

Covid-19: Passenger liner under investigation in Cape Town

The Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) has confirmed that two vessels in the Port of Cape Town are being held off port limits after a crew member on board one of the vessels began to exhibit symptoms of Covid-19.



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It has been established that the crew member had been on a flight with a fellow crew member and six passengers who went on to board a cruise vessel at the port.

This is the first suspected case of Covid-19 in a South African sea-port.

TNPA said the two crew members had flown into the country from Istanbul, Turkey, on 9 March 2020.

Only one of the two is showing signs of being ill, however, both have been placed in isolation on board the general cargo vessel, which is called MV Corona.

Passenger liner

Six passengers on-board the Italian flagged MV AidAmira passenger vessel had been on the same flight as the crew members of the MV Corona. However, according to the master and the doctor on board the passenger liner, the six have shown no symptoms of the virus but are in isolation and being monitored continuously.

The MV AidAmira ship has been operating between Port of Cape Town and Walvis Bay, in Namibia, this cruise season.

The vessel sailed on Friday, 13 March 2020, from the Port of Walvis Bay with 1,240 passengers and a tot

crew of 486 onboard.

The ship was on her voyage back to the Port of Cape Town, when TNPA was informed by Port Health Cape Town that six passengers had been on the same flight as the two MV Corona crew members.

The Master of the MV AidAmira immediately quarantined the six passengers to prevent the spread of the infection to other passengers and crew on board.

The ship arrived outside the Port of Cape Town on 15 March 2020.

"A joint operation centre was set up on 16 March 2020 - inclusive of TNPA Harbour Master, SAMSA (MRCC), Port Health and a specialist doctor. After careful consideration of the facts by the JOC, the vessel was permitted to dock on 16 March 2020," said the authority.

The six passengers have been evacuated and taken to hospital for testing and thereafter will be taken to a quarantined area arranged by Port Health Officials.

The rest of the passengers will remain quarantined on board until the test results for the six are received. Thereafter a decision will be made based on the results, said the authority.

Meanwhile, the MV Corona left the Port of Cape Town on Wednesday, 11 March 2020.

On Friday, 13 March 2020, the Master of this vessel contacted the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) and the Port Health unit of the national Department of Health, confirming one crew member was exhibiting symptoms and requesting that the vessel returns to the Port of Cape Town for evacuation.

Permission was granted by both authorities.

Upon arrival on Monday, the vessel waited off port limits.

MRCC, Port Health and the Harbour Master of the Port of Cape Town have coordinated efforts to evacuate both crew members by arranging with the Airforce helicopters for the suspected crew member to be transported to hospital.

"So far only one of the two crew members on board the MV Corona has shown symptoms of being sick and no passengers or crew onboard MV AIDAmira are exhibiting any symptoms," said TNPA.

Transnet National Ports Authority said it is responsible for ensuring that all vessels have been cleared by relevant state organs namely, Port Health, migration, MRCC and customs before entering or leaving the port.

TNPA is also tasked with ensuring compliance of safety of navigation of vessels, the safety of life and safety of the environment in the Port.