

## Mbalula details transport interventions amid Covid-19

The various transport sectors are expected to embark on campaigns targeted at limiting Coronavirus (COVID-19) infections in South Africa, says Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula.



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The Minister made the announcement during a ministerial press briefing on government's Covid-19 interventions after President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday declared it a national disaster.

### **Aviation sector**

With aviation declared one of the high-risk sectors, measures to mitigate the risks had already been activated.

"Desktop exercises have been carried out across all our airports, in accordance with the World Health Organisation (WHO) advisory to ensure that screening measures to limit the risk of exportation or importation of the disease are implemented without unnecessary restrictions to international traffic.

"ACSA has since procured and distributed masks for all frontline staff at all ACSA airports," the Minister said on Monday.

As an integral part in the airport operations value chain, various mandatory measures have been implemented for the airlines and all handling agents.

These include all airline and/or ground handling staff carrying out assisted passenger services being required to use personal protective equipment – such as surgical mask and gloves - when facilitating the arrival of international passengers.

Passenger-facing personnel, particularly for all international arrivals, transfers terminal and the domestic recheck, are required to use personal protective equipment.

All handling agent staff that are at a high risk of contact (including, but not limited to passenger escorting, VIP services facilitation, ticket sales, baggage handling and loading, aircraft grooming, catering services, cargo handling agents, bus drivers and crew transport drivers) are required to wear personal protective equipment.

All passenger busses will require additional cleaning/sanitisation measures to be implemented and ACSA will increase oversight in this aspect.

## **Travel ban**

The President announced the imposition of a travel ban on foreign nationals from high-risk countries such as Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and China as from 18 March 2020.

Mbalula said this, from a transport point of view, means that no foreign nationals will be allowed from these countries through the country's ports of entry, which include airports, sea ports and railways.

He said charter operators will be re-routed to international airports that have the Ports Health capability to manage suspected cases.

### **The following international airports have the necessary capacity and will be ready to handle charter flights:**

- OR Tambo International Airport
- Lanseria Airport
- King Shaka International Airport
- Upington Airport
- Polokwane Airport
- Bram Fisher Airport
- Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport
- Pilanesburg Airport
- Port Elizabeth International Airport
- Cape Town International Airport

The Civil Aviation Authority has issued guidelines for infection control for all airlines in respect of passenger cargo and baggage handling. These are guided by the general guidelines issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

In order to mitigate the risk, he said, the Civil Aviation Authority will conduct ramp inspections on all identified high-risk airlines.

## **Public transport**

"The taxi industry transports more than 16 million people and represents a critical sector which must be at the forefront of robust interventions and awareness to manage the risks. We will implement an aggressive information drive to create awareness and promote preventative measures," said the Minister.

Taxi and bus operators, he said, must become ambassadors whose task it is to disseminate information.

He said the department will engage the leadership of the taxi and bus industries to mount an aggressive information drive working closely with the Department of Health on preventative measures in the public transport environment.

Random testing measures will be implemented in the public transport environment, with particular emphasis on commuter rail.

## **Maritime**

The Minister announced that South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) will immediately operationalise a plan for all ships calling at port, guided by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and WHO handbook for the management of public health events onboard ships and will at all times be guided by directives issued by the Department of Health.

## **Cross-border transport**

The Cross Border Road Transport Agency (C-BRTA) will work with border and health authorities to ensure screening of truck drivers at all inland borders that continue to allow cross-border traffic as announced by the President.

"C-BRTA is currently working together with the Department of Home Affairs to assist Cross-Border operators (Commercial operators which are freight, buses, tour and taxi operators), with information requirements and to inform them about measures that are in place at the land border posts regarding their travel," he said.

Furthermore, C-BRTA is participating in daily co-ordination meetings for the Covid-19 pandemic at Lebombo and Beitbridge border posts and coordinating with stakeholders in other borders.

He said the C-BRTA is reviewing permit issuance with a view to discourage all non-essential cross border movement and will be in discussion with the Department of Transport, provinces and SADC member states.

"The necessary regulations to enable these measures have been developed and will be implemented on time for the measures to kick in on 18 March 2020," Mbalula said.