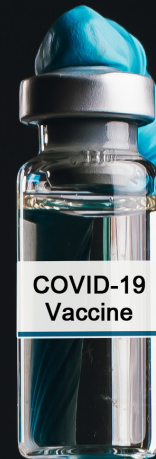


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# COVID-19 Vaccinations for Seafarers

## Vaccinating Seafarers Benefits the World



# COVID-19 Vaccinations for Seafarers

## Vaccinating Seafarers Benefits the World

The vaccination of seafarers is important. Most importantly of all is that they are protected against COVID-19 for the benefit of their health as well as to provide them with some reassurance when travelling and working in an uncertain world. However, vessels with vaccinated crew are also likely to face fewer restrictions from port authorities. This should allow for more normal vessel operations and may even enable seafarers to go ashore should the local circumstances allow it.

### Vaccinating Seafarers Benefits the World



In theory, vaccinated seafarers should also have fewer travel restrictions placed upon them which will hopefully make crew changes easier during these difficult times.

There are also wider public health benefits as vaccinated seafarers are far less likely to negatively impact the health of others they may come into contact with as they travel round the world.

Vaccinating seafarers therefore benefits the individuals themselves, their families, the shipping companies they work for, and the ports and countries they visit. The case for treating seafarers as key workers and vaccinating them as a matter of priority is clear from both a public health and economic point of view.

## How quickly are seafarers likely to be vaccinated?

That depends. The main factor will be the nationality of the seafarer. At present vaccines are primarily available from government agencies with each country having its own vaccination plan.

You can see from the map below that some of the key crew supply nations may not have completed their vaccination programs until 2023 (based on 60-70% being the majority of the adult population). This could mean that many seafarers are not vaccinated until 2023 at the earliest as the majority of crew are below 50 years old and are less likely to be considered in the vulnerable category.

This problem has been recognised by the shipping industry. Shipping organisations, including the International Group of P&I Clubs, have joined calls for action. Most recently this has resulted in the heads of 5 UN bodies including the World Health Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, and the International Maritime Organisation to call for seafarers to be prioritised for COVID-19 Vaccinations.

You can read the joint statement here.

[www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/vaccination-UN-joint-statement.aspx](https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/vaccination-UN-joint-statement.aspx)

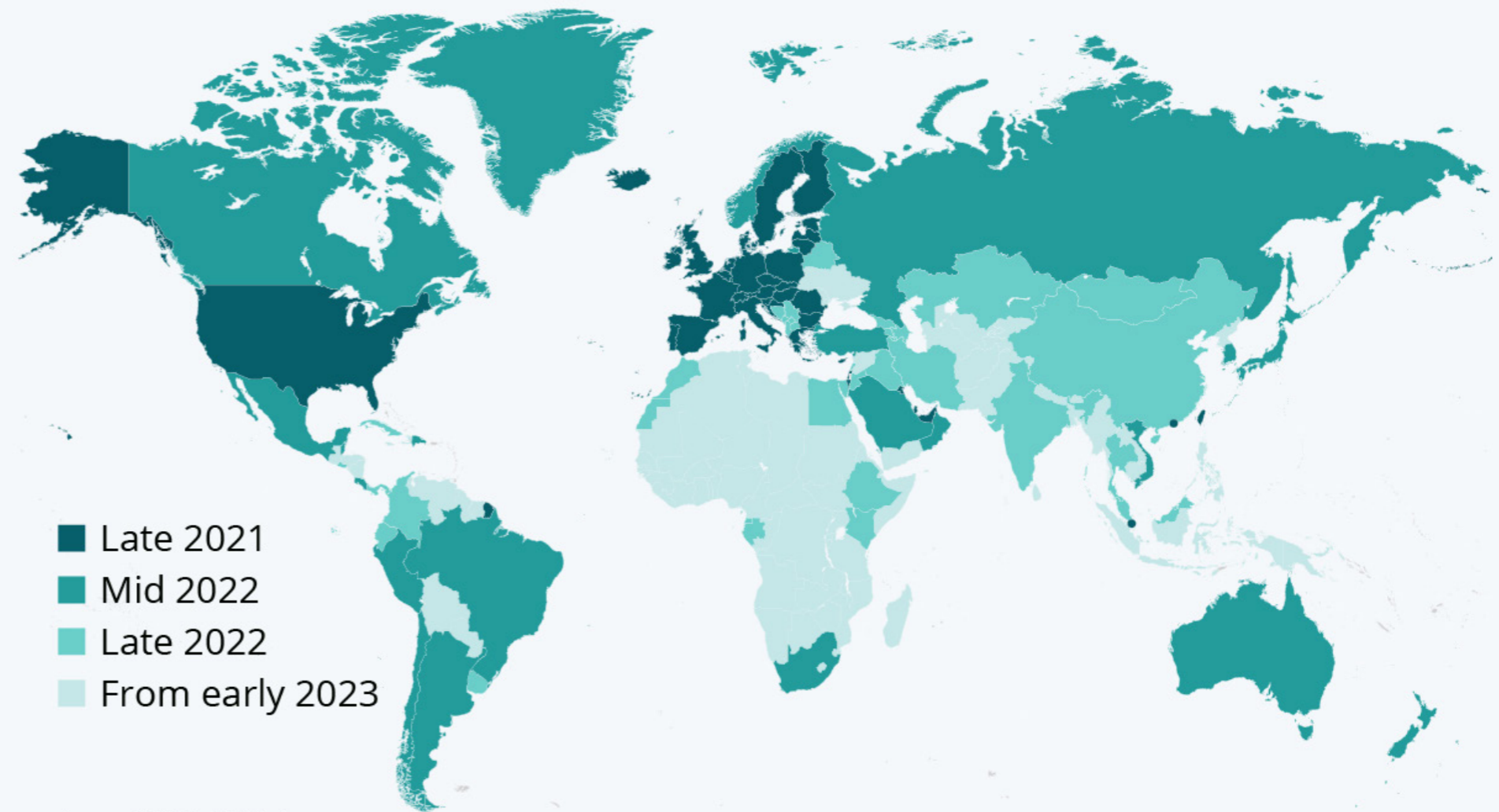
The UN bodies' joint statement also recognises the need for an interoperable global system of COVID-19 certificates to allow seafarers to continue to cross borders on a day-to-day basis.

### Vaccine Prioritisation for Seafarers is Highly Uncertain

This call for action is very much welcomed but unfortunately it does not necessarily mean that seafarers will be prioritised by national governments. At the time of writing global vaccine prioritisation of seafarers is highly uncertain.

# Global Vaccine Timeline Stretches to 2023

Countries by when they are expected to have vaccinated 60-70% of their adult population against COVID-19



- Late 2021
- Mid 2022
- Late 2022
- From early 2023

As of Q1 2021

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit



# Ship operators investigating vaccinations for Seafarers

The uncertainty surrounding national vaccination programs, and the length of time it may take for some countries to roll out vaccinations, has led to ship operators exploring vaccination options for their seafarers. This is entirely understandable but there are a lot of issues to consider and it is appropriate to seek expert legal advice from the relevant jurisdiction as currently there are no rules or procedures agreed or adopted for private vaccination of seafarers.

## Is it possible to arrange vaccination privately?

A private vaccination program may become an option in due course but should be considered carefully before taking such action prematurely.

## What are the legal considerations?

It is important that full due diligence is exercised to ensure the authenticity of the vaccine being provided and that it has the approval of the WHO, the country of which the seafarer is a national, the country of the employer and also that of Flag State. Otherwise, it is quite likely that it will not be widely accepted and more seriously perhaps, if there are any side effects resulting from the vaccination, the employer will be held fully responsible for same as having behaved negligently.

## What are the practical considerations?

We would recommend that the vaccine should be administered by a qualified healthcare professional ashore and not on board the vessel. It is important that it can be clearly demonstrated that the procedure was carried out by an appropriate third party rather than risking an allegation of negligence should there be any problems. On a practical level, if there are any serious side effects it is unwise to risk a large number of crew on the same vessel being so affected.

It would also be sensible to consider the pros and cons of using a single dose vaccine or a two dose vaccine as there may be logistical issues involved in arranging the latter.

## Can a shipowner require or mandate their seafarers to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Not all crew will welcome the opportunity to be vaccinated, the level of vaccine scepticism varying from country to country. Owners should encourage their seafarers to get vaccinated when they can and educate them in the science behind the vaccinations, which are both safe and effective.

Owners will naturally want to have their seafarers vaccinated as this helps to protect them, their colleagues and those ashore whilst assisting in dealing with international restrictions. However, requiring crew to have a vaccine during the course of their current employment may not be appropriate. Any significant changes to the terms of employment should be considered carefully and done in full consultation with appropriately experienced lawyers and all other relevant parties.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) has produced a short video introducing their practical guide to vaccination for seafarers <https://vimeo.com/528215098>

The guide can be downloaded here [www.ics-shipping.org/publication/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-practical-guide](http://www.ics-shipping.org/publication/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-practical-guide)

## Is proof of vaccination required?

It is vitally important that crew members have proof of vaccination and that this is shared with shipowners well in advance of travel. This proof of vaccination can come in different forms in different countries but will usually either be a paper or online form of certification. Restrictive vaccine passport schemes are being considered by numerous countries.

## What is covered by P&I?

If crew, during the course of their employment contract, are taken ill as a result of having been vaccinated, Members legal liabilities are covered by P&I in the same manner as for any other illness.

The ICS has prepared a guide; COVID-19: Legal, Liability and Insurance Issues arising from Vaccination of Seafarers in consultation with various industry bodies including the International Group of P&I Clubs and can be downloaded from:

[www.ics-shipping.org/publication/coronavirus-covid-19-legal-liability-and-insurance-issues-arising-from-vaccination-of-seafarers](http://www.ics-shipping.org/publication/coronavirus-covid-19-legal-liability-and-insurance-issues-arising-from-vaccination-of-seafarers)

## Keep Using MyGlobeView

The situation with vaccines is likely to remain uncertain. North will monitor the situation locally via our correspondent network, and information relating to vaccinations and restrictions locally will be updated on the MyGlobeView

# MyGlobeView

COVID-19 layer and our website.

Members can access MyGlobeview via their My North account [www.nepia.com/mynorth](http://www.nepia.com/mynorth)

Or can use our industry news service [www.nepia.com/industry-news/coronavirus-outbreak-impact-on-shipping](http://www.nepia.com/industry-news/coronavirus-outbreak-impact-on-shipping)

Any general queries, please contact the Personal Injury Team at North.

# MIND CALL

Supporting Seafarers at sea through COVID-19. If you are worried, stressed or anxious please contact our confidential helpline

Mind Call (provided in association with ISWAN) is a confidential\* helpline available 24/7, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. The helpline operators speak several languages including Tagalog, Chinese and Russian.

Mind Call can be contacted via:

Tel: **+44 191 235 3917**

Email: [contact@mindcall.org](mailto:contact@mindcall.org)

WhatsApp: **+44 7464 327451**

Live Chat via the website

[www.mindcall.org](http://www.mindcall.org)

\*please see our website regarding confidentiality.



MIND  
CALL

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