

Preparedness and Response Plan for Public Health Risks at International Airports

3rd Edition, 2018

English abstract

Publisher: The Chief Epidemiologist for Iceland and the Department of Civil Protection of the National Commissioner of Police

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Abbreviations

ACC Area Control Centre

ACI Airport Council International

ACT Air Control Tower

AEY Akureyri Airport - Iceland

CAPSCA Collaborative Arrangements for the Preventive and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation

CE Chief Epidemiologist

DCP District Commissioner of Police

DCCC District Crisis Coordination Centre

EAI Environment Agency of Iceland

EGS Egilsstaðir Airport - Iceland

IFVA Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority

ICAO International Civil Aviation Organization

ICS Incident Command System

IHR International Health Regulations

IRSA Icelandic Radiation Safety Authority

RDE Regional/District Epidemiologist

JRCC Joint Rescue Coordination Centre - Iceland

KEF Keflavik International Airport - Iceland

NCCC National Crisis Coordination Centre

NCP National Commissioner of Police

OSM On-site management

RVK Reykjavik Airport - Iceland

SMART TAG System of emergency classification

Tetra Terrestrial Trunked Radio

VHF Very High Frequency

WHO World Health Organization

Introduction

The Preparedness and Response Plan for Public Health Risks at International Airports (hereafter the Plan) is based on the International Health Regulation 2005 (IHR 2005), the Civil Protection Act, No. 82/2008, the Act on Health Security and Communicable Diseases, No. 19/1997, as well as other legislation and regulations. The Plan is also based on ICAO *Annex 9 – Facilitation (International Standards and Recommended Practices/2015)* and guidelines from WHO (*A Strategic Framework for Emergency Preparedness/2017*).

The Plan outlines the structure and management of preventive and control measures whenever there is suspicion of an incident aboard an aircraft or at an airport that could pose risk to public health. The Plan applies to all international airports in Iceland and has been adapted to each airport. In addition, it applies to aircraft in flight within the territorial airspace of Iceland. The Plan also outlines the distribution of the emergency equipment under the control of the Chief Epidemiologist (CE) for Iceland.

The Regional/District Epidemiologists (RDE) and the relevant District Commissioners of Police (DCPs) are responsible for the activation of the Plan, in full or in part, in collaboration with the CE and the National Commissioner of Police (NCP). The CE and the NCP also have full authority to activate the Plan, in particular when an incident involves an aircraft still in flight. All those with a function in the implementation of the present Plan can submit a request for its activation.

Objectives of the Plan for international airports in Iceland

- To ensure coordinated response from all relevant bodies when an aircraft lands with an ill passenger on board that is deemed to be infectious or a passenger falls ill in an air terminal or an incident occurs in an air terminal that might pose risk to public health.
- To minimise or prevent, if possible, the effects of infections/pollution/radiological/accidental events and to protect public health and the environment.
- To ensure undiminished service to all concerned.
- To implement the provisions of the IHR and ensure communication/collaboration within Iceland and across borders.

International organisations such as ICAO, CAPSCA and ACI have encouraged international airports to strengthen their response capacity against infectious diseases by making preparedness and response plans and practising them. The experience of those airports that have already made their response plans and practised them has revealed that the most important factor in response to an infectious passenger on board an aircraft or in an air terminal or another unexpected incident is communication to passengers, to the media, to relatives and to staff that are involved in such an incident.

International airports in Iceland

The Plan applies to almost all international airports in Iceland, i.e. **Keflavik International Airport, Reykjavik International Airport, Akureyri International Airport and Egilsstadir International Airport**, and it has been adapted to each airport in such a manner that areas of operation have been specified for each airport and check lists have been adapted to the responders of each airport.

The plan also applies to aircraft in flight within the territorial airspace of Iceland.

Phases of Disaster

The three Phases of Disaster, issued by the Civil Protection Authorities of Iceland:

Uncertainty Phase (*Óvissustig*): Uncertainty Phase is characterised by an event which has already started and could lead to a threat to people, communities or the environment. At this stage the collaboration and coordination between the Civil Protection Authorities and stakeholders begins. Monitoring, assessment, research and evaluation of the situation is increased. The event is defined and a risk assessment is conducted regularly.

Alert Phase (*Hættustig*): If a risk assessment indicates increased threat, immediate measures must be taken to ensure the safety and security of those who are exposed in the area. This is done by increasing preparedness for the emergency and security services in the area and by taking preventive measures such as restrictions, closures, evacuations and relocation of inhabitants. This level is also characterised by increase in public information, advice and warning messages.

Emergency Phase (*Neyðarstig*): This phase is characterized by an event which has already begun and could lead, or already has led to, harm to people, communities, properties or the environment. At this stage, immediate measures are taken to ensure security, save lives and prevent casualties, damage and/or loss.

Early warning

1. If a notification on a potential public health risk incident is received by an area control centre from an aircraft in flight within the territorial airspace of Iceland, the National Crisis Coordination Centre (NCCC) shall be in touch with the CE, tel. 510-1933, who then activates the Plan if it is deemed necessary according to initial risk assessment, and after consultation with Isavia and the Department of Civil Protection of the NCP. Further activation/summons is based on the results of risk assessment that is constantly being revised.
2. In case of an incident at an airport, the Airport Director or his representative calls for the assistance of an on-call physician and/or the Regional/District Epidemiologist (RDE) with the help of the 112 National Emergency Number (112) and the DCP (time limits). The RDE activates the Plan in consultation with Isavia, the DCP and the CE, tel. 510-1933, if it is deemed necessary according to initial risk assessment. Further activation/summons is based on the results of risk assessment that is constantly being revised.
3. The 112/NCP Telecommunications Centre shall ensure the summoning of the relevant responders in accordance with the list of responders in this Plan. The 112/NCP Telecommunications Centre shall also inform the logistics unit on route to the incident site by means of Tetra channel **Blue X – O and other relevant channels**.

Risk assessment and outbreak investigation

The Chief Epidemiologist is responsible for the surveillance of communicable diseases and the health effects of toxic and radioactive substances. Furthermore, the CE is responsible for outbreak investigation and risk assessment in case of unexpected health incidents falling under his purview. In case of unexpected events, surveillance and outbreak investigation form the basis for risk assessment that influences policy regarding response measures.

The CE is thus responsible for implementing an epidemiological investigation whenever health incidents have occurred on board aircraft and at airports and carries it out in collaboration with the relevant party, including the aircraft operator, the relevant local authority health inspection and others, depending on the nature of the incident each time.

The aircraft operators in question have a responsibility as regards information gathering, being obliged to provide the CE with information on the health of passengers and/or crew. The operators are in possession of key information on, among other things, the total number of passengers and crew, the number of cases taken ill and what symptoms or disease are being dealt with.

Important information must be obtained on the nature and extent of the incident, the symptoms involved, the number of people exposed, and whether the affected site has been contained or covers a larger area. An assessment must be made of the probability that the incident might have effect across borders. In particular, the assessment must cover transmission, toxic substances or radioactivity as possible underlying causes. Also, an examination and assessment must be made of possible countermeasures to minimise the harm.

The initial assessment takes place as soon as there is suspicion of a health incident aboard an aircraft or at an international airport. The first information on an incident can come from many different sources, including the crew of an aircraft, the local health inspection, the airport of departure, from cooperation partners abroad, other institutions and other unexpected parties. When suspicion of an incident has been aroused, the gathering of information and risk assessment must be initiated in collaboration with the parties concerned. This involves both the operator, health care workers, the health inspector concerned, representatives of the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority (IFVA), the Environment Agency of Iceland (EAI) and the Icelandic Radiation Safety Authority (IRSA) as needed, and, in case of a serious health incident, the Department of Civil Protection of the the NCP. Collaboration with foreign parties such as representatives for the country of the aircraft's last point of call, with WHO and ECDC can also provide valuable information. When the first assessment is available it is possible to prescribe measures, to activate a preparedness and response plan, if appropriate, and to determine a Disaster Phase in accordance with the severity of the situation at hand. Risk assessment is subject to constant revision depending on the development of events.

The nature of incidents is extremely varied and consequently the risk assessment creates a basis for different responses. The nature of an illness greatly affects the risk assessment, e.g. ebola would always be considered a serious incident even though only one passenger had fallen ill. On the other hand, a suspicion of norovirus among a greater number of passengers would in all likelihood not be considered as serious although more passengers or crew members had been affected. It is also possible that an incident first becomes known after a flight is over, e.g. in the case of an infectious disease with a long incubation period. As a consequence, measures can start long after the incident in question occurred.

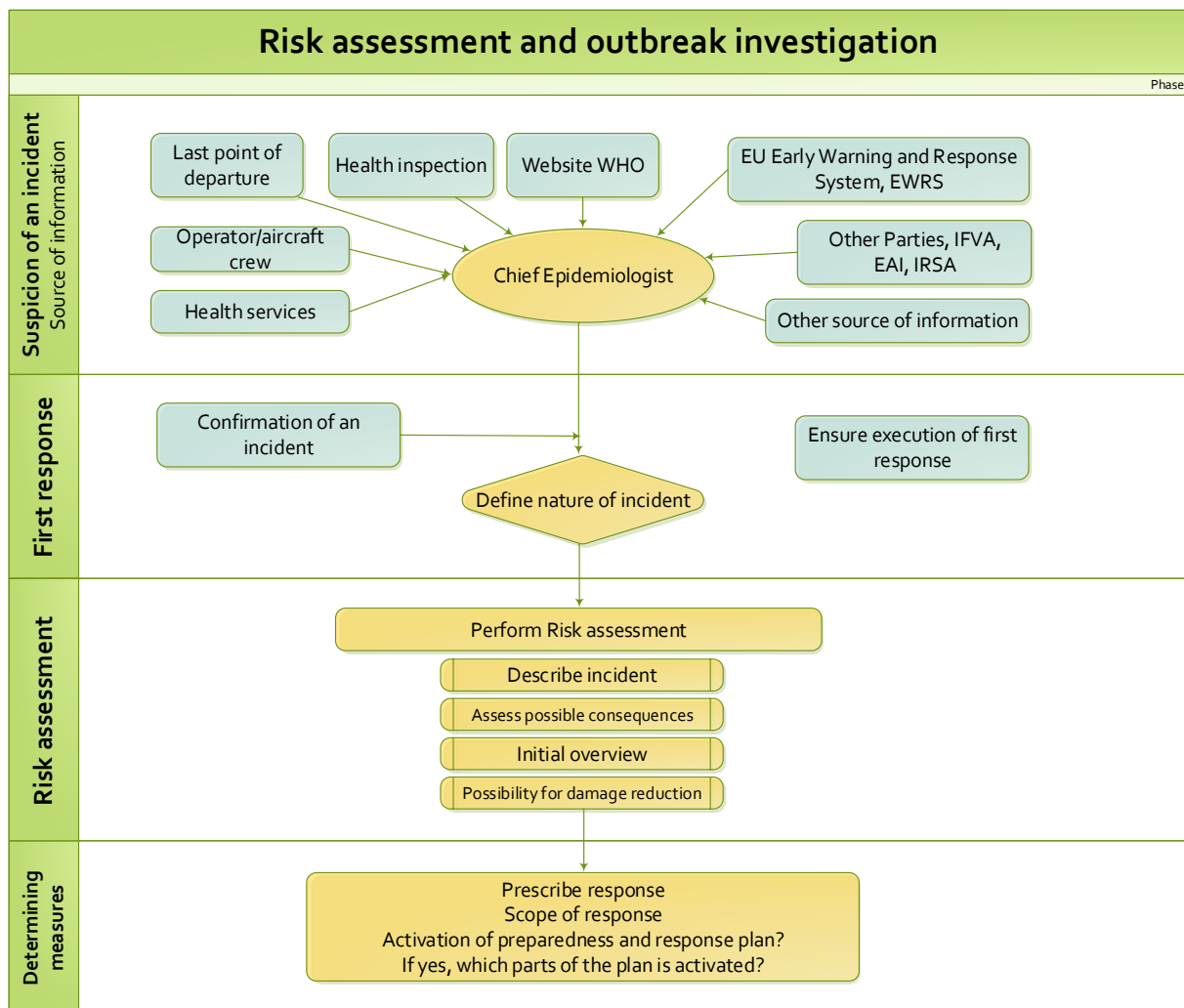


Figure 1. Risk assessment and outbreak investigation

Further information is available in:

[*Handbook for the Management of Public Health Events in Air Transport. \(WHO-2015\)*](#)

[*Management of Events in Air Transport. \(Poster\)*](#)

[*Vector Surveillance and Control at Ports, Airports, and Ground Crossings. \(WHO 2016\)*](#)

Activation

An illness that arouses suspicion of a public health risk must be reported to the relevant Regional or District Epidemiologist (RDE) who will, in consultation with the Chief Epidemiologist, assess what kind of treatment to provide and whether there is need for activating the Plan.

When the Plan has been activated, the relevant DCCC takes over the management of emergency measures. The DCCC assesses the need for summoning more parties for work, in consultation with the National Crisis Coordination Centre (NCCC). The DCCC Manager/NCCC Manager notifies any changes in the Disaster Phases described above to the 112 National Emergency Number and to responders. The JRCC–Iceland is in charge of operations if an incident happens at sea. Figures 2 and 3 show the activation of the Plan for aircrafts and international airports.

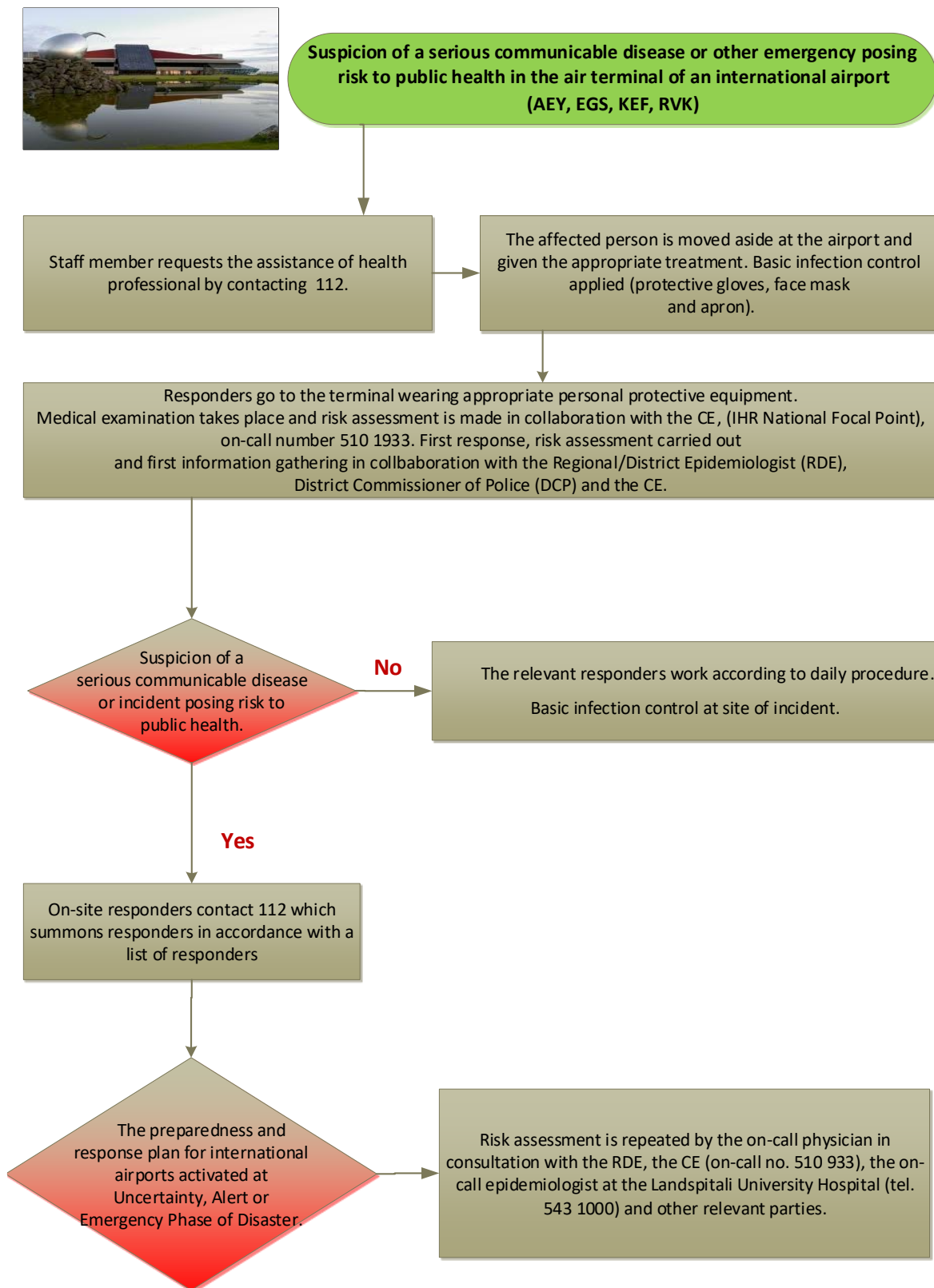


Figure 2. Activation of Preparedness and Response Plan for Public Health Risks in an air terminal

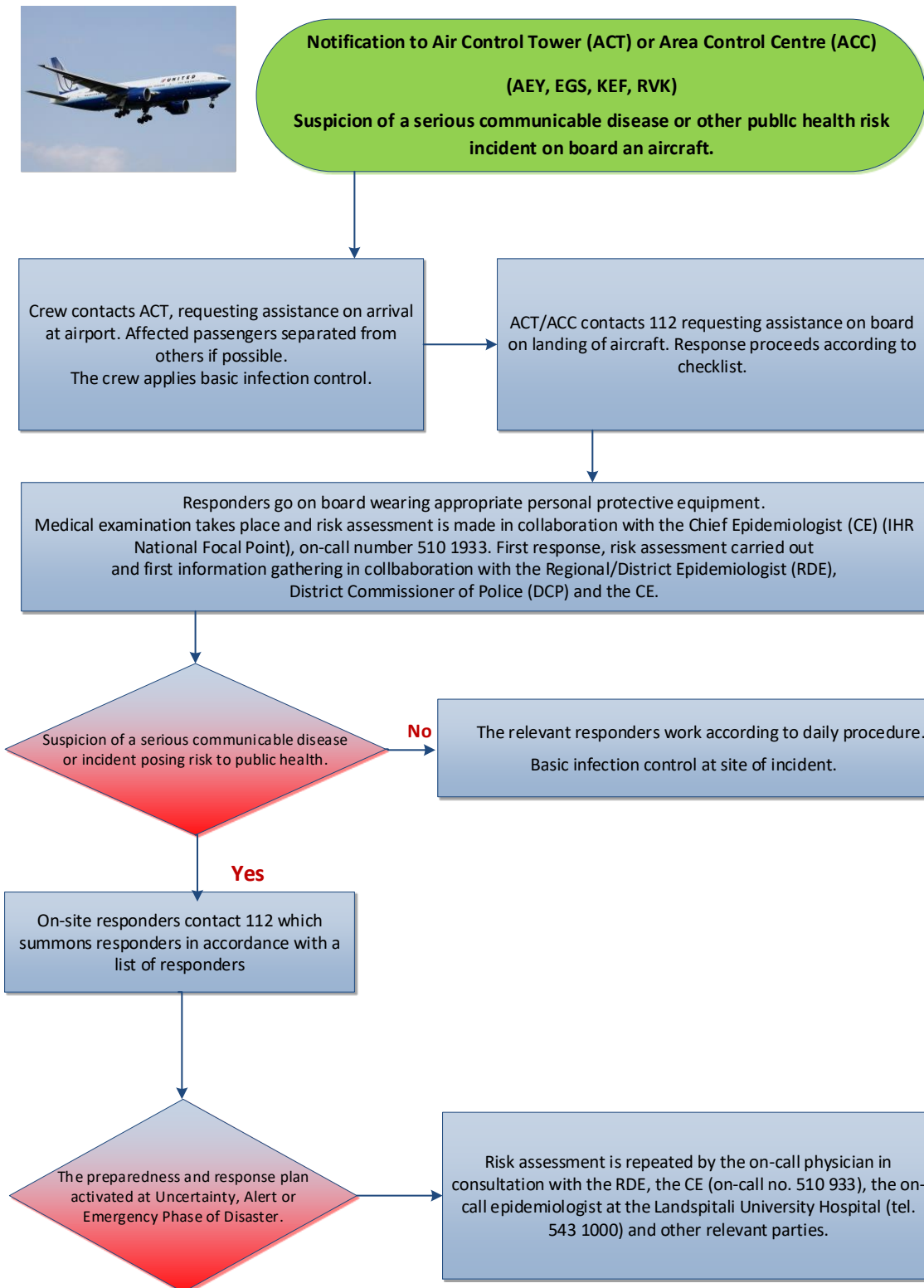


Figure 3. Activation of Preparedness and Response Plan for Public Health Risks on board an aircraft

Link to other response plans

Other prevention and response plans (accidents, pollution) can be activated alongside or following the activation of the *Preparedness and Response Plan for Public Health Risks at Airports*. To name an example, if a severe instance of influenza breaks out at an airport, the *Icelandic Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan* can be activated together with the response plan for the airport concerned. When more than one response plan is activated a formal decision is taken to that effect and responsibility is at once transferred to registered responders according to each plan.

Cancellation

The decision to cancel is taken by the CE in consultation with the NCP/Isavia and the relevant District Crisis Coordination Centre (DCCC).

The NCCC is responsible for notifying the cancellation or change to 112, which in turn is responsible for carrying out the cancellation and issues a notification to that effect. Changes to Phases of Disaster are notified through the appropriate channels (Tetra, VHF) to those responders who have been activated. The CE informs the Minister of Welfare of the cancellation of response measures as soon as a decision to that effect has been made.

The Icelandic system of civil protection governance

Government policy on civil protection and security issues is set by the Civil Protection and Security Council for three years at a time. In times of crisis, the Civil Protection and Security Council works with the National Commissioner of Police. According to Art. 4 of the Civil Protection Act, No. 82/2008, the government ministers responsible for public security, pollution protection, health, energy, defence and foreign relations have seats on the Council. The Minister of Justice is responsible for issues under the Civil Protection and Security Council and chairs the Council. That Minister of Justice can summon two other ministers to sit on the Council at any time in connection with specific matters.

Organisation of civil protection in Iceland

The NCP is in charge of civil protection affairs in Iceland on behalf of the Minister of Justice and operates the Department of Civil Protection, which handles any civil protection projects in the whole country, whether on land, in the air or at sea. The NCP is responsible for implementing measures in accordance with Government policy in matters of civil protection and security according to the Civil Protection Act, Nr. 82/2008. Under Article 11 of that Act, it is the role of District Commissioners of Police (DCPs) to be in charge of civil protection activities in times of crisis, each in their respective district. According to Regulation No. 1150/2014, the country is divided into nine Police Districts.

In case of an incident in the air/at an airport involving risk to public health, the relevant DCP and RDE are supposed to work in close collaboration.

Board of Aviation Facilitation

The Board of Aviation Facilitation is appointed by the Minister of transport for three years at a time in accordance with the Aviation Act, No. 60/1998, and Regulation on Facilitation, No. 1025/2012. Appendix 8.5 to the Regulation contains information on the requirements of the health service authorities concerning preparedness and response to public health risks occurring within the air service.

The National Crisis Coordination Centre (NCCC)

On the activation of this Plan, the CE or his substitute is in charge of health security and communicable disease control measures and has a seat on the NCCC management team as a senior expert. The NCCC controls the overall coordination of measures, maintains active communication with the DCCC and organises support for the districts. It procures further resources on request each time.

District Crisis Coordination Centre (DCCC)

In times of crisis, the management of response activities is in the hands of the District Commissioner of Police (DCP). On the activation of this Plan, the RDE or his representative assumes control of relevant health security and communicable disease control measures. The DCP appoints an Incident Manager who is in charge of and coordinates on-site activities in collaboration with on-site health service representatives.

On-Site Management (OSM)

On-site management and coordination is the responsibility of the Incident Manager, who is appointed by the DCP. When an incident occurs at sea, the on-site management and coordination is the responsibility of the Icelandic Coast Guard. The Incident Manager is usually a member of the police force. He/she must have training and experience in on-site management.

Important tasks of the OSM

- Overall management and coordination of on-site operations in accordance with the Incident Command System (ICS).
- Work according to the task organisation chart of the ICS. Deviation from the chart is permitted if it is deemed necessary.
- The person who has been assigned the task of **Operation** shall communicate with the task managers by means of telecommunications and must have a car at his/her disposal in order to drive between the location of the on-site management and other locations of operations.
- Responsibility for carrying out transmission tracking and ensuring that the required passengers fill in the [Public Health Passenger Locator Form](#).
- Assistance in epidemiological investigations as needed.
- Ensuring basic infection control.
- Organising and ensuring on-site telecommunications.
- Ensuring that telecommunications are in place to communicate with the DCCC.

NCCC – DCCC – OSM

Tasks at each management level in the event of risk to public health incident

The National Crisis Coordination Centre (NCCC) – situated in Reykjavik

The Chief Epidemiologist (CE) for Iceland and the Department of Civil Protection of the National Commissioner of Police (NCP) are in charge of the NCCC. The JRCC–Iceland is in charge of operations if an aircraft incident happens at sea.

The tasks of the NCCC are maintaining active communication with the DCCCs in Iceland, organising support, supplying resources on request and managing the overall coordination. The NCCC establishes connection with the government institutions that supply assistance, with health care institutions and foreign institutions. The NCCC activates the Trauma Care Consultation Group. The NCCC operates according to the ICS task organisation chart.

District Crisis Coordination Centres (DCCCs)

There are nine DCCCs in Iceland, one in each Police District. They are located in Reykjavik and the towns of Borgarnes, Isafjordur, Saudarkrokur, Akureyri, Eskifjordur, Hvolsvollur, Westman Islands, and Reykjanesbær. The management of crisis coordination at sea is under the command of the Icelandic Coast Guard.

The DCP and the RDE function as Crisis Coordination Managers within their districts in case of infection/pollution that may pose a risk to public health.

The DCCCs of Police Districts/JRCC – Iceland work closely with the NCCC, the sanitation inspection of local authorities, the relevant aircraft operator in question as well as related parties and others that can be of assistance in some way.

The tasks of a DCCC are management, coordination, information gathering and communication. The DCCC guarantees smooth communication with everyone concerned and works according to the DCCCs task organisation chart, see figure 5.

On-site Management (OSM)

Location and members: Management and coordination at the site of emergency is in the hands of the Incident Manager who is appointed by the DCP. Coordination at sea is in the hands of the Icelandic Coast Guard. The OSM forms a support group for task managers.

The tasks of an OSM are the overall management and coordination of operations in accordance with the ICS task organisation chart on behalf of the DCP or the Coast Guard, as well as reporting on on-site operations. The OMS guarantees smooth communication/telecommunication with all relevant parties within a specified site.

Task Managers

Manage and coordinate individual tasks on site in collaboration with the OSM.

Health Care Manager Appointed by the RDE	Protection Manager Appointed by the DCP	Transport Manager Appointed by the S&R district management/ district ambulance service	Rescue Manager Appointed by the local authority Fire Brigade Director
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Figure 4. Organisation of Civil Protection in Iceland, the NCCC, DCCC and OSM

Management			
Technical management	Contacts	Media	Security
Planning		Logistics	
gathering Information and sharing	Specific plans/input of experts	Equipment	Supplies
Forecasts	Goals and action plan	Special equipment	Basic service
On-site circumstances	Needs of the affected	Telecommunication	Special services
	Structure		Maintenance
Operation			
Communication with incident site	Communication within district	Communication outside district	Statistics and flow
Handling of on-site requests	Health care institution	Mass casualty centre/Temporary service centre	Number of victims
Transport of victims	Communication with Health Care Manager	Gathering site for relatives and friends	Time line
Management of deceased	Communication with the NCCC		Location of victims
Transfer of incident site to investigators			Final report

Figure 5. Task organisation chart for DCCCs

Communication and flow of information

This Plan is based on a specified flow of information and channels of communication. The NCCC/Chief Epidemiologist and the DCCCs/RDEs play a key role in the dissemination of information. The RDEs are responsible for communication within their Epidemiological Districts/Regions in collaboration with the relevant DCP and the CE is responsible for nationwide communication in collaboration with the Department of Civil Protection of the NCP. The telecommunications make use of the Tetra mobile telephone system in which the DCCCs have their own channel for communicating and another channel is exclusively for use by health care workers.

The Government of Iceland	
Ministry of Welfare	Ministry of the Justice
National Crisis Coordination Centre (NCCC) – in Reykjavik The CE for Iceland and the NCP are responsible in case of incidents posing risk to public health	
District Crisis Coordination Centre of the DCP for the Capital Region	District Crisis Coordination Centre of the DCP for the Western Region
District Crisis Coordination Centre of the DCP for the Westfjords	District Crisis Coordination Centre of the DCP for the Northwestern Region
District Crisis Coordination Centre of the DCP for the Northeastern Region	District Crisis Coordination Centre of the DCP for the Eastern Region
District Crisis Coordination Centre of the DCP for the Southern Region	District Coordination Management of the DCP for the Westman Islands
District Crisis Coordination Centre of the DCP for the Southern Peninsula	Incidents at sea are the responsibility of the Icelandic Coast Guard in consultation with the NCCC and other stakeholders

Figure 6. Channels of communication in case of incidents posing risk to public health

The media

Reliable media information is important when circumstances arise that could possibly pose a threat to public health. Information must be communicated in a clear and purposeful manner. An incident may affect only few individuals while it may also be so extensive that the whole community suffers harm. Inaccurate media information can cause unnecessary alarm.

The CE or CE representative and the DCP concerned are in charge of media information. The CE staff are in charge of information to passengers and crew together with the DCP and the CE makes own media communication plan in an emergency situation. The plan can be in the form of a checklist that would include: Motto, responsibility, specified information officers, main tasks and division of tasks, list of contacts with names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of responders, methods of communication. In addition, foreign media, authorities and international institutions must be informed as far as possible when the consequences of a disaster can have effect across Icelandic borders.

The NCP Information and Media Team operates from the NCCC when needed. Besides a representative of the NCP, the Team is composed of the information officers of key institutions, such as the Icelandic Red Cross, ministries and the relevant local authorities, depending on what type of incident is being addressed. The role of the Team is to communicate important information to the media and the public, and government ministries shall seek its advice on communication regarding official information and news reporting.

The Team also assists media people in planning their work and provides them with data and advice on emergency zones etc. Depending on the nature of an incident, a temporary work station close to the

incident site shall be established, if possible. The Team is also responsible for ensuring information flow to responders, the Government, Permanent Secretaries and the institutions concerned.

The NCP shall also employ social media for communication with the general public as appropriate in each case. It is necessary for the public to know that response measures have been implemented and that correct news and information is offered from responsible parties. When reporting news, special attention shall be paid to those groups and individuals who have difficulty in accessing information.

Areas of Operation

The areas of operation are defined as all Icelandic international airports, four in total. In addition, the Plan applies to aircraft flying within the airspace of Iceland. The country is divided into seven Epidemiological Regions. In practice, the Westman Islands are a special Epidemiological District and Northern Iceland has been divided into two Epidemiological Districts to correspond to the region's two Police Districts. The Epidemiological Regions have thus been adapted to the Police Districts in the country, whereby the DCP and the RDE within each Epidemiological District/Region form the core of the District Crisis Coordination Centre (DCCC).

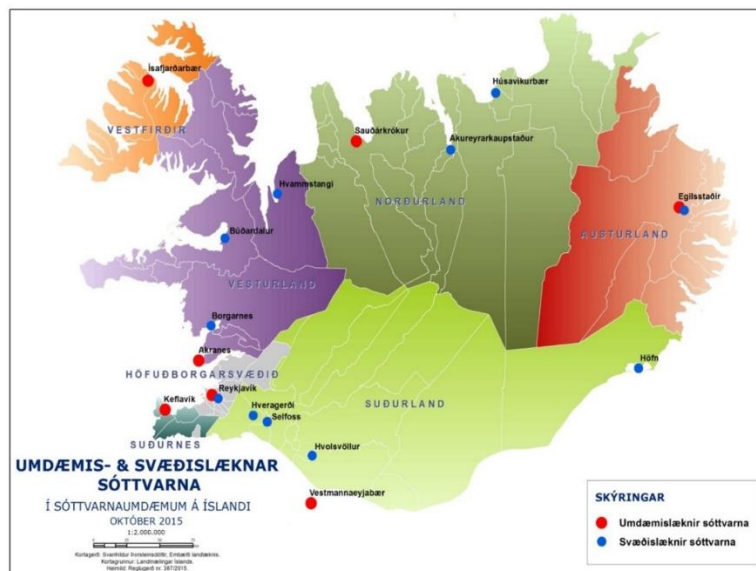


Figure 7. The seven Epidemiological Regions and offices of Regional/District Epidemiologists

Counting/reporting the affected

The form [Public Health Passenger Locator Form](#) is used in tracking the routes of transmission. The police collects the filled-in forms on site and hands them over to the RDE who is responsible for delivering them to the CE without delay. If the affected are few it is sufficient to use this form and there is no need for emergency classification.

In case many people have been affected, the system of emergency classification (SMART TAG) must also be used with the help of SMART TAG bags located in the transport vehicles of the responders. A system of emergency classification provides an overall picture of the number of people affected and their condition.

Role of responders

The following institutions/organisations/companies have a registered role in the *Preparedness and Response Plan for Public Health Risks – Aircraft*.

Civil Protection Authorities

- 112, the National Emergency Telephone Number
- The National Crisis Coordination Centre, NCCC
- The District Crisis Coordination Centre, DCCC
- On-site Management, OSM

Health Services

- Chief Epidemiologist for Iceland
- The Regional and District Epidemiologists
- Specialised hospital service – Landspítali University Hospital (LUH)
- Specialised hospital service – Akureyri Hospital
- Hospitals and health care centres in the Capital Area

The Police

- The National Commissioner of Police, NCP – Department of Civil Protection
- NCP – Telecommunications Centre
- NCP – Identification Committee
- NCP – Special Unit
- District Commissioners of Police

Aviation

- Ground handling services
- Area control centres
- Air control tower
- Airport security staff
- Airport service
- Aircraft operators

The Icelandic Red Cross – Emergency Centre

The Directorate of Customs/Customs Authorities

Fire Brigades

The Icelandic Coast Guard

- Joint Rescue and Coordination Centre – Iceland, JRCC – Iceland
- Aircraft Division
- Patrol Vessels Division

The Icelandic Association for Search and Rescue

- National Management
- District Management

Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority, IFVA

- For animals on board
- Illness attributed to infected food

The Icelandic Transport Authority

- The Icelandic Transportation Accident Investigation Board

The Icelandic Tourism Board

The Icelandic Radiation Safety Authority, IRSA

Sanitation Inspection of Local Authorities

The Environment Agency of Iceland, EAI

Distribution

All those who have a role according to this Plan are obliged to keep a printed copy of it.

The Preparedness and Reponse Plan for Public Health Risks at International Airports is published on the website of the Directorate of Health, www.landlaeknir.is and the website of the Department of Civil Protection of the NCP, www.almannavarnir.is

Each international airport in Iceland publishes its own preparedness and response plan on the open website of the airport in question.

Whenever changes are made to the Plan/a new edition is published, the CE/NCP Department of Civil Protection send a notification by e-mail to that effect to the relevant bodies asking them to print a new copy/new edition and keep it at their workstation.