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Circular Letter No.4204/Add.25
24 July 2020

To: All IMO Member States
United Nations and specialized agencies
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO

Subject: **Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Outcome of surveys by ICS and ITF on health protection measures on board ships in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**

The COVID-19 related restrictions on crew changes have a major impact on the health and well-being of seafarers. Although some Governments have taken action to alleviate the situation, more than 200,000 seafarers are still waiting to be repatriated, many remaining on board long beyond the end of their original contracts.

The Secretary-General has received a report of ICS and ITF entitled Outcome of the surveys on health protections measures onboard ships in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as set out in the annex. The ICS survey was completed by 83 companies, operating approximately 1,775 ships, and the ITF survey was completed by 538 seafarers. The objective of the surveys was to gain further understanding of the health protection measures introduced by companies on board their ships during the pandemic and inform the development of best practices for companies and seafarers.

Member States and international organizations are invited to make use of the attached information, as they see fit, and circulate it to all interested parties, as deemed appropriate.

ANNEX



**OUTCOME OF THE
SURVEYS ON HEALTH PROTECTION MEASURES ONBOARD SHIPS
IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC**

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SECTION A – INTRODUCTION

ICS and ITF collected information from shipping companies and seafarers regarding the health protection measures and procedures introduced onboard ships in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Objective

To gain a further understanding of the health protection measures introduced by companies onboard their ships during the pandemic, and inform the development of best practices for companies and seafarers.

Responses

ICS survey was completed by **83** companies, operating approximately **1775** ships.

ITF survey was completed by **538** seafarers.

Seafarers indicated the ship type on which they serve: bulk carrier/general cargo (17%), tanker (15%), container (15%) passenger ship (11%), chemical/LNG/LPG (7%), other (36%).

Note: Where there are differences in the responses between companies and seafarers, it is primarily due to the fact that the seafarers who responded to the ITF version of the survey are unlikely to be any of those that are serving onboard the ships operated by the companies that responded to the ICS version of the survey.

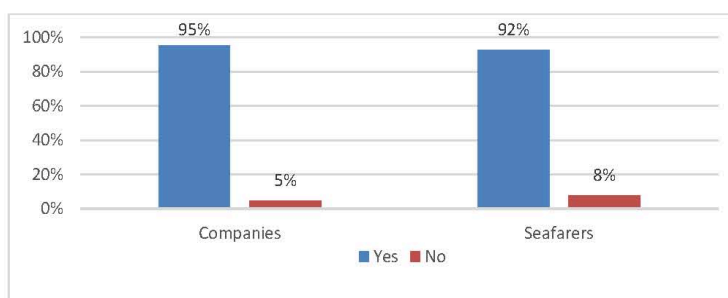
SECTION B – RESULTS

Information and awareness

Question 1 – Providing information on COVID-19 to seafarers

Has the Company provided general information to its seafarers on COVID-19, including its symptoms and some of the standard infection protection and control precautions based on WHO and any flag State advice?

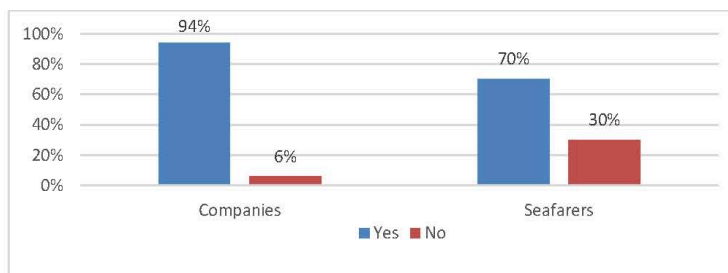
Have you received general information from your Company on COVID-19, including its symptoms and some of the standard infection protection and control precautions?



Question 2 – Providing training or instruction on COVID-19 to seafarers

Has the Company provided any training to its seafarers on COVID-19 and the related shipboard plans and procedures of the Company, such as through training videos, posters or information sheets?

Have you received any training on COVID-19 and the relevant shipboard plans and procedures of your Company, such as through training videos, posters or information sheets?

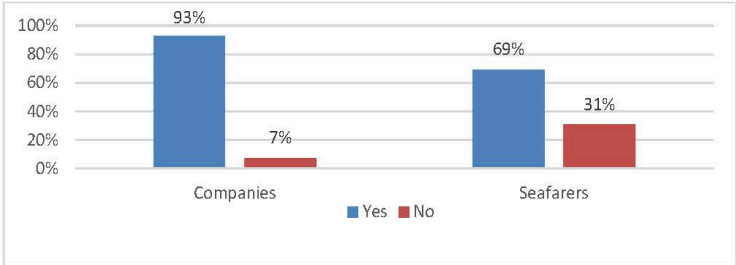


Shipboard plans and procedures

Question 3 – Development of plans and procedures related to COVID-19

Has the Company developed specific plans and procedures to protect the health of its seafarers and the safety and security of its ships during the COVID-19 pandemic?

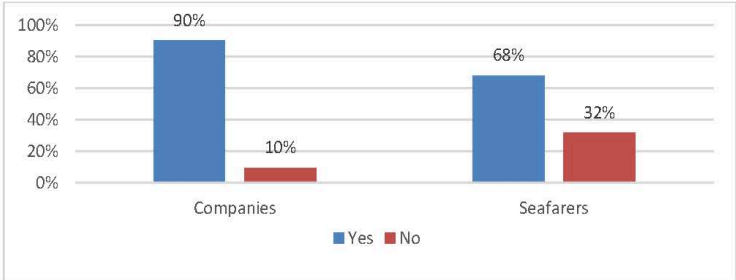
Are you aware of any specific plan your Company has developed and procedures related to COVID-19?



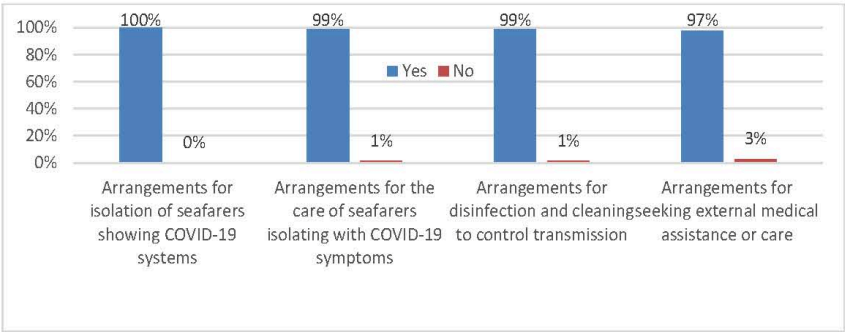
Question 4 – Plans and procedures to manage cases of COVID-19

Has the Company developed plans and procedures to manage any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 onboard its ships?

Does your ship have plans and procedures to manage any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 on-board ship?



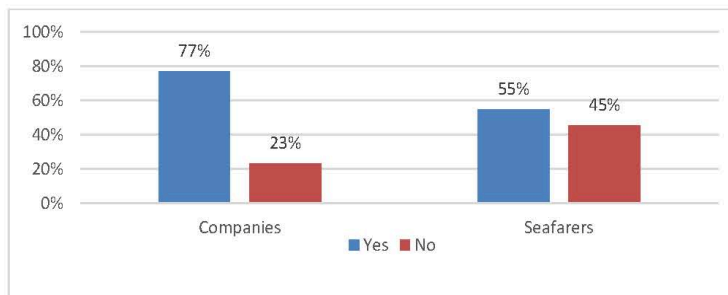
If a Company responded "Yes", they were asked to specify what was address in the plans and procedures:



Question 5 – Plans and procedures for segregation and social distancing

Has the Company developed plans and procedures for the segregation or social distancing of seafarers who recently joined the ship?

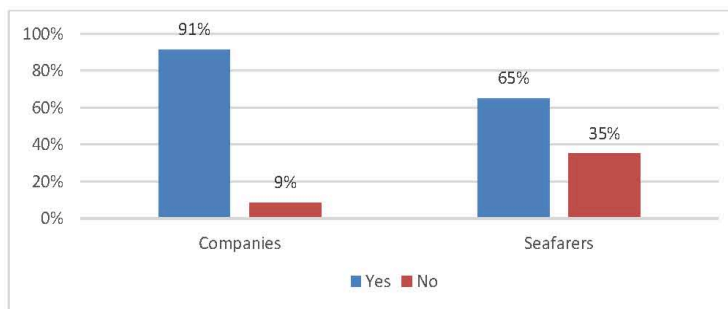
Does your Company/ship require the segregation or social distancing of seafarers who recently joined the ship?



Question 6 – Procedures or instructions to limit visitors coming onboard ship

Has the Company developed any specific procedures or instructions to its ships designed to restrict or limit the number of visitors coming onboard ship?

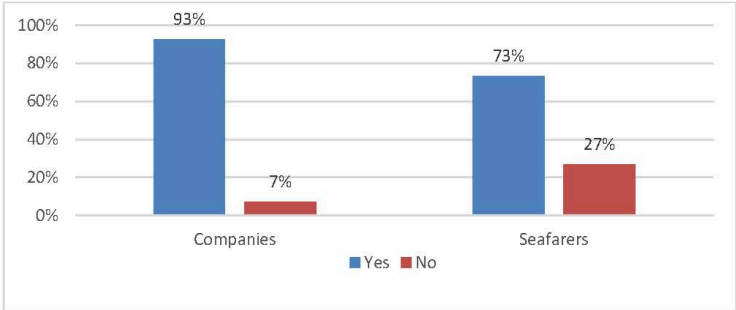
Does your Company/ship have any procedures or instructions in place that are designed to restrict or limit the number of visitors coming on-board ship?



Question 7 – Procedures and instructions related to PPE to be worn by visitors

Has the Company developed any special procedures, including instructions, for the PPE to be worn by visitors coming onboard its ships in ports?

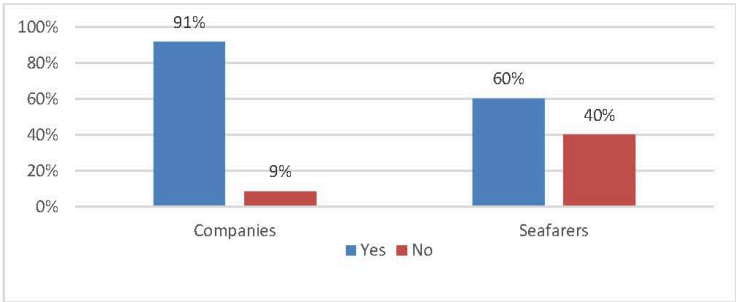
Does your Company/ship have special requirements for the PPE to be worn by visitors coming on-board the ship in port?



Question 8 – Availability of additional PPE onboard ship to provide to visitors

Has the Company arranged for additional PPE to be available on board its ships to provide to any visitors coming onboard as necessary?

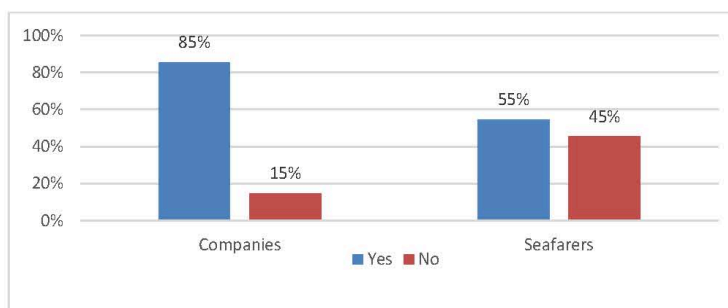
Does your ship have PPE to provide to any visitors coming on-board the ship as necessary?



Question 9 – Designation of a special area onboard ship to meet with visitors

Has the Company instructed ships to designate a special area or area onboard for meeting with visitors to the ship?

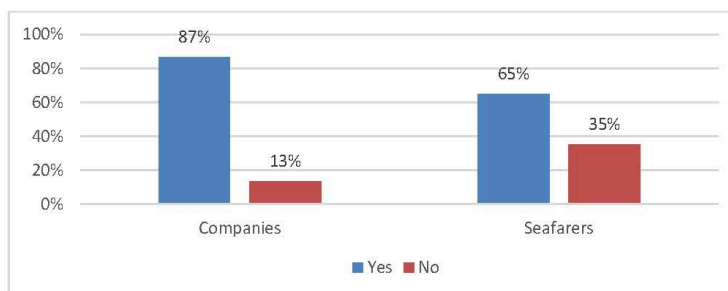
Has your ship designated any special area or areas on-board for meeting with visitors to the ship?



Question 10 – Procedures or instructions related to disinfection after receiving visitors

Has the Company developed any special procedures, including instructions, for the disinfection of areas or surfaces that were touched by, or in the vicinity of, a visitor to the ship?

Does your Company/ship require the disinfection of areas or surfaces that were touched by, or in the vicinity of, a visitor to the ship?



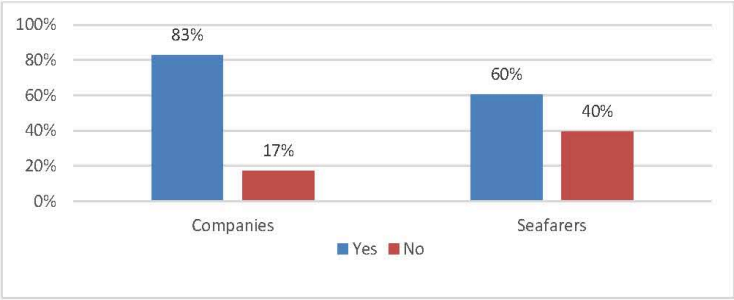
Health protection measures

General measures

Question 11 – Daily body temperature checks of seafarers onboard ships

Does the Company require seafarers to have their body temperature checked and recorded daily while onboard ship?

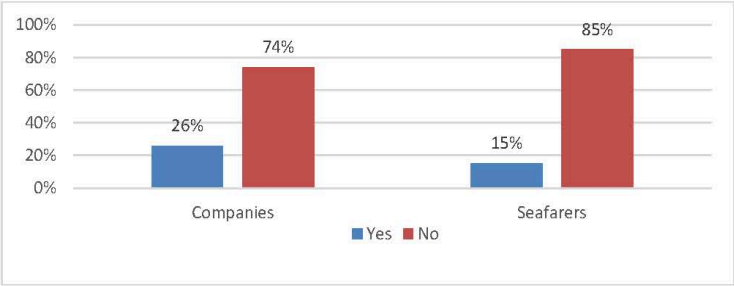
Are you required to have your body temperature checked and recorded daily while on-board ship (either checked by yourself or Master/designated officer)?



Question 12 – Requirement to wear a face covering at sea

Does the Company require seafarers to wear a face covering while onboard ship at sea?

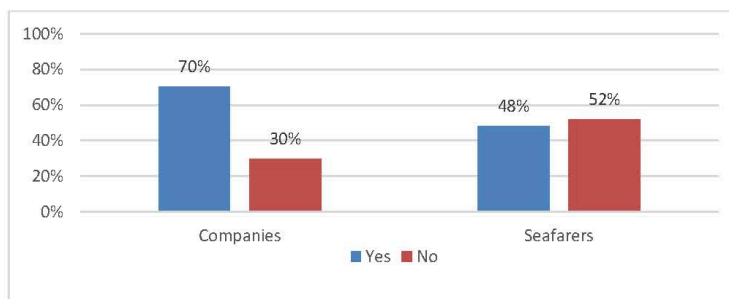
Are you required to wear a face covering while on-board ship while at sea?



Question 13 – Requirement to wear a face covering while in port

Does the Company require seafarers to wear a face covering while onboard ship in port?

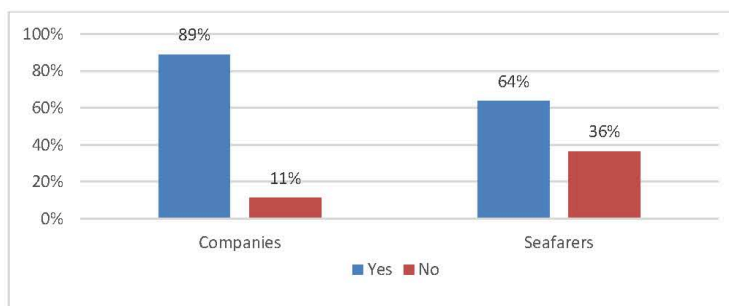
Are you required to wear a face covering while on-board ship while in port?



Question 14 – Requirement to wear a face covering while visitors are onboard ship

Does the Company require seafarers to wear a face covering while visitors are onboard ship in port?

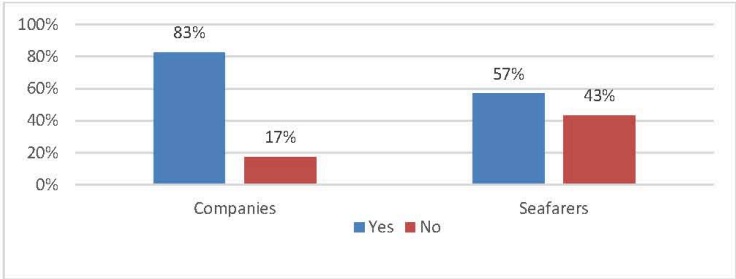
Are you required to wear a face covering while visitors are on-board ship while in port?



Question 15 – Requirement for seafarers stationed on gangway to wear PPE

Does the Company have special PPE requirements for seafarers stationed on the gangway in port or other points of embarkation/disembarkation from the ship?

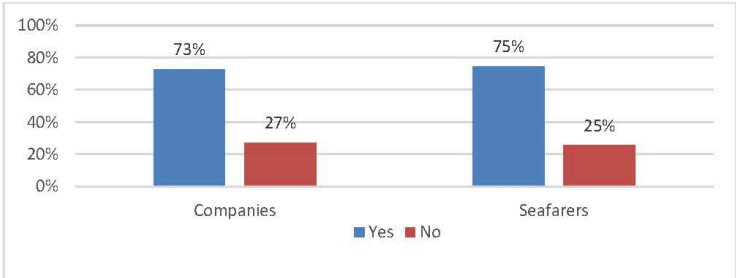
Does your Company/ship have special PPE requirements for seafarers stationed on the gangway in port or other points of embarkation/disembarkation from the ship?



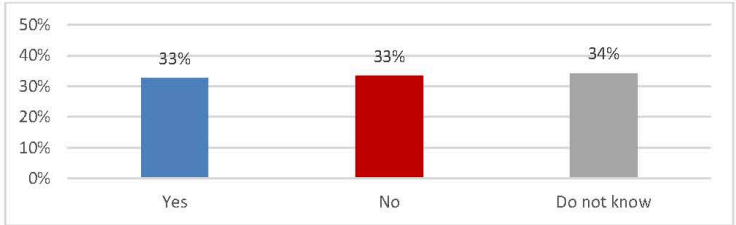
Question 16 – Suspension of shore leave

Has the Company decided to suspend shore leave, even in ports where the port or local authorities would permit seafarers to go ashore?

Has your Company/ship suspended shore leave?



If a seafarer responded "Yes", they were asked: Was the suspension of shore leave the result of restrictions imposed by the port?

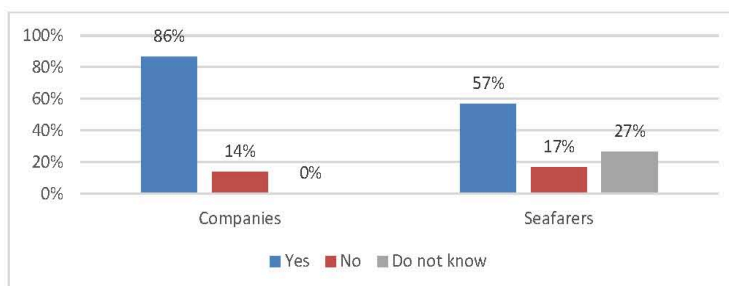


Screening and testing of on-signing seafarers

Question 17 – Screening questionnaire or health declaration for on-signing seafarers

Does the Company require on-signing seafarers to complete a specific COVID-19 screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to embarkation on to the ship?

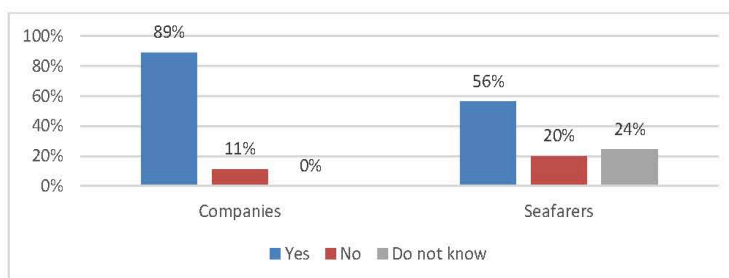
Does your Company/ship require on-signing seafarers to complete a specific COVID-19 screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to embarkation on to the ship?



Question 18 – Temperature checks for on-signing seafarers

Does the Company require on-signing seafarers to have their temperature taken prior to embarkation on to the ship?

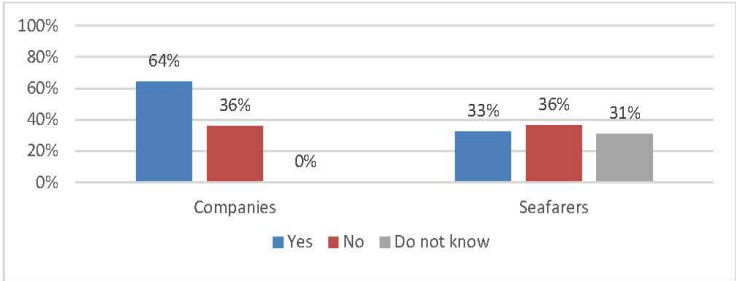
Does your Company/ship require on-signing seafarers to have their temperature taken prior to embarkation on to the ship?



Question 19 – Testing for on-signing seafarers

Does the Company test on-signing seafarers for COVID-19 prior to embarkation, where COVID-19 tests can be procured and made available for use?

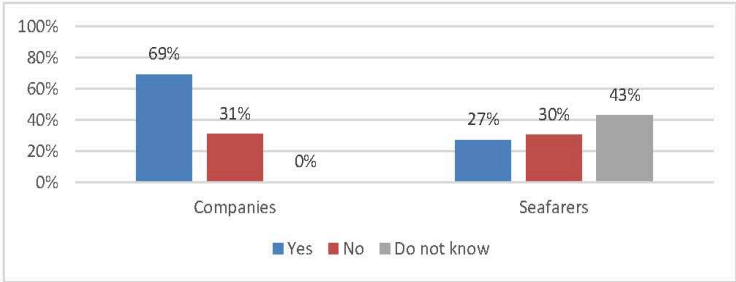
Does your Company/ship test on-signing seafarers for COVID-19 prior to embarkation (if tests are available)?



Question 20 – Pre-deployment testing for on-signing seafarers

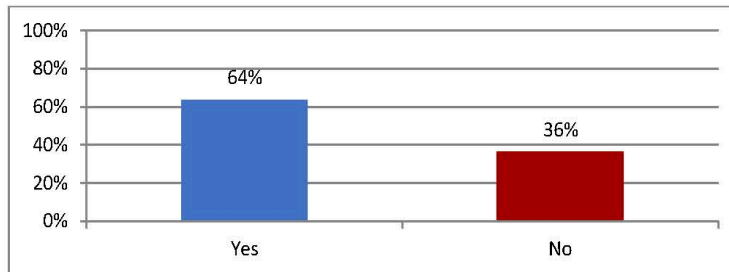
Does the Company require pre-deployment COVID-19 testing of seafarers to be arranged by its local representatives or agents in the country of ordinary residence of the seafarers?

If you recently joined a ship, did your Company require a pre-deployment test before you travelled to join the ship?



Question 21 – Contingency plans related to on-signers

Has the Company developed a contingency plan for if a seafarer is deemed unsuitable to board the ship as a result of not passing any screening or testing protocols applied by the Company at the point of embarkation?

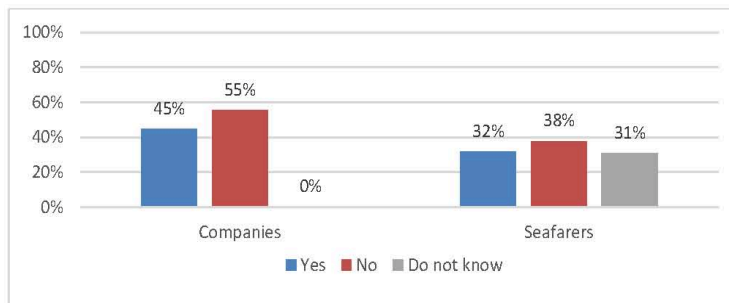


Screening and testing of off-signing seafarers

Question 22 – Screening questionnaire or health declaration for off-signing seafarers

Does the Company require off-signing seafarers to complete a specific COVID-19 screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to disembarkation from the ship for repatriation?

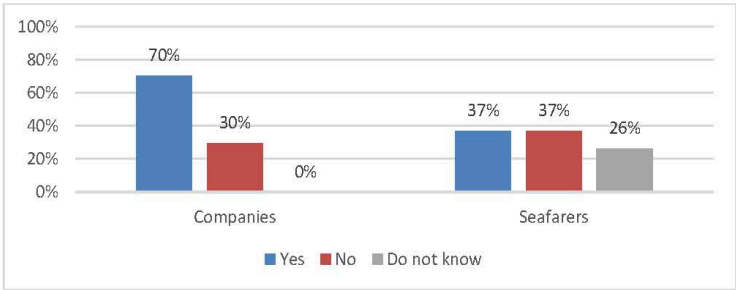
Does your Company/ship require off-signing seafarers to complete a specific COVID-19 screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to disembarkation from the ship for repatriation?



Question 23 – Temperature checks for off-signing seafarers

Does the Company require off-signing seafarers to have their temperature taken prior to disembarkation from the ship for repatriation?

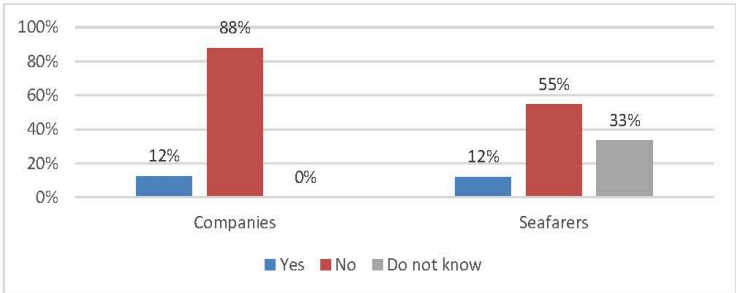
Does your Company/ship require off-signing seafarers to have their temperature taken prior to disembarkation from the ship for repatriation?



Question 24 – Testing for off-signing seafarers

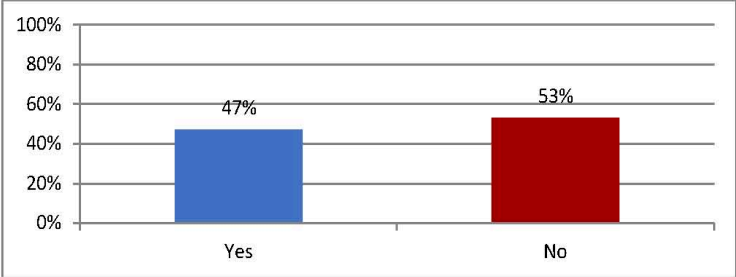
Does the Company test off-signing seafarers for COVID-19 prior to disembarkation for repatriation, where COVID-19 tests can be procured and made available for use?

Does your Company/ship test off-signing seafarers for COVID-19 prior to disembarkation for repatriation (if tests are available)?



Question 25 – Contingency plans for off-signers

Has the Company developed a contingency plan for if a seafarer is deemed unfit to travel for repatriation as a result of not passing any screening or testing protocols applied by the Company prior to disembarkation?

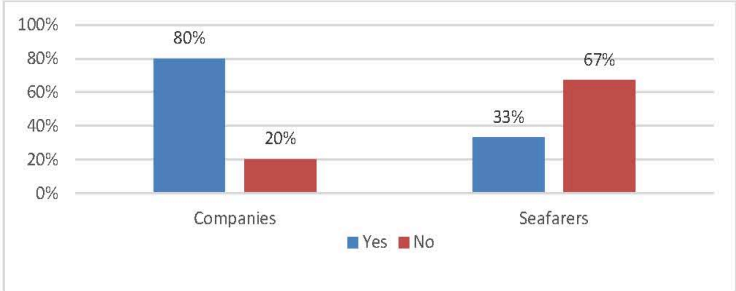


Screening and testing of visitors to ships

Question 26 – Requirements related to screening of visitors for COVID-19

Has the Company developed and introduced any requirements for visitors coming onboard its ships related to screening for COVID-19?

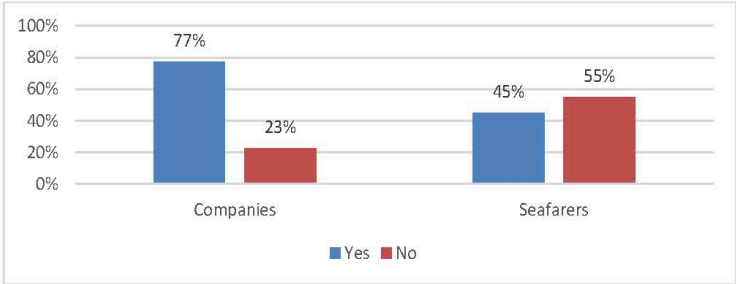
Has your Company/ship introduced any special requirements for visitors coming on-board ships related to screening for COVID-19?



Question 27 – Screening questionnaire or health declaration for visitors

Does the Company require visitors to complete a specific COVID-19 screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to coming onboard the ship?

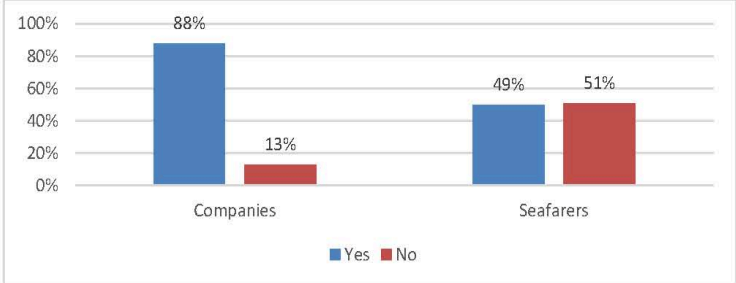
Does your Company/ship require visitors to complete a specific COVID-19 screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to coming on-board the ship?



Question 28 – Temperature checks for visitors

Does the Company require visitors to have their temperature checked and registered prior to coming onboard its ships?

Does your Company/ship require visitors to have their temperature checked and registered prior to coming on-board ship?

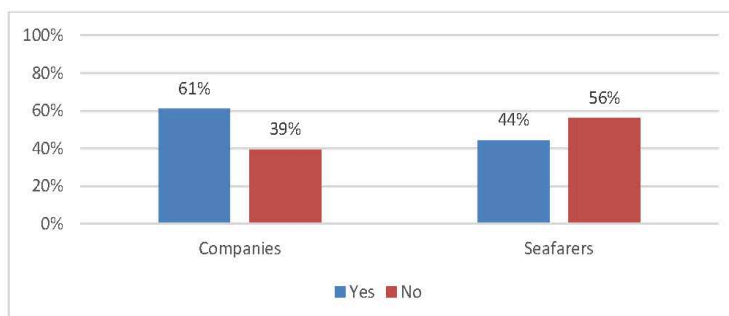


Medical care and supplies

Question 29 – Procurement of additional medicines and equipment

Has the Company arranged to procure additional medicines and equipment for its medical facilities and ships' medicine chests due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

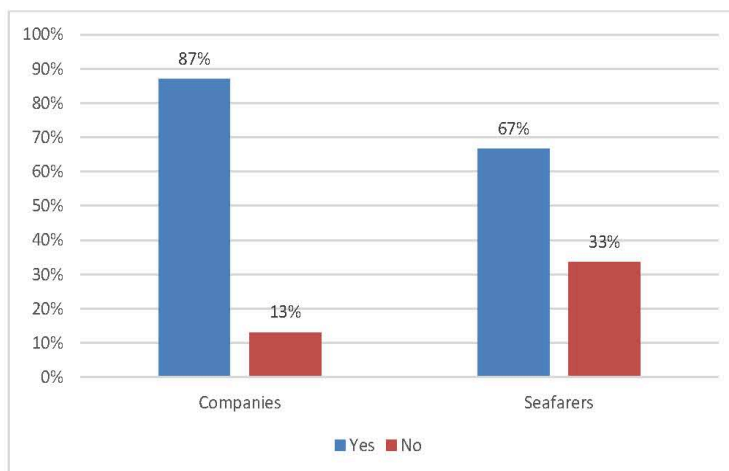
Has the Company arranged to procure additional medicines and equipment for its medical facilities and ships' medicine chests due to the COVID-19 pandemic?



Question 30 – Availability of medical advice

Has the Company reminded its ships of the availability of medical advice by radio or satellite communication to ships at sea, including advice related to COVID-19?

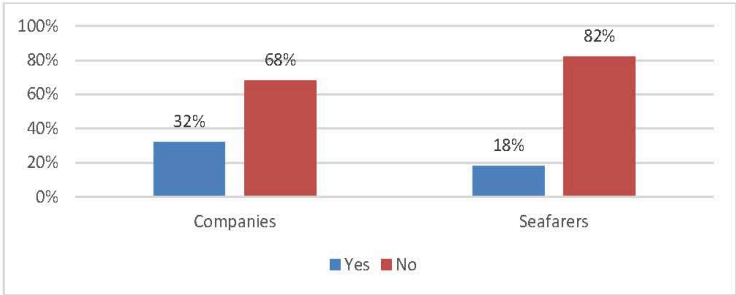
Are you aware of the availability of medical advice by radio or satellite communication to ships at sea, including advice related to COVID-19?



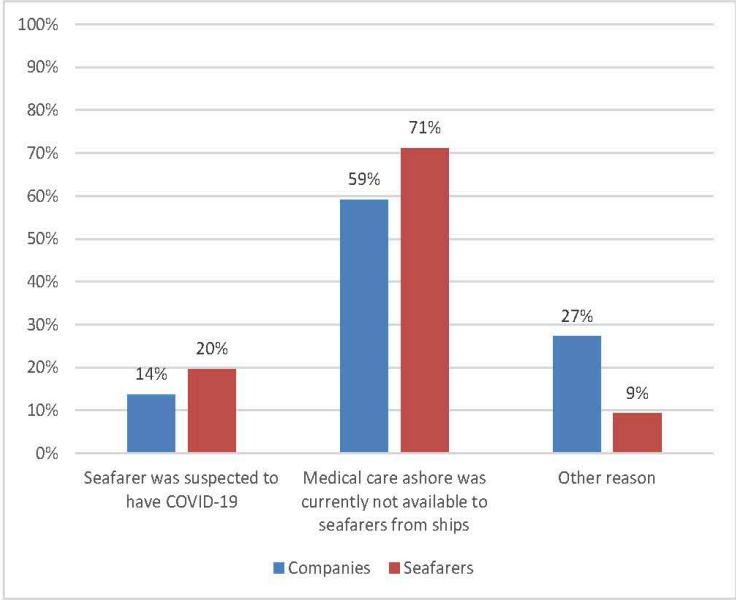
Question 31 – Denial of access to medical care ashore

Has the Company had any seafarers onboard its ships denied access to medical care ashore during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Are you aware of any seafarers on your ship/in your Company that have been denied access to medical care ashore during the COVID-19 pandemic?



If companies or seafarers responded “Yes”, they were asked to specify the reason given for denying access to medical care ashore:



SECTION C – RECOMMENDATIONS

General recommendations

Companies should:

- Ensure that any plans or procedures developed to protect the health of seafarers are clearly communicated to ships and their seafarers. Seafarers cannot implement health protection measures of the company if they have not received and understood them; and
- Ensure that ships and their seafarers are provided with resources to implement any plans or procedures and be prepared to provide any additional explanations or clarifications necessary. Seafarers will not be able to effectively implement health protection measures of the company without sufficient resources or information.

Seafarers should:

- Ensure that the plans, procedures and requirements communicated to them by companies are effectively implemented onboard ship, as well as during any travel to and from ships; and
- Request any additional explanation or clarifications, as well as resources, as necessary from the company.

Specific recommendations

Companies should provide general information to their seafarers on COVID-19, including its symptoms and standard infection protection and control precautions.

Seafarers should ensure they review and understand the general information provided by their company on COVID-19, including its symptoms and the standard infection protection and control precautions.

Shipboard plans and procedures

Companies should:

- Develop specific plans and procedures to protect the health of their seafarers and the safety and security of their ships during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Provide instructions or training to their seafarers on COVID-19 and the related shipboard plans and procedures of the Company, such as through training videos, posters or information sheets; and
- Develop plans and procedures to manage any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 onboard its ships, which should, *inter alia*, address arrangements for:
 - isolation of seafarers showing COVID-19 symptoms;
 - segregation or social distancing of seafarers who recently joined the ship;
 - care of seafarers isolating with COVID-19 symptoms;
 - disinfection and cleaning to control transmission; and
 - seeking external medical assistance or care;

Seafarers should ensure they engage with any training or instructions provided by their company on COVID-19 and the relevant shipboard plans and procedures, which may be in the form of training videos, posters and information sheets.

Measures related to visitors to ships

Companies should

- Seek to restrict or limit as far as possible the number of visitors coming onboard ship;
- Develop procedures, including instructions, for ships to request that all visitors wear appropriate PPE while onboard ship;
- Arrange for additional PPE to be available onboard ship to provide to any visitors who are not already wearing appropriate PPE;
- Instruct ships to designate a special area or area onboard for meeting with any visitors to the ship, to the extent possible taking into account the nature and different requirements of visits to ships by shore-based persons;
- Develop procedures, including instructions, for ships to disinfect areas or surfaces that were touched by, or in the vicinity of, a visitor to the ship;
- request visitors to complete a COVID-19-specific screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to coming onboard the ship; and
- Request visitors to have their temperature checked and registered prior to coming onboard the ship.

Measures to protect and monitor the health of seafarers

Companies should:

- Request seafarers to have their body temperature checked and recorded daily (either checked by themselves or Master/designated officer) while onboard ship in order to monitor the health of seafarers for COVID-19 infection, particularly for a period of time after leaving a port, before arriving at a port and when visitors or new seafarers have recently come onboard the ship;
- Consider requiring seafarers to wear a face covering while onboard ship at sea when interacting with other seafarers that have recently joined the ship, such as working in close proximity where any distancing measures are not possible;
- Consider requiring seafarers to wear a face covering while onboard ship in port, such as when visitors may be onboard ship or new seafarers are joining the ship;
- Have special PPE requirements for seafarers stationed on the gangway in port or other points of embarkation/disembarkation from the ship; and
- Consider suspending permission for seafarers to take shore leave based on an assessment of the health risks of going ashore in a particular port or territorial area.

Screening and testing of on-signing seafarers

Companies should:

- Require on-signing seafarers to complete a COVID-19-specific screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to embarkation on to the ship;
- Require on-signing seafarers to have their temperature taken and recorded prior to embarkation on to the ship;¹
- Ensure that on-signing seafarers are tested for COVID-19 prior to embarkation where COVID-19 tests are made available to seafarers;
- Require the pre-deployment COVID-19 testing of seafarers in their countries of ordinary residence where tests are made available to seafarers or where tests can be arranged by local representatives or agents of the company; and
- Have a contingency plan for if a seafarer is deemed unsuitable to board the ship as a result of not passing any screening protocols applied by the company at the time of embarkation.

Screening and testing of off-signing seafarers

Companies should:

- Require off-signing seafarers to complete a COVID-19-specific screening questionnaire, health self-declaration, or similar, prior to disembarkation from the ship for repatriation;
- Require off-signing seafarers to have their temperature taken and recorded prior to disembarkation from the ship for repatriation;²
- Ensure off-signing seafarers are tested for COVID-19 where tests are made available to seafarers in the port or terminal of disembarkation for repatriation; and
- Have a contingency plan for when a seafarer is deemed unfit to travel for repatriation due to not passing Company screening protocols prior to disembarkation.

Medical care and supplies

Companies should:

- Procure additional relevant medicines and equipment for its medical facilities and ships' medicine chests due to the COVID-19 pandemic, based on WHO, flag State or other authoritative medical advice; and
- Remind their ships of the availability of medical advice by radio or satellite communication to ships at sea, including advice related to COVID-19.

Seafarers should remember the availability of medical advice by radio or satellite communication to ships at sea, including advice related to COVID-19.

¹ More thermometers will likely need to be available onboard for this measure to be feasible and effective.

² *ibid.*

Port/Coastal States should ensure that seafarers have access to medical care ashore in accordance with the WHO International Health Regulations (2015) and the MLC, 2006.³ ICS and ITF are deeply concerned by the results indicating that seafarers are being denied medical care ashore during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴

³ Regulation 4.1 of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006, as amended, requires that seafarers on board ships who are in need of immediate medical care are given access to medical facilities on shore. Article 28, paragraph 2, of the WHO International Health Regulations (2015), states that ships or aircraft shall not be refused *free pratique* by States Parties for public health reasons; in particular they shall not be prevented from embarking or disembarking, discharging or loading cargo or stores, or taking on fuel, water, food and supplies.

⁴ IMO has issued Circular Letter No.4204/Add.23 on *Recommendations for port and coastal States on the prompt disembarkation of seafarers for medical care ashore during the COVID-19 pandemic* (1 July 2020), which provides important guidance for port/coastal States on the subject.