

# National Influenza Committee Guidelines for H1N1 and Travel

Source: Government of Canada providing H1N1 travel guidance  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/transport-transport-eng.php>

Saint Lucia National Influenza Plan is available at [www.tiny.cc/nip](http://www.tiny.cc/nip)

Past Guidelines in the Series Are Available at...

<http://stlucia.gov.lc/flu/guidelines.htm>

This document provides interim guidance on suggested means to reduce the spread of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus on various mode of transport. Recommendations are interim based on current knowledge of the H1N1 outbreak, and may be revised as more information becomes available.

## Background

The risk of transmission of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus may be increased on transport due to increased proximity and sometimes prolonged contact between people in an enclosed environment; however, it should also be recognized that under circumstances of widespread community transmission, the risk of acquiring influenza like illness [ILI] on a transport may not be significantly greater than in other community settings.

This guidance will address general recommendations that apply to all programs and some specific guidance that applies to programs that are residential.

At this time, CDC recommends the primary means to reduce spread of influenza focuses on early identification of the ill. This includes the cooperation of the transport sector staying home (or away from others) when ill, conducting good cough and hand hygiene etiquette, and environmental controls that encourage use of these hygiene practices.



## Novel Influenza A (H1N1)

The symptoms of influenza usually include fever plus at least either cough or sore throat. These symptoms are often referred to as an influenza-like illness (ILI). Influenza infection can also lead to additional symptoms like headache, tiredness, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills, diarrhea, and vomiting. Like seasonal flu, novel influenza A (H1N1) infection in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. When severe, pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death are possible.

Novel influenza A (H1N1) is thought to spread in the same way that seasonal influenza virus spread, mainly through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with the virus. People may also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Guidance on how to reduce the spread of the H1N1 flu virus on planes, ferries, taxis and buses

***The first priority is to arrange for immediate medical attention of a passenger, if required.***

## Recommendations Regarding Infection Prevention and Control

In addition to usual practices, it is recommended that the following infection prevention and control measures be instituted on board transport.

### 1. Self-Screening

#### Passengers

In keeping with the recommendation that individuals with ILI remain home until they are symptom-free, feeling well and able to fully participate in their regular activities, passengers who are currently experiencing symptoms of ILI should avoid travel and not board transport if possible. To facilitate communication of this recommendation, it is suggested that transport operators and staff consider providing relevant information for passengers by, for example, displaying signage advising passengers of the symptoms of ILI and the recommendation to stay home if experiencing ILI symptoms. Communicating this key message to passengers in advance of their departure dates may be helpful to passengers as they assess their fitness to travel.



Passengers with ILI who cannot avoid or delay travel should try to avoid public modes of transportation. If this is not possible, passengers should follow the advice provided in the section on management below.

Transport operators may wish to develop policies which facilitate re-booking of travel for reasons of illness, if such policies do not already exist.

If a traveler on a transport is exhibiting symptoms of ILI, prior to arrival at their destination, the first priority should be to arrange for immediate medical attention, if required, as per the company protocol and any applicable laws.

#### Drivers

It is also recommended that drivers perform self-assessments for symptoms of ILI and be prepared to report immediately to a doctor if symptoms develop. Buss and Taxi Associations may wish to develop mechanisms to facilitate and encourage reporting.

## Crew

It is also recommended that crew perform self-assessments for symptoms of ILI and be instructed to report immediately to a designated crew member if symptoms develop. Transport operators may wish to develop mechanisms to facilitate and encourage reporting.

For passengers or crew who develop symptoms of ILI while traveling, the advice given in the section on management below would apply.

## **2. Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Cough/Sneeze Etiquette**

Transport operators may wish to consider the development of signage reinforcing good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Such signage could be placed on board transport and inside transport terminals in conspicuous locations.

It is recommended that all persons on board transport practice good hand hygiene. Hand cleaning is recommended frequently using soap and water or alcohol based hand rubs (60-90% alcohol concentration). Soap and water are recommended be used if hands are visibly soiled.

It is also recommended that all persons on board practice good respiratory etiquette. This includes the practice of coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into one's sleeve or elbow. Used tissues should immediately be placed in a waste receptacle and hand hygiene performed.



In addition, it is recommended that transport operators ensure adequate hand washing supplies and/or alcohol-based hand rub (60-90% alcohol concentration) be readily available.

## **3. Other Precautions**

The use of gloves, gowns, respiratory protection, including high-quality procedure masks, facemasks, or N95 respirators and eye protection **IS NOT RECOMMENDED** for crew members engaging in general work activities.

The focus should be on placing a mask, if available, on the ill person, as described below in the section on management, and practicing good hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette.

## **4. Cleaning and Disinfection**

Equipment and surfaces that may have become contaminated with droplets or respiratory secretions should be cleaned and disinfected according to the Ministry of Health's Influenza Manual (available from <http://stlucia.gov.lc/flu/guidelines.htm> ).

## 5. Management of Persons with ILI

Local Setting: *Management of Drivers and Passengers with ILI*

It is recommended that:

- Drivers [taxi and minibus] and passengers with ILI should be separated from the general public as much as possible and self isolate.
- In keeping with the Ministry of Health's Guidelines all persons should practice hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Ill passengers should be monitored and, if necessary, taken directly to the nearest health facility.

Regional or International Setting: *Management of Passengers and Crew with ILI*

It is recommended that passengers and crew with ILI should be separated from other passengers and crew as much as possible, preferably by at least 2 meters, without compromising safety. Ideally, persons experiencing symptoms of ILI would be isolated or grouped together (if multiple persons with ILI) in a separate cabin with a dedicated washroom until they are symptom-free, feeling well and able to fully participate in their regular activities or disembarked, whichever comes first. The number of crew interacting with the ill person(s) should be minimized to the extent possible. It is recommended that persons with ILI should be asked to wear a facial or surgical mask, if available, to help protect others. The crew can encourage ill persons to practice hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Isolated persons should be monitored and, if necessary, permitted to disembark at the next scheduled stop unless medical evacuation is required sooner and is feasible.



If it is possible, it is recommended to isolate sick passengers with a family member or companion and provide the companion with the information contained in *the Ministry of Health's Guidelines on Managing Influenza at Home* available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/slunemo/message/869>

Crew or caregivers who have had contact with a person who has ILI do not need to be isolated if feeling well, but it is recommended they monitor their health for 4 days following exposure and to isolate themselves at the first sign of symptoms of ILI.

If a traveler on a transport is exhibiting symptoms of ILI, prior to arrival at their destination, the first priority should be to arrange for immediate medical attention, if required, as per the company protocol and any applicable laws.

It is recommended that for international travelers who are or become ill with ILI stay home, or arrange accommodation at the point of disembarkation if not in home community, until they are

symptom-free, feeling well and able to return to regular activities. The LuianFlu website provides additional information on influenza at <http://stlucia.gov.lc/flu>

## 6. Reporting

### *International Transport*

The Quarantine Act requires that the operator of any airplane, ferry or bus, used in the business of carrying people or cargo, report to the appropriate authority any person, cargo or thing on board the transport that could cause the spread of a communicable disease, including H1N1, as listed in the Quarantine Act. This should be done as soon as possible, either before the transport arrives in, or departs from, Saint Lucia. The authority will notify a Port Health Officer.

Air operators can report to a Port Health Officer by advising an air traffic controller or their air carrier centre. The information will then be relayed to the airport duty officer/airport operation centre who would inform the Port Health Officer.

Once notified of an ill traveler on board a transport arriving in Saint Lucia, the Port Health Officer, who may collaborate with the Immigration Officer, will assess the situation and advise on whether further action under the Quarantine Act is required for the ill traveler. The Port Health Service will also notify the Influenza Focal Point at the Ministry of Health and/or public health officials as per established protocols.



If a traveler on a transport is exhibiting symptoms of ILI and requires medical attention prior to arrival, the first priority should be to arrange for immediate medical attention, as per the company protocol and any applicable laws in the jurisdiction where the transport is located at the time.

If the transport is proceeding, the operator must inform a Port Health Officer or intermediary as soon as possible. Even if the ill traveler is disembarked prior to arrival, notification must still be made so a Port Health Officer can assess if further action under the Act is required for those who have been in close contact with the ill traveler.

### *Ferries:*

This reporting can take place similar to the description above.

### *Domestic Transport*

Operators of transport i.e. taxi operators and minibus drivers are under no legal obligation to report to public health authorities; however, public health authorities are available for consultation regarding suspected cases or outbreaks of ILI on transport. It is recommended that transport operators consult, as necessary, with the public health authority of the Ministry of Health.

## 7. Patient Transfer

It is recommended that persons with ILI who require transfer off of the transport be provided with a facial or surgical mask during transfer, if available and if tolerated.

Crew involved in transfer should follow the recommendations provided in the *Management of Passengers and Crew with ILI* section above.

A disembarkation plan, including how to organize safe and timely exit routes for ill persons and other travelers and crew, to limit the possibility of spreading the infection is recommended.

Transport terminal and emergency medical services should be notified, as appropriate, that they will be receiving a patient with ILI so any required actions can be undertaken.

## 8. Response Plan

Whether transporting passengers by bus, or taxi; shipping goods and services by commercial trucks around town or across the country; maintaining the nation's highway infrastructure (i.e., highways bridges, tunnels and operations centers); working in a transportation-related job; or shipping or receiving transported goods, the Sub-Sector's impact on the nation's economy and social stability is significant. Any disruption to these key highway transportation services and infrastructure may cause significant local, national and even regional challenges potentially putting the delivery of critical food, fuel, and medical supplies, as well as emergency response equipment, supplies, and personnel at risk. Proactive planning with emergency management and safety officials and community leaders will facilitate the successful integration of essential highway and motor carrier business operations into community emergency response planning. Primarily a service sector, this sub-sector's chief function is assuring the movement of people and others' goods/products. The transport sector is therefore encouraged to review the Pandemic Influenza Planning Guidelines for the Transportation Sector at [http://www.stlucia.gov.lc/nemp/plans/influenza\\_plan/NIP\\_Vol8\\_Transport.pdf](http://www.stlucia.gov.lc/nemp/plans/influenza_plan/NIP_Vol8_Transport.pdf)

