

Subject: Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of aircraft surfaces -
Operational Recommendations

Ref. Publications:

- European Centre for Disease Prevention (ECDC) *Disinfection of environments in healthcare and non-healthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2*, 26 March 2020 (<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/disinfection-environments-covid-19>).
- ECDC *Interim guidance for environmental cleaning in non-healthcare facilities exposed to SARS-CoV-2*, 18 February 2020 (<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/interim-guidance-environmental-cleaning-non-healthcare-facilities-exposed-2019>).
- World Health Organization (WHO) *Cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces in the context of COVID-19*, 16 May 2020 (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/cleaning-and-disinfection-of-environmental-surfaces-in-the-context-of-covid-19>).
- WHO Guide to Hygiene and Sanitation in Aviation, Third Edition, 2009 (https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/aviation_guide/en/).
- GünterKampf (2020): Potential role of inanimate surfaces for the spread of coronaviruses and their inactivation with disinfectant agents. *Infection Prevention in Practice*.
- van Doremalen, N.; Morris, D. M.; Bushmaker, T.; Holbrook, M. G.; Gamble, A.; Williamson, B. N.; Munster, V. J. (2020): Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2. *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

Applicability:

Aircraft operators involved in commercial transport of passengers.

Description:

Following the evolution of the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak causing COVID-19 disease, on 11 March 2020 the WHO assessed the current SARS-CoV-2 outbreak as a pandemic. This status continues to remain the same at the time of the issuance of this SIB.

There are three possible ways by which infection can be transmitted on board of aircraft:

- 1) Direct inhalation of respiratory droplets and/or suspended airborne particles;
- 2) Direct contact with saliva, faecal matter or other potentially contaminated body fluids;
- 3) Direct contact with saliva, faecal matter or other potentially contaminated body fluids deposited on surfaces or, for maintenance staff, entrained in ventilation and air conditioning systems.

This is information only. Recommendations are not mandatory.



The main source of infection for air travellers is from an infected person, and proximity to an infected person is an important risk factor for droplet-transmitted infections. Once the infected person is no longer in proximity, the risk of exposure to respiratory droplet is considerably reduced. Nevertheless, scientific evidence (GünterKampf, 2020; van Doremalen, et al., 2020) shows that the SARS-CoV-2 transmission from aerosol and from inanimate surfaces is plausible since the virus can remain viable and infectious in aerosols for hours and on surfaces up to several days, depending on the type of surface and the environmental conditions. In this context, the possibility for the virus to remain in the aircraft environment through the common surfaces contaminated by the infected passenger, even after the infected passenger has disembarked, requires mitigating action in order to prevent further contamination.

As a result of the evidence mentioned above and of the epidemiological situation, EASA issued Safety Directives (SD) [SD-2021-04](#) and [SD 2021-05](#) regarding the cleaning and disinfection of aircraft.

Even if the virus remains viable on certain surfaces for a number of days, no confirmed cases of transmission from inanimate surfaces have been reported. Furthermore, medical experts consider that enhanced cleaning is sufficient to remove any remaining particles containing viable SARS-CoV-2 virus. Consequently, EASA has decided to cancel the above-mentioned Safety Directives and to issue this SIB providing recommendations for enhanced cleaning of frequently touched areas.

Recommendation(s):

EASA recommends the following:

- 1) Aircraft operators should assess the risk of transmission of COVID-19 via contaminated surfaces on board their operated aircraft. In their risk assessment, operators could consider aspects like incidence levels of COVID-19 in the states/areas where they operate, the impact on health of the prevailing virus variant in that state/area, any additional mitigations required by the relevant public health authorities, for example pre-flight testing, wearing of masks or vaccination rates in the states/areas where they operate.
- 2) Based on the risk assessment, aircraft operators should implement enhanced cleaning policies focusing on the frequently touched areas and other possibly contaminated surfaces.
- 3) In their enhanced cleaning policies, aircraft operators should consider the principles detailed in the latest update of the EASA [Guidance on aircraft cleaning and disinfection](#), the EASA-ECDC [Aviation Health Safety Protocol](#), local requirements and international best practices.
- 4) Aircraft operators, when having a confirmed case during a flight or when receiving information, within maximum 48 hours after the flight has ended, that a person (passenger or crew member) that has travelled in their aircraft was confirmed positive for COVID-19, should perform a disinfection of the respective surfaces of the aircraft, unless disinfection has been performed prior to notification and post the affected flight. Disinfection should be performed following best practices, as soon as operationally possible and, preferably, no later than 24 hours after receiving the information.

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