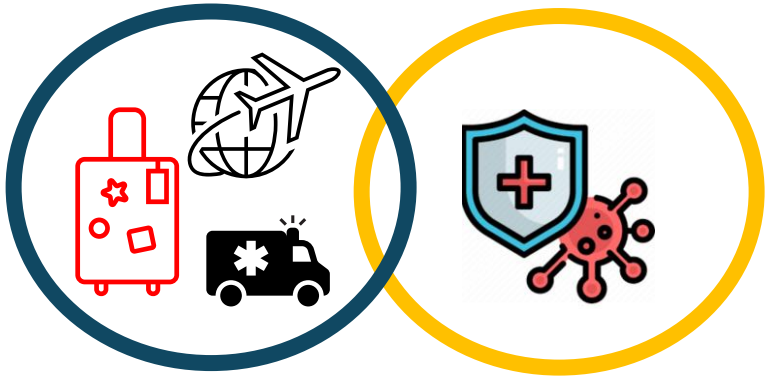
ICAO
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION
A UN SPECIALIZED AGENCY
ICAO provisions on public health
25 June 2025, Bangkok

Why Public Health in Aviation?

Global Connectivity

Air transport links the world, enabling rapid movement of people and goods



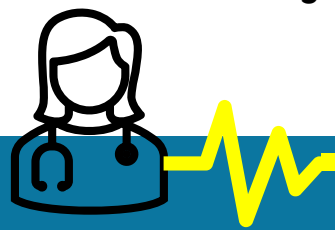
Dual Nature

Essential travel and emergency response facilitation

Potential pathway for rapid international spread of communicable diseases

Crucial Need

Robust public health measures are vital to ensure safe, secure, and efficient international air travel



The ICAO-WHO Framework

International Health Regulations (IHR)

- **World Health Organization (WHO) & IHR (2005):**
  - International legal instrument to prevent, protect against, control, and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease.
  - Legally binding for 196 States Parties.
  - Mandates core capacities at points of entry (including airports) for public health emergencies.
- **Focus:** Early detection, reporting, and coordinated response to health threats.

World Health Organization

SEVENTY-SEVENTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
Agenda item 13.3

A77/A/CONF./14
1 June 2024

International Health Regulations (2005)

PART I – DEFINITIONS, PURPOSE AND SCOPE, PRINCIPLES AND RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES

Article 1 Definitions

1. For the purposes of the International Health Regulations (hereinafter "the IHR" or "Regulations"):

"affected" means persons, baggage, cargo, containers, conveyances, goods, postal parcels or human remains that are infected or contaminated, or carry sources of infection or contamination, so as to constitute a public health risk;

"affected area" means a geographical location specifically for which health measures have been recommended by WHO under these Regulations;

"aircraft" means an aircraft making an international voyage;

"airport" means any airport where international flights arrive or depart;

"arrival" of a conveyance means:

(a) in the case of a seagoing vessel, arrival or anchoring in the defined area of a port;

(b) in the case of an aircraft, arrival at an airport;

(c) in the case of an inland navigation vessel on an international voyage, arrival at a point of entry;

(d) in the case of a train or road vehicle, arrival at a point of entry;

"baggage" means the personal effects of a traveller;

"cargo" means goods carried on a conveyance or in a container;

"competent authority" means an authority responsible for the implementation and application of health measures under these Regulations;

"container" means an article of transport equipment:

(a) of a permanent character and accordingly strong enough to be suitable for repeated use;

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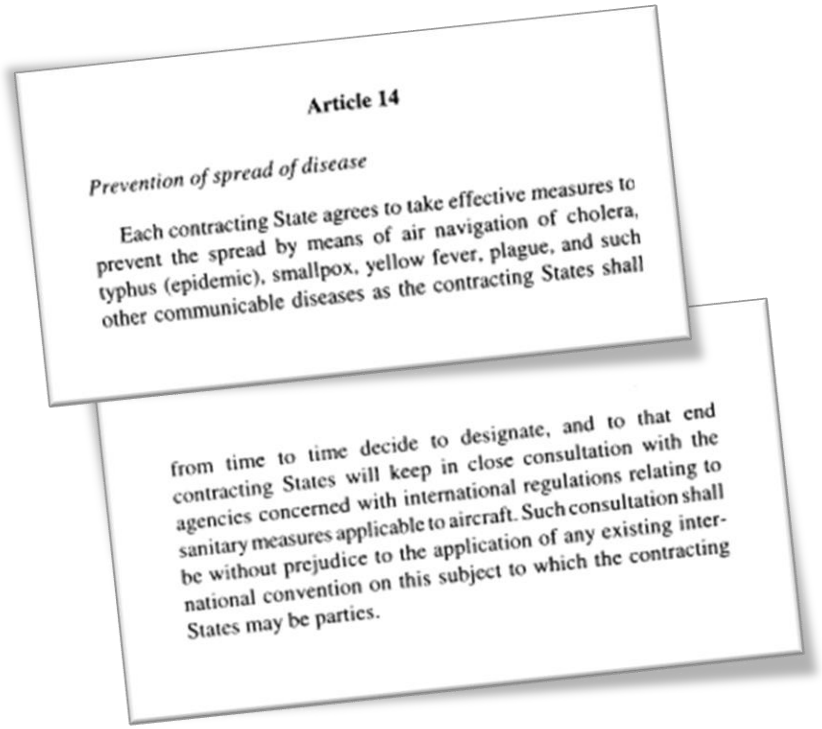
The ICAO-WHO Framework

ICAO's Mandate



Article 14

Prevention of spread of disease

Each contracting State agrees to take effective measures to prevent the spread by means of air navigation of cholera, typhus (epidemic), smallpox, yellow fever, plague, and such other communicable diseases as the contracting States shall

from time to time decide to designate, and to that end contracting States will keep in close consultation with the agencies concerned with international regulations relating to sanitary measures applicable to aircraft. Such consultation shall be without prejudice to the application of any existing international convention on this subject to which the contracting States may be parties.

- **Chicago Convention (1944):**

  Article 14 - Prevention of Spread communicable of Disease: States agree to take effective measures to prevent disease spread by air navigation and consult with health agencies.

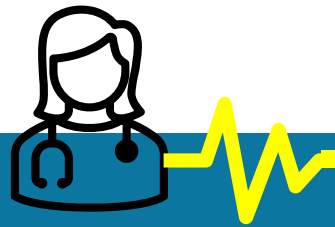
- **ICAO's Role:**

  To ensure safe, orderly, and sustainable development of international civil aviation, including health aspects.

The ICAO-WHO Framework

Interoperability and Collaboration

- **Seamless Integration:** ICAO SARPs are designed to complement and support the WHO IHR.
- **Key Goal:** Harmonized, evidence-based, and proportionate public health responses in aviation globally.
- **Avoidance of Unnecessary Interference:** Measures should minimize disruptions to international traffic while effectively mitigating health risks.



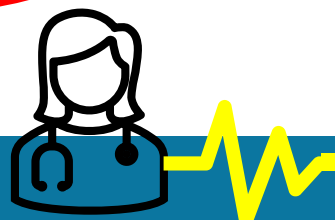
Key ICAO Annexes

ANNEX 9
FACILITATION
Chapter 10. Health-related provisions

National Aviation Public Health Plans:
States to establish plans for preparing their national aviation systems for outbreaks of communicable diseases posing public health risks.

Coordination with WHO :
Contracting States shall not prevent an aircraft from calling at any international airport for public health reasons unless such action is taken in accordance with the IHR.

Compliance with IHR (2005):
States are obligated to comply with the pertinent provisions of the WHO International Health Regulations.



Key ICAO Annexes

ANNEX 9
FACILITATION
Chapter 10. Health-related provisions

Health Documentation:

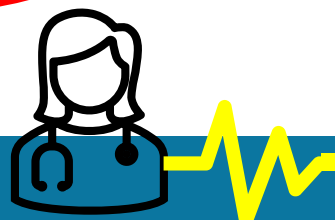
States must accept the WHO International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (e.g., for Yellow Fever).
Digital Health Certificates (VDS-NC): ICAO supports digital issuance of vaccination certificates, aligned with WHO recommendations, enhancing security and verification.

Communication of Requirements:

States must clearly and effectively communicate their public health-related entry requirements to ensure clarity for travelers.

Inspection & Mitigation:

Digital Platforms: Encourages digital submission of health information by passengers to reduce physical interactions.
On-arrival Measures: States should consider measures like testing, vaccination, or quarantine to mitigate health risks upon arrival, while considering the health risks of returning an infected passenger.



Key ICAO Annexes

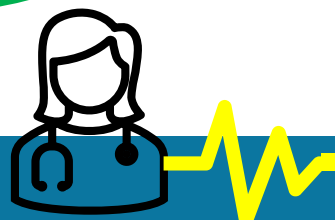
ANNEX 6
AIRCRAFT OPERATION

Medical Supplies Onboard:
"6.2.2 An aeroplane shall be equipped with:
a) accessible and adequate medical supplies;"

First-aid kits:
For cabin crew to manage minor incidents.

Universal precaution kits:
For managing suspected communicable disease cases (e.g., clean-up of body fluids, personal protection).

Medical kits:
For use by qualified medical personnel in treating in-flight emergencies, particularly on longer flights or larger aircraft.

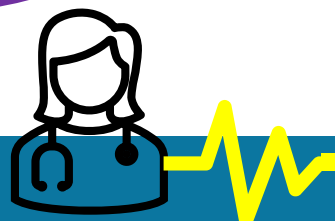


Key ICAO Annexes

ANNEX 11
AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES (ATS)

Notification of Suspected Cases:
Flight crew must promptly notify the ATS unit of any suspected communicable disease or other public health risk on board.

Contingency Planning:
Public health emergencies are to be included in contingency plans for air traffic services.

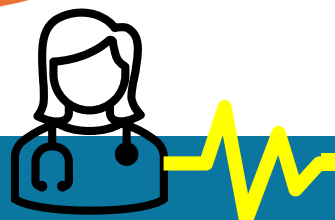


Key ICAO Annexes

ANNEX 14
AERODROME

Aerodrome Emergency Plans:
Aerodrome emergency plans should incorporate procedures for responding to public health emergencies.

Facilities:
International airports are required to provide necessary facilities for public health, emergency medical relief, and quarantine measures.



Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA)

A global, multi-sectorial, collaborative programme, managed by ICAO with support from WHO

Civil Aviation Authorities

Health Authorities

Airlines

Aerodrome

Primary Objective: To assist States in improving preparedness and response to public health events affecting civil aviation by fosters communication, harmonization, and capacity building

Challenges in Public Health Management in Aviation

Inconsistent Implementation:

Varying levels of adherence to ICAO/WHO standards across States.

Response Mechanisms:

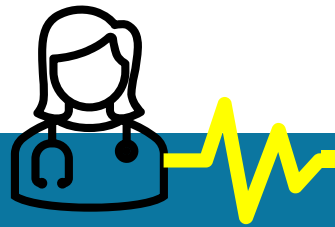
Potential for bureaucratic delays in responding to evolving health threats.

Passenger Experience vs. Health Measures:

Balancing necessary health protocols with minimizing travel disruptions and respecting passenger rights.

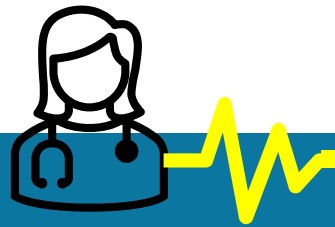
Inclusivity Gaps:

Ensuring emergency planning considers the needs of persons with disabilities, the elderly, and vulnerable populations



Monitoring of public health protocols in aviation

- ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Program (USOAP)
- Public Health provisions in Annex 6, 11 and 14 to the Chicago Convention
- Assessment of consistent application of such provisions- USOAP audit of States

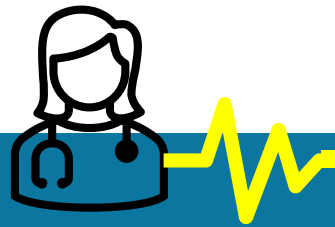


4.460
4.460

Flight operations PQs

PQ 4.460, CE-6

Does the flight operations inspection organization ensure that the air operator has established a procedure for the crew to evaluate a traveler with a suspected communicable disease, based on the presence of a fever and certain other signs or symptoms?

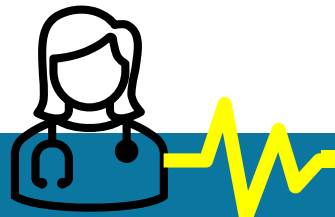


Evidence

1) Review operations inspectors' procedures to ensure that they check air operators' related procedures.

2) Confirm effective implementation by verifying that an air operator's operations manual or cabin crew manual contains related procedures.

3) Check that the procedure includes the transmission, as required, of a General Declaration form to the State authorities.



PQ 4.462 CE-6

Does the flight operations inspection organization ensure that the air operator has established procedures for the pilot-in-command to report promptly to air traffic control (ATC) a suspected communicable disease, with transmission of the following information:

a) aircraft identification;

b) departure aerodrome;

c) destination aerodrome;

d) estimated time of arrival;

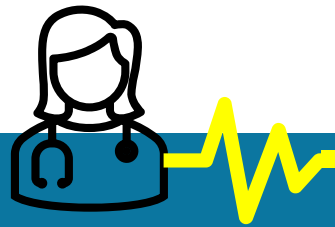
e) number of persons on board;

f) number of suspected case(s) on board; and

g) nature of the public health risk, if known?

Evidence

1) Review operations inspectors' procedures to ensure that they check air operators' related procedures.
2) Confirm effective implementation by verifying that an air operator's operations manual has procedures for reporting suspected communicable diseases, including transmission of the following information:
   a) aircraft identification;
   b) departure aerodrome;



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c) destination aerodrome;

d) estimated time of arrival;

e) number of persons on board;

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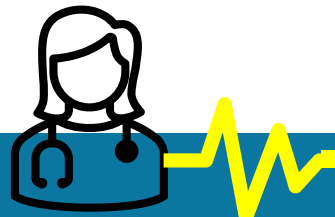


Air Navigation

Does the State ensure that contingency plans have been developed and promulgated in the event of disruption or potential disruption of ATS or related supporting services?

1) Review mechanism established to confirm that the main elements are considered in the contingency planning in accordance with Annex 11 Attachment C.

2) Review documented evidence of the existence of contingency plans and how they are applied.

3) Verify that contingency plans have been:

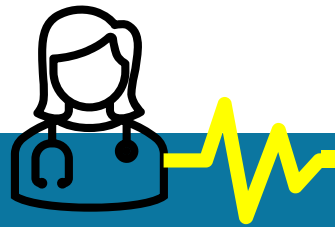
Contd..

a) developed with the assistance of ICAO (as necessary);

b) coordinated with ATS authorities responsible for the provision of services in adjacent portions of airspace; and

c) coordinated with airspace users.

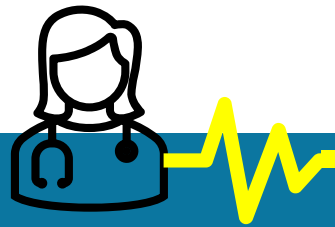
4) Ensure that contingency plans also address natural disasters and public health emergencies.



Aerodromes

PQ 8.291

Does the State ensure that aerodrome operators/competent State authority develop emergency plans, including appropriate cooperation and coordination with other entities involved in the provision of emergency services and the development of the plans?



Contd..

1) Review evidence to confirm effective implementation, cooperation and coordination.
2) Sample aerodrome emergency plan.
3) Check inclusion of:

a) emergencies which may occur in the vicinity of an aerodrome; and

b) public health emergencies, including coordination with public health services

Thank You !!