



ICAO

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Planning Sub-Group (AOP/SG/4)**

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Agenda Item 4: Provision of AOP in the Asia/Pacific Region

**PUBLIC HEALTH PROTECTION AND PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES AT
HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

(Presented by Hong Kong, China)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the public health protection and precautionary measures being implemented by the Airport Authority Hong Kong (“AA”) at the Hong Kong International Airport (“HKIA”). In recognition of the success of HKIA in maintaining the airport safe to be travelled with and the high standard in upholding health and safety in operations, ACI has granted accreditation to HKIA under the Airport Health Accreditation (“AHA”) programme.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The health and safety of passengers and staff are always the top priority at HKIA. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Hong Kong (“HK”) earlier in the year, AA has been implementing a broad range of health and safety measures and supporting the Department of Health (“DH”) in controlling the risk of spreading of the disease. AA works closely with DH and other government departments to facilitate the implementation of precautionary and quarantine measures at the airport. We devise contingency and response plan to ensure that the methodology and level of response are commensurate with the risk involved, and closely communicate with stakeholders regarding the implementation of the plan.

1.2 In September 2020, HKIA has been accredited under ACI’s AHA programme, in recognition of HKIA’s high standard in upholding health and safety in its operations. The AHA Programme is designed to support airports around the globe to introduce new hygiene measures against global standards in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to help reassure the travelling public that airport facilities are safe. HKIA is among the first few Asia Pacific airports to be accredited by the programme.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 AA has implemented a series of measures targeting different types of passengers and staff to ensure hygienic and safe facilities at HKIA. These measures will be critical not only in this present stage, but also for the restoration of travellers’ confidence when the pandemic subsides.

Quarantine Procedures for Arriving Passengers

2.2 Starting from 22 April 2020, passengers arriving HK via HKIA are required by DH to undergo a COVID-19 test immediately upon arrival in the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (“TSCC”) set up at AsiaWorld-Expo (“AWE”) and wait for the test results, such that any passenger who tested positive for the virus would be identified and sent straight to hospital without entering the community. To support DH’s measure, designated buses were arranged to shuttle passengers between the airport and AWE to minimize possible contacts with non-passengers. On 18 August 2020, TSCC has been moved to and started operation at the Midfield Concourse in the restricted area. Arrival passengers need to stay at TSCC to wait for test results, which will usually be available on the same day, before proceeding with immigration procedures and baggage reclaim.

Departing Passengers

2.3 Temperature check will be conducted when they enter the terminal building. Protective screens have been installed at check-in and customer services counters. To facilitate social distancing for passengers in the terminal, signage and foot mark stickers on the floor are put up to provide guidance in queueing areas. Passengers are required by AA to wear face masks in all passenger accessible area in the restricted area of HKIA. This compulsory requirement is also applicable at SkyPier and on Automated People Mover and apron passenger vehicles. In line with the Government’s requirement that all people must wear face masks when entering or present in a public place (both indoor and outdoor), passengers must wear face masks in all indoor and outdoor public areas of HKIA.

Transfer and Transit Passengers

2.4 With the gradual resumption of transfer/transit services at HKIA since 1 June 2020, AA has introduced enhanced measures at HKIA to ensure smooth transfer/transit operations. Airlines must ensure that passengers meet the immigration and health quarantine requirements of their final destinations before they board the flights to HKIA for transfer/transit, in order to avoid transfer/transit passengers being stranded at HKIA. All transfer/transit passengers, in addition to the requirement of wearing face masks and undergoing body temperature screening at transfer points, will be given stickers for identification purpose and are requested to go directly to the boarding gates for their connecting flights immediately. A designated seating area at each boarding gate and designated dining areas are set up for transfer/transit passengers to reduce the risk of contact and transmission.

2.5 To ensure airlines are in full compliance with requirements set by the Government for the gradual resumption of services for transfer/transit at HKIA, meetings and briefings were held with the airlines and operators at the airport. Airlines are required to check and verify the authenticity of the travel documents held by the transfer/transit passengers, to ensure the passengers can continue their onward journey from HKIA to their final destinations, and to avoid any such passengers being stranded at HKIA. In the events of any violation of the requirements, the concerned airlines will be subject to suspension or prohibition of transfer/transit services at HKIA, and be responsible for the costs incurred for handling the stranded passengers.

Air Crew

2.6 As a general principle, air crew members arriving at HKIA will be arranged to minimise contact with passengers and members of the public throughout their passage at the airport. Not only is transportation segregated, a dedicated channel is also made available for air crew members for the quarantine and specimen testing process. Under the current arrangement, all crew members, are required by DH to take the COVID-19 test at the TSCC immediately upon arrival. For non-local-crew members, they are recommended by DH to obtain a proof of negative result within 48

hours prior to boarding the flight to Hong Kong for duty. If any non-local crew members do not possess a pre-departure negative result, they will need to wait for the test results at TSCC or at a designated hotel arranged by the airlines, before they can leave for their accommodations. To minimise contact with the public, crew members will only use the point-to-point transportation, both to the designated hotel and their accommodations.

Airport Staff

2.7 Temperature checks are conducted for all airport staff upon entering the terminal and the restricted area. Hand sanitisers are provided in staff entrances to the restricted area and other locations in the terminal. HKIA is the world’s first airport to introduce the “CLEanTech” technology that conducts a quick disinfection of clothing and body surface. Currently, the device is installed near Gate 1 and in the Baggage Reclaim Hall for use by airport staff who take part in public health and quarantine duties.

2.8 Health protection information is disseminated to airport staff from time to time. Workshops were organised by AA and DH from time to time for staff from the airport community to raise their awareness of potential public health issues associated with their duties and the necessary precautions. The two latest staff workshops were held in June and July. So far there are no reported cases of frontline staff getting infected at the airport while handling passengers and the daily airport operations.

2.9 In view of the fact that airport staff may be regarded as having higher exposure to COVID-19 infection, the Centre for Health Protection of DH has extended the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme, which was originally introduced only for arrival passengers, to airport workers and air crew since 15 May 2020. Designated counters set up at HKIA for distribution and collection of specimen bottles operate from Monday to Friday (except public holidays). There is a daily quota of 500 persons on a first-come-first-served basis. The enhanced measure helps in the early detection of possible cases of COVID-19 infection and reduces the risk of community outbreaks among airport staff. As of 11 September 2020, over 19,000 specimens were collected for testing.

Use of New Technologies

2.10 Since the outbreak, AA has stepped up the cleaning and sanitising work in the terminal. In particular, areas frequently contacted by passengers and staff such as escalator/walkway handrails and button panels in lifts are cleaned every hour, and washrooms are also cleaned every hour. The air ventilation in the terminal has also been enhanced, with the fresh air intake set to its maximum level throughout the day. Apart from stepping up of general cleansing and disinfection, AA has been pioneering the use of new technologies in combating COVID-19.

2.11 Several types of robots are being used at HKIA to enhance cleaning and disinfection, including the Intelligent Sterilisation Robot, the Autonomous Vacuum Sweeper “Whiz”, and the Autonomous Floor Scrubber “Taksi”. AA is also in the process of introducing a full paperless and touchless self-service process from check-in to boarding, by using technologies and equipment such as contactless screen and facial recognition.

2.12 Furthermore, AA is conducting a pilot test of applying antimicrobial coating on passenger facilities. The invisible coating, which destroys germs, bacteria and viruses, will be applied to high-touch surfaces in the terminal, including check-in counters, smart check-in kiosks, seating areas, baggage trolleys, elevator buttons and, toilets, as well as handles and seats of the Automated People Movers and passenger buses.

2.13 HKIA is the world’s first airport where “CLEanTech”, a full-body surface disinfection channel facility, is trialled in live operation. Persons using the facility will have a temperature check before entering an enclosed channel for a 40-second disinfection and sanitising process. The interior surface of the channel is overlaid with antimicrobial coating which can remotely kill viruses and bacteria on body surface and clothing by using the technologies of photocatalyst and “nano needles”. Sanitising spray is also applied for instant disinfection. The channel is kept under negative pressure to prevent cross-contamination between the outside and inside environment. Currently, the facility is designated for use by staff who take part in public health and quarantine duties at the airport.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the efforts made by the HKIA in maintaining the airport safe to be travelled with and the high standard in upholding health and safety in operations amid the recent outbreak of COVID-19;
- b) share experience and lesson-learnt of different airports in combating the pandemic and upholding health and safety in its operations; and
- c) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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