

## Update to the UNOLS COVID Guidance for Conducting Seagoing Science

The following information and guidance is provided as an update and adjustment to previous UNOLS COVID Guidance related to conducting science onboard U.S. Academic Research Fleet vessels (see: [1June2020 UNOLS COVID-19 Considerations For Conducting Seagoing Science](#), [11May2021 Update to UNOLS COVID-19 Guidance](#), [4June2021 Update to UNOLS Considerations for Conducting Seagoing Science](#), [25August2021 UNOLS COVID-19 Guidance Update](#), [10 Dec2021 Update to UNOLS COVID-19 Guidance](#), and [23May2022 Updated UNOLS COVID-19 Guidance](#).) Those elements of the previous UNOLS COVID Guidance not addressed in the following paragraphs remain in effect.

This update has been developed with advice and guidance provided by George Washington Medical Faculty Associates.

There is increased risk of COVID-19 transmission inherent to congregate settings (such as ships). Ship-board clinical care is limited and there are significant constraints to providing timely, appropriate clinical care to personnel who fall ill. Given that vaccination in accordance with CDC recommendations remains the most effective means of decreasing severe illness and death from COVID-19 infection, it is essential that we strive to maximize the percentage of onboard persons who are fully up to date in their vaccinations. The CDC clearly outlines how a person can remain up to date with COVID vaccinations

Please refer to the [CDC's Guidance on "up to date" COVID Vaccinations](#). Please note that the most current CDC criteria differ from prior versions and we can expect that the CDC will continue to update its recommendations.

The following changes are made to previously issued UNOLS COVID guidelines for consideration in conducting oceanographic research on U.S. Academic Research Fleet vessels. In all cases, the vessel operators and chief scientists can choose to use stricter protocols if deemed appropriate for any reason.

### UPDATED GUIDANCE

UNOLS recommends that all involved parties maximize efforts to encourage that all persons' (crew and science party) COVID vaccinations are Up to Date, per CDC guidelines, by a ship's sail date.

#### Risk Assessment

Vessel Operators should determine the level of risk related to COVID-19 issues impacting the successful execution of seagoing scientific operations through their established Risk Assessment Process. For ships that have voyages that are longer than 7 days and/or anticipate being more than 24-hour sail from medical facilities, consideration should be given to having on-board Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) or any CDC recognized Antigen (Ag) testing capability.

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UNOLS encourages vessel operators and science parties to use the following basic process outline to manage COVID-19 related risks:

1. All personnel should be up to date with COVID-19 vaccination as defined by the CDC at the time of sailing per [CDC guidance](#).
2. Ship operators and the chief scientists should evaluate the need to conduct risk assessments to assess the degree of risk for each cruise. The joint risk determination will serve to inform the degree of travel and pre-cruise protocols that may be implemented by the vessel operator and science party to mitigate risks related to each cruise.
  - a. The risk assessment should consider:
    - i. Port of embarkation / mobilization - including COVID-19 case rates & trends
    - ii. Distance from shore & appropriate medical care
    - iii. Cruise duration
    - iv. Cost of cruise execution
    - v. Science party size
    - vi. Whether public transport travel to the embarkation port is required
    - vii. The number of high-risk participants
3. Using the Risk Assessment as a guide, ship operators, in concert with the chief scientist, should determine and communicate travel and pre-cruise protocols that may be implemented for each cruise. Depending on the level of risk, pre-cruise protocols may include:
  - a. Pre-cruise symptom checks
  - b. Pre-cruise testing
  - c. Travel precautions
  - d. Masking requirements
    - i. Masking using N-95 / KN-95 masks is strongly encouraged for any persons using commercial transportation
    - ii. Masking may be required by vessel operators for infection prevention precautions (e.g., have or are suspected to have an infectious respiratory pathogen such as COVID-19, tuberculosis, measles, influenza, RSV).
  - e. Embarkation requirements
  - f. COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan that includes the following if a case arises
    - i. Onboard testing with ability to cover all personnel
    - ii. Underway isolation plan
    - iii. Underway sanitizing and cleaning material supply
4. Ship operators should continue to maintain robust COVID-19 Health and Safety Plans that outline protocols for addressing when crew/science party members develop symptoms while onboard during cruises. Isolation is the key to success. The ability to isolate the air supply to “Isolation Rooms” is a significant risk mitigator.
5. It is recognized that situations may arise where a ship operator encounters challenges in

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fully crewing a vessel given the current ongoing crewing crisis. In those cases where a vessel operator must complete a “last minute” fill of the crew complement to ensure departure as close to that which is scheduled, the ship operator should:

- a. update the risk assessment for that cruise,
- b. adjust risk mitigation protocols as may be appropriate
- c. communicate the situation with the chief scientist

### **Travel Recommendations**

For crew and science party who travel to meet the ship

- Travel to port should be conducted in private vehicle when possible.
- Travelers are strongly encouraged to wear an N-95 or KN-95 mask and minimize interaction during travel.