

Briefing

Review of Shanghai route under the Air Border Order

Date due to MO:	15 December 2020	Action required by:	N/A
Security level:	IN CONFIDENCE	Health Report number:	HR20202288
To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response		

Contact for telephone discussion

Name	Position	Telephone
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Minister's office to complete:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs change | <input type="checkbox"/> Seen | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's Notes | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn | |

Comment:

Review of Shanghai route under the Air Border Order

Security level: IN CONFIDENCE **Date:** 14 December 2020

To: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response

Purpose of report

1. This report updates you on the Director-General of Health's decision on whether to designate Shanghai as a "higher-risk route" under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order (No.2) 2020.
2. This follows the infection of an Air New Zealand air crew member while on layover on Shanghai last month.

Summary

3. The criteria used by the Office of the Director of Public Health (ODPH) for recommending which routes should be designated as "higher-risk" are the ability to tightly control accommodation and transport arrangements during aircrew layover.
4. In addition, other criteria such as the prevalence of community transmission in the overseas jurisdiction and the length of aircrew stay is considered.
5. Following ODPH review, the public health advice is that the level of risk in Shanghai has not changed and this route should continue to be a medium risk layover. This is due to the substantial measures in place to mitigate risk and the very low prevalence of COVID-19 there.
6. A monthly review of routes will be undertaken going forward and this will commence from mid-January 2021. This preliminary review will determine and confirm if any of the controls or criteria considered as part of the risk assessment have changed. Where this is the case, a more detailed risk assessment will be performed by ODPH and advice provided to the Director-General where it is assessed the risk of the route has changed.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

- a) **Note** that the Air Border Order allows the Director-General of Health to ☒ Yes ☐ No designate routes of travel as "higher-risk" routes
- b) **Note** that Shanghai is not recommended to be designated as a "higher risk" route at this time ☒ Yes ☐ No

- c) **Note** that a monthly review of routes will be undertaken to determine if any of the controls or criteria considered as part of the risk assessment have changed. **Yes/No**



Sue Gordon

DCE COVID-19 Health System Response

Date: 15 December 2020



Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Date: 17/12/2020

I disagree with this decision. A more precautionary approach would be to treat Shanghai as a high risk route until they have demonstrated that the new approach is safer than the old one (which was also deemed medium risk but which still resulted in a case). CH

PROACTIVELY RELEASED

Designation of Shanghai as a “higher risk” route under the Air Border Order

Background

1. The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order (No. 2) 2020 (Air Border Order) provides that the Director General may designate a route of travel as a higher-risk route.
2. If a route is designated as higher-risk, returning air crew must self-isolate for 48 hours, undergo a test for a COVID-19, and then continue to self-isolate until a negative test is received.
3. Air crew who return from other routes may enter the community without restrictions.
4. At present, only Los Angeles and San Francisco are designated as higher-risk routes.

Criteria considered for recommending a route be designated higher risk

5. The criteria used by the Office of the Director of Public Health (ODPH) for recommending which routes should be designated as higher-risk are the ability to tightly control accommodation and transport arrangements during layover. Arrangements in Los Angeles and San Francisco are assessed as less tightly controlled.
6. In addition, other criteria such as the prevalence of community transmission in the overseas jurisdiction and the length of aircrew stay is considered.

Current arrangements for air crew in Shanghai

7. Air New Zealand advise that air crew in Shanghai arrive through a VIP terminal at the airport that is used by air crew only. The terminal is disinfected after each crew travels through it.
8. Air crew then take a 5-minute journey in a dedicated vehicle to a layover hotel designated by Chinese authorities. The hotel is landside, but within the airport precinct. Air crew cannot leave their rooms, and meals are delivered to the door. Compliance is closely monitored by Chinese authorities.
9. On return to the airport, air crew are collected from their rooms by Chinese officials in full PPE and escorted to their crew transport and then to the plane.
10. The length of an air crew layover in Shanghai varies between 1 and 3 days but is usually shorter.
11. Air crew are temperature tested during the flight over with the results being provided to authorities on arrival. They also have a PCR test taken on arrival.
12. All air crew are also subject to a regular seven-day cycle of surveillance testing in New Zealand.
13. The use of the VIP terminal, and a new designated hotel and caterer, were introduced by Chinese authorities after 21 November 2020.

14. The prevalence of COVID-19 transmission in Shanghai is low. Johns Hopkins University reports 92 current active cases as at 14 December 2020.¹

Public health advice

15. Public health advice is that the level of risk in Shanghai has not changed and this route should continue to be a medium risk layover.

Equity

16. There are no specific equity issues to consider.

Ongoing review and next steps

17. A monthly review of routes will be undertaken going forward, commencing from mid-January 2021. This preliminary review will determine and confirm if any of the controls or criteria considered as part of the risk assessment have changed. Where this is the case a more detailed risk assessment will be performed by ODPH and advice provided to the Director-General where it is assessed the risk of the route has changed.
18. If there is a positive case in aircrew returning from a route that is not designated as "higher risk", this would also trigger a review outside of the regular monthly review cycle.
19. We will advise you should the Director-General determine that a change to the risk assessment for a route is required.

ENDS.

¹ <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>