



**PROTOCOL FOR COVID-19 CONTROL AND MONITORING OF PASSENGERS IN TRANSIT FOR NATIONAL ANTARCTIC PROGRAMS**

**PROTOCOL FOR COVID-19 CONTROL AND  
MONITORING OF ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL,  
NATIONAL ANTARCTIC PROGRAMS PASSENGERS,  
AND CARGO IN TRANSIT BETWEEN PUNTA ARENAS  
AND THE ANTARCTIC TERRITORY**

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**This protocol was developed jointly between representatives of the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH), the Chilean National Health Service, and the Chilean Armed Forces (Undersecretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, Army, Navy, and Air Force). It applies to Chilean national Antarctic programs, the National Antarctic Programs of Antarctic Treaty System member countries as well as to all Armed Forces personnel traveling to Chilean bases in the Antarctic Territory.**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of COVID-19, an infectious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome CoronaVirus 2), to be a global pandemic. With this in mind, countries and states have had to take rigorous preventive measures to contain the spread of this virus. This document defines practices intended to control the spread of SARS-CoV-2 to the Antarctic Territory, and to protect professionals, researchers, and logistics personnel who conduct activities for the Chilean Antarctic Science Program (PROCIEN) within the framework of Antarctic Scientific Expedition 59 ("ECA 59") on the White Continent, as well as the Antarctic operations personnel of the Armed Forces.

Punta Arenas (Chile) is the gateway city to Antarctica used by the largest number of countries for access to this Antarctic territory (numbers vary between 19 and 23, depending on the season). As a result, and bearing in mind the nature of the pandemic, Punta Arenas has become an extremely important location for health controls for Antarctic activity.

In coordination with a number of public and private institutions, agreed-upon measures have been established and are described in this Protocol, in order to achieve the objectives outlined below.

This document is based on the current documentation related to the Ministry of Health epidemiological surveillance actions during the COVID-19 pandemic in Chile and may be modified according to the epidemiological and public health situation in Chile and the Magallanes Region at the time of its application.

This protocol defines responsibilities, participants involved, and procedures for a number of scenarios.

## **2. GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

The primary purpose of this Protocol is to provide guidelines for the control and monitoring of those participating in the Chilean Antarctic Program (including national defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs operators) and in National Antarctic Programs of countries that use the Chilean Magallanes Region as a gateway to the White Continent.

## 2.1 Specific Objectives

- Prevent the propagation of COVID-19 in the Antarctic territory.
- Prevent the introduction of the COVID-19 virus from other countries into the Chilean Magallanes Region.
- Safeguard the continuing capacity for health care in the Antarctic territory as well as the Magallanes regional health care system.

## 3. SCOPE

This protocol shall apply to those involved in Antarctic area expeditions as well as related logistics and support personnel, and Antarctic operators, who use the city of Punta Arenas as an access route to Antarctica.

## 4. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CONTROL AND TRACKING

The entity responsible for the validation and definition of the scope of this Protocol shall be the "Secretaría Regional Ministerial de Salud de Magallanes" (the Health Ministry Regional Secretariat for Magallanes).

The general coordination for the Chilean Antarctic Scientific Expedition Number 59 (ECA 59) and the Antarctic School Expedition (EAE), as well as the arrival and departure of elements of the NAPs (National Antarctic Programs), will be undertaken by the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH).

The general coordination for Armed Forces elements will be performed by an authorized representative of each institution of the military services.

In view of the need for continuous and sustained coordination, representatives and persons responsible for each entity have been defined to implement this protocol. Spanish language terms have been included to assist in international coordination efforts.

The responsibilities of the principal agencies are described in the following:

- **Antarctic Central Point of Contact for the regional health authority for COVID-19 (Punto Focal Antártico COVID19 SEREMI de Salud Magallanes):** responsible for compliance, tracking, and control of COVID-19 measures in this Protocol, serving as the agency for making contact with all participants and elements involved, whether private or public organizations.
- **Chilean Antarctic Institute COVID-19 Coordinator (Coordinador COVID19 INACH):** responsible for information distribution, compliance, tracking, and control of COVID-19 measures in this Protocol, charged with coordination between the Chilean Antarctic Institute COVID-19 team and Antarctic territory operators, both national and foreign.
- **COVID-19 coordinators for Armed Forces institutions:** Each military institution will designate a person responsible for the compliance, tracking, and control measures described in this protocol, and will establish contact with the other affected participants (in both public and private institutions).
- **COVID-19 coordinators for private institutions:** Each private institution shall designate an individual responsible for the compliance, tracking, and control measures of this Protocol, who will

also establish contact with the other applicable participants involved (in both public and private institutions).

## **5. PROCEDURES FOR TRAVEL TO ANTARCTIC TERRITORY**

### **5.1 Requirements for international and Chilean national travelers who enter the Magallanes region**

#### **a) National (Chilean) travelers**

Chilean nationals must comply with the provisions of Resolution 494 EXENTA, which specifies the step-by-step care plan ("Plan Paso a Paso. Seguimos Cuidándonos") by the Ministry of Health (MINSAL) as well as local resolutions that may be in force at the time of travel.

#### **b) International travelers entering Chile**

All international travelers entering Chile by air, land, or sea must comply with the provisions of "Resolution 495 EXENTA" which specifies approves the Ministry of Health "Protected Borders Plan" ("Plan Fronteras Protegidas").

The suggested and mandatory measures will depend on the alert phase at any given time, which will reflect international and national epidemiological health conditions.

It is important to understand that the change of alert phases at the national borders is a dynamic process. Check for the latest alert phase and conditions through official government sources (<https://saludresponde.minsal.cl/medidas-fronteras-nacionales>).

### **5.2 Mandatory requirements for visiting the Antarctic territory**

#### **a) Traveler WITH full SARS-CoV-2 vaccination schedule**

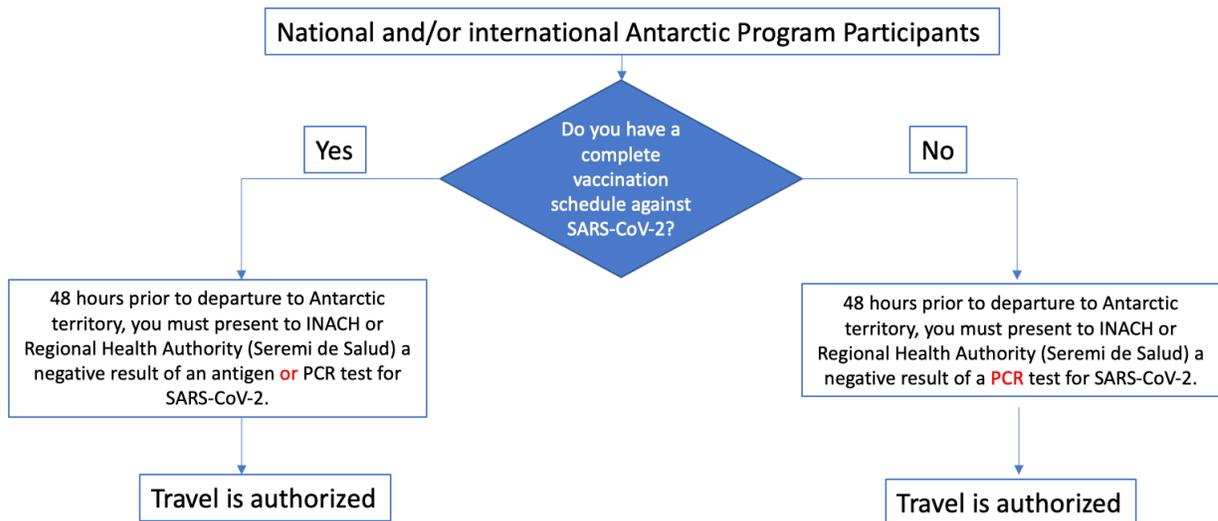
Every person entering the Antarctic Territory by air or sea must have a complete set of current vaccinations against COVID-19.

For the purposes of this protocol, it shall be understood that those who present the respective proof of vaccination against SARS-CoV-2, according to the country where they have been administered, have the complete vaccination schedule.

#### **b) Traveler WITHOUT full SARS-CoV-2 vaccination schedule**

Any person wishing to enter the Antarctic Territory by air or sea and does not have a complete vaccination schedule against SARS-CoV-2, must present a negative result of a PCR test for SARS-CoV-2. The PCR test sample must not exceed 48 hours before the trip counted from the scheduled boarding time.

#### **c) Obligation to have a negative Antigen (Ag) or RT-PCR (PCR) test result for SARS-COV-2**



- **Coordination for taking samples for participants in National Antarctic Programs (NAPs), PROCIENT (Chilean Antarctic Science Program) and EAE (Antarctic School Expedition)**

In the case of those personnel under NAPs, PROCIENT and EAE, the taking of the COVID sample must be carried out in laboratories authorized by the Institute of Public Health (ISP) and the Chilean Ministry of Health.

- **Coordination for taking samples for Antarctic operations personnel of the Armed Forces and public institutions**

For taking COVID samples for public institutions and Armed Forces operations personnel in Antarctica, the taking of the COVID sample must be carried out in laboratories authorized by the Institute of Public Health (ISP) and the Chilean Ministry of Health.

**Note: Foreign travelers who do not have a "clave única"** (Chilean national unique user name) for access to their RT-PCR results may make an informed consent request to the designated national authority ("Autoridad Sanitaria") to reveal the test results, download them, and send them electronically to whomever may require that information.

• **Validation of SARS-COV-2 RT-PCR tests for national travelers in transit through the city of Punta Arenas**

For national travelers making a stopover in the city of Punta Arenas before proceeding to the Antarctic territory, negative results of SARS-COV-2 PCR test taken within the country in a laboratory accredited by the Chilean Public Health Institute (ISP) shall be validated. The collection of the test sample may not be greater than 48 hours before beginning the trip to the Antarctic territory.

**Note: A list of nationally approved testing laboratories can be found at the following website: <https://www.ispch.cl/isp-covid-19/laboratorios-pcr-sars-cov-2/>**

- **Validation of COVID testing in exceptional cases**

In the event of an urgent entry into the Antarctic Territory due to aeromedical evacuation or a search and rescue operation, or other emergency, the Chilean health authority for the region ("SEREMI de Salud de Magallanes") will at an appropriate time validate the negative result of a COVID antigen test. The test is to be conducted by an institution that has a current authorization of its Sampling Unit ("Unidad de Toma de Muestra - UTM" - in Spanish) / 3-step antigen.

- **Validation of isolation certificate for those persons who were exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the previous 90 days.**

Those persons who have experienced a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the 90 days prior to travel to the Magallanes region, and who have a valid certificate to document this, will not be required to take a PCR or Ag test.

#### **d) Obligation to comply with protocols to prevent the transmission of SARS-CoV-2**

Depending on the means of transport (ship or aircraft), each company or other organization responsible for the transportation of crew and/or passengers to the Antarctic Territory should have specific protocols to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. This should include all of the features recommended by national and international health authorities measures to prevent contagion.

Likewise, these protocols must include steps for the activation of an alert in the event of either "suspected COVID-19 cases" or "positive COVID-19 cases." In either case, each such organization must immediately notify the Antarctic Central Point of Contact for the regional health authority for COVID-19 ("Punto Focal Antártico COVID19 SEREMI de Salud Magallanes") before and/or during travel, as applicable). All travelers must be made aware of the required protocols and should have a copy of training materials.

INACH will use health protocols for cargo and scientific equipment according to what is established by the national health authority, as specified in Appendix 2 "Protocol for cleaning and disinfection of COVID-19 environments (Excluding Health Care Establishments)" (Original document in Spanish: "Protocolo de limpieza y Desinfección de ambientes COVID-19 (Excluidos los Establecimientos de Atención de Salud).") The original is available at this web page: [https://www.minsal.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/PROTOCOLO\\_LIMPIEZA-Y-DISINFECCION.pdf](https://www.minsal.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/PROTOCOLO_LIMPIEZA-Y-DISINFECCION.pdf).

### **5.3 Management of authorization for travel to Antarctic territory**

#### **a) Mandatory documents each traveler must present:**

In order to process the authorization for travel to Antarctica, each participant or delegated representative must submit the following documents at least 24 hours prior to travel, for each person traveling:

- Copy of national identity card ("DNI" or carnet - both sides copied) or copy of passport photo identification and nationality data page.
- If you have a complete vaccination schedule against SARS-CoV-2, you may present a negative PCR or antigen test result for SARS-CoV-2 (48 hours prior to travel).
- If you do not have certificate of vaccination, you must present a negative PCR test result for SARS-CoV-2 (48 hours prior to travel).

Those responsible for receiving the indicated individual health information for issuance of travel authorization:

- Individuals or representatives for NAPs (National Antarctic Programs), PROCIENT (Chilean Antarctic Science Program) and EAE (Antarctic School Expedition) shall submit their documentation to the COVID-19 coordinator at INACH.
- Armed Forces or private party participants or their representatives shall present their documentation to the Antarctic Central Point of Contact for COVID ("Punto Focal COVID-19 SEREMI de Salud") at the following email address [centro.enlace12@redsalud.gov.cl](mailto:centro.enlace12@redsalud.gov.cl).

NOTE: Each Armed Forces institution must channel the information for their participants using the corresponding e-mail address issued by the COVID-19 Coordinator for the Armed Forces institutions, or for the COVID-19 Coordinator for private organizations.

## **6. CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THE ANTARCTIC TERRITORY**

As long as the Health Alert remains in effect in Chile, and/or the sources of contagion and spread of the COVID-19 virus continue in Chilean territory and in other countries that operate their Antarctic operations through Chile, it is suggested to keep self-care measures.

Suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 shall be reported immediately to the Antarctic Central Point of Contact designated by the cognizant Health Authority. Compliance with procedures determined by the Health Authority is mandatory. As a preventive measure, anyone suspected of having contracted COVID-19 may be isolated for evaluation of his or her general health condition. Depending on the patient and weather conditions, evacuation to Punta Arenas may be initiated.

## **7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

For all travelers to the Antarctic territory, whether on a permanent or temporary basis, recommended measures for prevention of the spread of COVID-19 include the following:

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use a suitable anti-viral alcohol solution.
2. Wear a surgical type mask, preferably "pre-formed" (not the collapsible type) that covers the nose and mouth. When a mask becomes moist it should be replaced.
3. Discard a mask once it is removed, whether moist or not, and follow this immediately by washing your hands.
4. Do not handle a mask in use and do not touch your face. In the event of having to touch your face, immediately wash your hands.
5. If you have to cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a disposable handkerchief or tissue, or cover with your forearm. When using disposable handkerchiefs or tissues, dispose of

- them promptly and wash your hands.
6. Keep practicing preventive measures during your entire stay in the Antarctic territory.
  7. In the event of feeling COVID-19 symptoms, immediately advise your supervisor or COVID-19 coordinator for your organization.
  8. Always comply with the internal protocols for COVID-19 for your organization.
  9. When traveling to the city of Punta Arenas on commercial flights, continue to observe rigorous self-care measures to avoid infection.

## **8. EFFECTIVE PERIOD**

The effective period for this Protocol will continue so long as the COVID-19 Health Alert ("Alerta Sanitaria COVID-19") remains lawfully in force in Chile.

## **9. EXCEPTIONS**

Unforeseen situations may occur during activities in the Antarctic territory, which may result in conditions that prevent compliance with all the measures indicated in this protocol. Therefore, any exceptions must be reported to the Antarctic Control Point of the Antarctic Health Authority ("Punto Focal Antártico SEREMI de Salud") in order to arrange the necessary authorization procedures.

## **10. PENALTIES**

Any failure to comply with the protocol described in this document may be penalized by the national health authority in accordance with Book X of the Health Code. Note that foreign nationals within Chile are also obligated to comply with these legal requirements.

## **11. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1. Inter-institutional coordination plan

Appendix 2. "Protocol for cleaning and disinfection of COVID-19 environments (Excluding Health Care Establishments)." (In Spanish. Original title: "Protocolo de limpieza y Desinfección de ambientes COVID-19 (Excluidos los Establecimientos de Atención de Salud).")