



Cover Letter – Guidance for Air Carriers

Public health authorities in South Africa have confirmed that a new COVID-19 variant of concern (B.1.1.529) has been detected in that country. Over the past few days, this variant – named Omicron by the World Health Organization – has also been detected in other countries.

As a precautionary measure, until January 31, 2022, the Government of Canada is implementing enhanced border measures for all travellers who have been in South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Egypt, Nigeria and Malawi – within the last 14 days before arriving in Canada. Foreign nationals who have travelled in any of these countries within the previous 14 days will not be permitted entry into Canada. Canadian citizens, permanent residents and people with status under the *Indian Act*, regardless of their vaccination status or having had a previous history of testing positive for COVID-19, who have been in these countries in the previous 14 days will be subject to enhanced testing, screening, and quarantine measures. Individuals authorized to enter Canada will be required to obtain, within 72 hours of their scheduled flight to Canada, a valid negative COVID-19 molecular test in a third country before continuing their journey to Canada. Upon arrival to Canada, regardless of their vaccination status or having had a previous history of testing positive for COVID-19, they will be subject to immediate arrival testing. All travellers will also be required to complete a test on day 8 after arrival and quarantine for 14 days.

There are 3 instruments related to these new measures:

- A new Order in Council [Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order \(Prohibition of Entry into Canada – Specified Countries\)](#), which generally gives the Chief Public Health Officer the ability to implement travel restrictions related to the Omicron variant, including preventing foreign nationals from entering Canada if they are from a country with an outbreak or at risk of having an outbreak;
- Temporary measures by the Chief Public Health Officer confirming the list of countries, as well as testing and quarantine requirements for persons normally exempt from this type of requirement; and
- The TC [Interim Order Respecting Certain Requirements for Civil Aviation Due to COVID-19](#) which requires that air carriers to deny boarding to any traveller that is not eligible to enter Canada and to not accept COVID-19 molecular test results from those countries identified by the Chief Public Health Officer.

These measures are now all in force. Please review the guidance material for operators in order to put these measures into immediate effect.



Guidance For Air Carriers: Measures related to the Omicron Variant

Background

On November 26, 2021 the Minister of Transport signed [Interim Order No. 46](#) which included an update to Schedule 1 of the *Interim Order*. An addition of six countries was made to the list of countries where COVID-19 molecular test results are not accepted. Since then, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has added more countries to the list of those that are a concern given the Omicron variant. As such, [Interim Order No. 48](#), signed on November 30, 2021, now references the **list identified by the Chief Public Health Officer** to identify countries which may pose a higher risk related to the omicron variant.

List of Countries

The following countries have been identified as posing a higher-risk in relation to the omicron variant of COVID-19 by the Chief Public Health Officer:

1. Botswana
2. Egypt
3. Eswatini
4. Lesotho
5. Malawi
6. Mozambique
7. Namibia
8. Nigeria
9. South Africa
10. Zimbabwe

Obligation for Air Carriers

- 1. Deny boarding to travellers with pre-departure test from a country identified by the Chief Public Health Officer**

The *Interim Order* requires air carriers to deny boarding to all travellers if they present a pre-departure COVID-19 molecular test from a country identified by the Chief Public Health Officer (list is noted above).

Note: air carriers must still deny boarding to a traveller if they present a COVID-19 molecular test result from a country listed on Schedule 1 (i.e., India or Morocco), however this list is not specifically in relation to the omicron variant.

- 2. Deny boarding to any traveller if they do not meet an entry requirement outlined in the Public Health Agency (PHAC) of Canada Order in Council (OIC)**

The Transport Canada *Interim Order* requires air carriers to deny boarding to any traveller that is not permitted to enter Canada based on provisions in PHAC Orders in Council.



A new Order - [*Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order \(Prohibition of Entry into Canada – Specified Countries\)*](#) - along with a direction from the Chief Public Health Officer ([*see list of specified countries*](#)), requires that air carriers deny boarding to foreign nationals that have been in any of the following countries: South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Egypt, Nigeria and Malawi, in the past 14 days. Canadian citizens, permanent residents and persons registered under the *Indian Act* can be boarded but will be subject to public health measures upon arrival including arrival testing and quarantine. These travellers will be subject to the arrival measures regardless of their vaccination status and whether they would normally be considered exempt from the application of this type of requirement. Public health officials will provide instructions to travellers upon arrival.

IMPORTANT Additional Information – Flight Crew

Operators are advised that the [*Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order \(Prohibition of Entry in Canada – Specified Countries\)*](#) does not have an exception for flight crew who have been in the listed countries over the past 14 days. **This means that foreign flight crew are not eligible to enter Canada if they have landed in one of the identified countries (South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Egypt, Nigeria and Malawi) in the past 14 days.** With respect to Canadian flight crew that have been in one of these countries, they will be allowed to enter Canada, but should expect to undergo day 1 testing immediately upon arrival (for monitoring purposes). Canadian flight crew will not, however, not be required to go into 14-day quarantine or undergo day 8 COVID-19 testing.