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## **SUSPECTED COMMUNICABLE DISEASE**

### General Guidelines for Cargo and Baggage Handlers

The following are general guidelines for cargo and baggage handlers who have to handle cargo or baggage transported by an aircraft arriving from an affected area or carrying a suspected case of communicable disease.

During an outbreak of a specific communicable disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) or member states may modify or add further procedures to these general guidelines.

However, these general guidelines provide a basic framework of response to reassure the cargo and baggage handlers and help them manage such an event.

During the SARS outbreak, the WHO reviewed the situation as it related to cargo handling and declared that there was no evidence that the infection had been or could be transmitted by cargo or baggage handling. Whilst the WHO has not made a similar statement regarding Influenza so far, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has made the following statement on this particular issue:

“There is no evidence that avian influenza is spread through contact with baggage, packages, or other objects, including items arriving from areas where influenza cases have been reported. Special handling of cargo arriving from areas where avian influenza cases have been reported is, therefore, not necessary.”

The above recommendation also applies to hand carried cabin baggage of a passenger suspected of carrying a communicable disease.

Therefore, unless stated otherwise by WHO or a National Public Health Authority in the case of a new communicable disease, special handling of cargo and baggage is not necessary at this time.

Notwithstanding the above, cargo and baggage handlers should use proper hand hygiene and wash their hands frequently as it is recommended to all workers.