising will never be a zero-risk activity and that the goal of the CSO's phased approach is to resume passenger operations in a way that mitigates the risk of COVID-19 transmission onboard cruise ships and across port communities. We remain committed to the resumption of passenger operations in the United States following the requirements in the CSO by mid-summer, which aligns with the goals announced by many major cruise lines. In furtherance of this mutual effort, we provide the following clarifications to its Phase 2A technical instructions issued on April 2, 2021.

We look forward to reviewing plans submitted by the cruise lines for Phase 2A and moving into the next phase of the CSO soon.

Clarifications

Timeline to resuming passenger operations under the phased approach

- The 30 calendar day timeframe for the submission to CDC of a cruise ship operator's notice for conducting a simulated voyage and the 60 calendar day timeframe for submission to CDC of the

¹ Cruise industry participants included American Queen Steamboat Company, Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line, Carnival Corporation, Cruise Line International Association, Disney Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, Royal Caribbean Group, and Viking Cruises.

² As part of these discussions, CDC reviewed CLIA's vaccine position statement which CDC understands to be that trade group's current position regarding the role of vaccines in restarting cruising.

cruise ship operator's COVID-19 Conditional Sailing Certificate application as set forth in the CSO are suggested as guidelines. CDC Maritime Unit will respond to submissions within 5 business days. CDC expects to quickly approve applications that are both complete and accurate.

- CDC encourages the finalization of the Phase 2A port agreements to allow cruise ships to embark non-essential crew for simulated and restricted voyages. Prior to finalization of the Phase 2A agreements with port and local health authorities, CDC will allow cruise ships to embark 50 percent of the non-essential crew expected to sail on the first restricted voyage. CDC expects that a full complement of crew will not be needed for a cruise ship operator to conduct a simulated voyage because such simulations may be conducted with a small percentage of passengers.

Phase 2A: Port agreements – General Components

- In documenting the approval of all U.S. port and local health authorities where the ship intends to dock or make port during one or more simulated voyages or restricted passenger voyages, the cruise ship operator may enter into a multi-port agreement (as opposed to a single port agreement) provided that all relevant port and local health authorities (including the state health authorities) are signatories to the agreement. Such multi-port agreements may be particularly suitable if one port has limited medical or housing capacity and a nearby port is able to supplement these capacities.

Phase 2A: Port agreements – Vaccination Components

- In completing the vaccination component of a Phase 2A agreement, including a plan and timeline for vaccination of cruise ship crew prior to resuming passenger operations, cruise ship operators must disclose and document their current plans to vaccinate crew. This includes if a cruise ship operator only plans to encourage crew to be vaccinated on a voluntary basis once vaccines become more widely available.
- In completing the vaccination component of a Phase 2A agreement, including presentation of proposals regarding how the cruise ship operator intends to incorporate vaccination strategies to protect passengers, cruise ship operators must disclose and document their current strategy. This includes if a cruise ship operator only plans to encourage passengers to be vaccinated on a voluntary basis once vaccines become more widely available.

Phase 2A: Port agreements – Medical and Housing Components

- In determining the sufficiency of shoreside medical and housing facilities, port authorities and local health departments should consider the cruise ship operator's plan and timeline for vaccination of crew and presentation of proposals incorporating vaccination strategies to maximally protect passengers. Those cruise ship operators with a clear and specific vaccination plan and timeline may have only a limited need for shoreside medical and housing facilities compared to operators who only plan or propose to encourage vaccinations.

Phase 2A: Port agreements – Medical Components

- CDC acknowledges that shoreside medical facilities and healthcare systems cannot guarantee bed capacity. In documenting a cruise ship operator's contractual arrangement with such

facilities or systems, redundant contracts, or contracts allowing for preferential acceptance of patients on a space-available basis, will be considered acceptable.

Phase 2A: Port agreements – Housing Components

- In determining whether a cruise ship operator has contractual arrangements for shoreside housing facilities in sufficient quantities to meet the needs of travelers for isolation or quarantine, the parties to a Phase 2A agreement may consider the ability of travelers to use their own personal vehicles to return safely to their residences. The parties should consider the time needed for travelers to drive to their final destinations to avoid the need for overnight stays en route. At a minimum, the health department at the final destination must be notified and travelers must be advised to complete their isolation or quarantine at home. For more information, please visit CDC's [Interim Guidance for Transporting or Arranging Transportation by Air into, from, or within the United States of People with COVID-19 or COVID-19 Exposure](#) webpage.
- CDC routinely works with state and local health departments and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to prevent travelers from boarding commercial airplanes if they:
 - o are known or suspected to have a contagious disease, or
 - o were exposed to a contagious disease that poses a threat to the public's health.
 - For more information see [Travel Restrictions to Prevent the Spread of Disease](#).

Accordingly, the parties to a Phase 2A agreement should consider the housing needs of travelers who are unable to return to their residences by private vehicle as they will not be permitted to board commercial flights.

- In documenting that the parties to a Phase 2A agreement have deliberated and jointly considered the needs of travelers under quarantine or isolation, including needs relating to security and legal considerations to prevent travelers from violating any mandatory isolation or quarantine, it is assumed that a government entity may issue an order for mandatory isolation or quarantine, and that the cruise ship operator would cooperate with the government entity in addressing security needs.
- Referencing the requirement that shoreside housing provide separate ventilation systems for all travelers who are not part of the household, CDC notes that a standard hotel room with a thermostat on the wall or individual air handling unit is an example of housing that would meet this requirement.

We remain committed to providing any requested technical assistance with Phase 2A agreements and looks forward to receiving these port agreements from the industry. Any technical questions from the cruise ship operators or other relevant stakeholders regarding the Phase 2A port agreements should be addressed to eocevent349@cdc.gov.

We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with our current thinking regarding the following possible updates.

Upcoming Updates

Color-coding update

- Cruise ship operators may be allowed to use commercial travel to disembark crew regardless of the cruise ship's color status. Cruise ship operators will be restricted from using commercial travel for crew who have tested positive for SARS-COV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 (unless they have documentation of recovery from a COVID-19 infection in the previous 90 days) and are within their isolation period and their close contacts (unless fully vaccinated) who are within their quarantine period.

Testing and quarantine updates during restricted voyages based on vaccination status

- CDC will update testing and quarantine requirements for passengers and crew to closely align with CDC's guidance for fully vaccinated and not fully vaccinated persons.

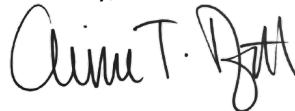
	Not Fully Vaccinated Crew	Fully Vaccinated Crew
Embarkation Day Testing	- NAAT	- Viral (NAAT or antigen)
Quarantine Testing [& Duration]	- NAAT [end quarantine after day 10 if negative]	- Viral (NAAT or antigen) [end quarantine after day 7 if negative]
End of Quarantine Testing	- NAAT	- Viral (NAAT or antigen)
Routine Screening Testing	- Viral (NAAT or antigen)	- Viral (NAAT or antigen)
Disembarkation Day Testing	- Viral (NAAT or antigen)	- Not applicable

Updates for fully vaccinated passengers and crew

In lieu of conducting a simulated voyage, cruise ship operator responsible officials, at their discretion, may sign and submit to CDC an attestation under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 that 98 percent of crew are fully vaccinated and submit to CDC a clear and specific vaccination plan and timeline to limit cruise ship sailings to 95 percent of passengers who have been verified by the cruise ship operator as fully vaccinated prior to sailing.

We appreciate your support, and that of our partners, as we work together to fight COVID-19.

Sincerely,



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CC:

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