

IAATO Operational Update 2020.01

January 7, 2020

A Word of Thanks:

The IAATO family is deeply saddened by the loss of 38 people aboard the Chilean Air Force Hercules C130 that went down in the Drake Passage on Monday, December 9. Many IAATO Member Operators were involved in the search and rescue efforts which extended for more than a week after the incident.

Over the next weeks and months, the circumstances surrounding the tragedy will become clearer as authorities piece together the evidence that is collected. The Secretariat will follow the results of this investigation closely. We will also look carefully at how we handled our role in responding to requests for assistance from the MRCC and in communication with all of you. There are surely lessons to be learned.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to again thank those of you involved in the search operation. It has been a grim but essential task that will contribute to giving the families affected by this tragedy the answers they deserve. Thanks also should be extended to your guests and staff, who have had to exercise both patience and understanding while you have fulfilled this challenging and somber duty

1. Whale Avoidance Measures

On January 1 2020, IAATO's new mandatory measures for whale avoidance came into effect. In establishing mandatory measures in Cape Town, IAATO Operators acknowledged that travelling at 10 knots or less in the designated geo-fenced time-areas is the best option for avoiding whales, but allowed for vessels to travel above 10 knots if they post an additional, dedicated lookout and if the lookout has taken and passed a whale avoidance training programme established in the vessel's ship management system.

Operators were requested to inform the Secretariat prior to the start of the current season if they wished to choose the additional lookout option and to provide details of their training programme. Operational Update 2019.07 listed the vessels that had met those requirements. Since then, it has become clear to the Secretariat that there was considerable confusion about when Operators needed to notify the Secretariat of their whale avoidance intentions. Recognizing this confusion, we have reviewed and approved the whale avoidance training programmes of two additional operators. Vessels operated by HAL/Seabourn, RCCL/Silversea and by Hapag-Lloyd have been cleared to travel above 10 knots in the geo-fenced time areas this season.

2. Deception Island Seismic Activity Detection

In light of the recent incident on White Island/Whakaari, New Zealand, there have been several questions/concerns surrounding the continuation of activities at Deception Island.

As you are aware Deception Island has a Treaty Management Plan ([ASMA 4](#)), and within this management plan Annex 6 details volcanic alerts and escape. Please review this annex.

Seismic research is done on Deception during the summer months, and IAATO is in touch with the Spanish National Program, which regularly monitors the activity of the island. When Spain takes a reading of the seismic activity they communicate the threat status to IAATO - Green to Red: Green meaning minimal threat, Red being the most foreboding of conditions.

The Secretariat is happy to share this information with any Operator who would like to have it. To be put on an email distribution list please contact Lisa (lkelly@iaato.org). This information is only published every few days.

Please note that while Spain and the Deception Island Management Group are happy to share this information, they by no means take responsibility for the safety of the vessel. Each Operator who visits Deception Island does so at their own risk.

3. High Season Considerations

Following on from reports from the Peninsula Vessels, we would like to remind Operators of some important High Season Considerations.

i. Post Holes

Quite a few post holes have been reported at landing sites.

Post-holing is more than an annoyance, it is dangerous for other landing site users, including wildlife, staff, guests, and crew. It also detracts from the beauty of Antarctica that everyone is there to see.

Field staff should give themselves enough time to get on a landing and set up a flagged or staff posted walking route. Make sure the guests and crew are briefed about why it is important to stick to the path, and be certain to employ enough staff to keep people on the route and not straying off into snow fields.

If you do see post holes, please try to fill them in to the best of your ability.

ii. Snow Sculptures

Building snowmen or making snow angels can be a really nice memory for the guests. However, it is important to make sure all snow sculptures are knocked down and any signs erased as much as possible.

iii. Distance to wildlife

Although we have had several reports/concerns that staff and guests may be approaching wildlife from less than 5m, the following report from Useful Islands is a clear example of ways to mitigate wildlife disturbance, and also what can happen if we do not:

Report as follows:

Once at the top of Useful Island, a route in the snow leads from the Gentoos at the north end to the Chinstraps further south. This route passed very close to exposed rock with a small number of nesting Gentoos. On our visit XXX we stomped a new track to provide more distance from the nesting Gentoos. Subsequent visits revealed that this new track had not been used and that there were footsteps and a broad trodden area right up to the rock where the gentoos were nesting.

Just south of this point was a Gentoo penguin nesting alone on the east side of the track, hidden in a hollow of the bedrock. This bedrock is tempting as a place to wander to get

wider views, but of course this is not possible with the presence of the nesting Gentoos. However, it was clear by the number of footprints that there had been considerable activity in the snow adjacent to this rock presumably as people walked on to the rock to explore further.

On our visit of XXX, both this solitary nesting Gentoos had gone (evidence of a hatched egg remained in the nest), and also one of the nesting Gentoos on the bedrock slightly to the north had also gone. While we have no evidence of what caused the departure of these two nesting Gentoos, the amount of foot-traffic in the area had been considerable and closer than the guidelines recommend.

iv. Vegetation Concerns

We know vegetation in the Antarctic is especially fragile, and this time of year more and more is being exposed as the snow melts. There have been reports of several known moss patches which have been used as part of walking trails - places include (but are not limited to) Danco, Cuverville, and Useful Islands

Please make sure any walking routes do not go over rocks which act as an anchor for lichens and/or mosses. Whilst walking on rock is much more stable, it can cause irreparable damage to the plants. Make sure the marked trails circumvent rocks with plants on them.

v. Crevasses

Commonly used landing sites that have known crevassed sections include:

Cuverville – all permanent snow-covered areas, particularly the snow peak and ice cliffs on the southern half of the island.

Damoy – at the top of the hill leading up from the hut, close to the outlook over Port Lockroy.

Neko Harbour – all higher ground to the east of a line drawn between the upper part of the rookery and the exposed rocky knoll look out point near the glacier.

Portal Point – going onto the neck and any area beyond. Current position reported: S 64°30.017' W 061°46.258'

NEW for Portal Point 64° 30' 1.98"S 61° 46' 7.14"W

Danco – permanent snow covered slopes to the south of the penguin colonies.

Orne Harbour – along the SW side of the ridge. Current position reported: S 64°37.900' W 062°33.409'

Port Charcot – along the higher slopes.

There may be crevasses of varying depth, size and extension present in all landing areas with permanent snow cover.

Prior to landing visitors at any site with snow slopes, experienced individuals should assess the area and put necessary precautions in place to minimise the risk of a crevasse incident.

- Review records and incident reports from previous seasons
- Send an advance party, roped, to probe a safe route
- Station staff at key route change points i.e. corners in the flagged route

Only experienced individuals or groups should approach un-surveyed areas and should be roped up using the correct equipment. A guide team experienced in crevasse rescue should remain in the area with a crevasse rescue kit until all visitors have left the area.

IF IN DOUBT STAY AWAY!

4. Booking Guidelines for Vessels

With the season in full swing, please remember the IAATO ship scheduler booking guidelines, as agreed upon at IAATO 2019.

General Guidelines:

- i. All Antarctic Treaty and IAATO Site Guidelines will be observed when booking sites.
- ii. No vessel shall book a landing site for the entire day (midnight to midnight inclusive).
- iii. When possible, vessels running activities such as helicopters or submersibles should attempt to do so in areas of low traffic in order to keep other landing sites available for general landing purposes.
- iv. It is the Operator's responsibility to manage users who have access to the IAATO ship scheduler: only those who work for an IAATO Operator may have access to the ship scheduler.
- v. Use of an IAATO Operator's access to the ship scheduler, while working for a non-IAATO Operator is prohibited.

Specific for Category 1 vessels:

- i. Category 1 vessels should make every effort to book only one landing site. If booking more than one time slot, the second time slot should be a shoulder landing slot, not a prime landing slot.

Specific for Category 2 vessels:

- i. Category 2 vessels should make every effort to book only two landing slots, one if appropriate. If there is a need to book a third time slot, the third time slot shall only be booked four (4) days in advance.

Specific for Cruise-Only vessels:

- i. Cruise-only vessels may only book a site in a non-landing capacity. As cruise-only vessels do not land, another vessel may utilise the same site for a landing opportunity at the same time.

Specific for Yachts:

- i. When possible yachts should not book more than one time slot. If booking more than one time slot, the second time slot should be a shoulder landing slot, not a prime landing slot.
- ii. All yachts 50m or longer/over 300GT must book in the ship scheduler.

5. Elephant Seal Guidelines

Following on from some "weaner action" photos and videos surfacing on Social Media, we would like to bring attention to the [IAATO Draft Elephant Seal Guidelines](#) (new for 2019-20), and also the expectations of the South Georgia Permit Holder.

The IAATO Draft Elephant Seal Guidelines were created in response to last year's life threatening incident where a guest was bitten by a bull elephant seal on Salisbury Plain. Although the Operator involved did all they could to avoid such an incident, it did raise several flags with the South Georgia Government (GSGSSI), and the draft guidelines hope to focus concerns in a constructive way. The guidelines were created by the IAATO Field Operations Committee, in consultation with the GSGSSI.

Whilst the guidelines are currently in Draft form, they are expected to be followed during the 2019-20 season. Feedback on the guidelines will then form the basis for revisions, and then eventual "final" guidelines to be voted upon at IAATO 2020.

A few key points to remember with general etiquette and particular points in the Elephant Seal Guidelines:

- i. South Georgia Government is very explicit in the Permit Holder briefing that guests and staff should not be lying down or sitting on breeding beaches. The buddy system is preferred.
- ii. Elephant seals, especially the pups (weaners) are often very inquisitive and may approach. If an individual or a group moves towards you, make efforts to avoid contact.
- iii. South Georgia Government (as well as other Competent Authorities) question IAATO every year about the wildlife interactions they view on Social Media feeds.
- iv. Unfortunately with social media posts it isn't easily construed whether the interaction is correct or not, and that is one of the biggest battles we as an industry face - posts which do not have context, and suggest to the outside world that operators and/or their guests are acting inappropriately.

Antarctica is under the spotlight and social media is increasingly being used to add an extra layer of scrutiny to Operator actions: Did the guests sit quietly on the beach and the weaner came over to them? or did that guest put themselves right in the middle of a group and wiggle their fingers until the weaner came over to them? - it is really difficult to tell and has the potential to cause an intense social media reaction that could quickly damage our industry's reputation.

6. Biosecurity on South Georgia

Vessels that have called into South Georgia this season have found the Biosecurity inspections especially rigorous. Vessels should prepare for inspections and anticipate that they may extend normal disembarkation times.

These inspections are VERY detailed, and ANY organic material, even a small seed in velcro, is a deduction.

Certain boots, although they contain larger treads, do have small holes which can capture organic material. Make sure your guests are familiar with these special grooves, and are especially vigilant when cleaning these areas.

Below are a few more reminders, and helpful hints to help you prepare for the inspections, specifically for South Georgia:

- i. Boot washing is obligatory for all persons prior to going ashore and again when returning to the ship. Boots must be cleaned to remove dirt and seeds and then dipped in an approved biocide (e.g. Virkon).
- ii. Clothing inspections and boot washing must be overseen by a competent member of the expedition team. For visits, this must be either a member of the expedition staff or an appropriate crew member. The Visit Permit holder is responsible for ensuring that this inspection is carried out. All external surfaces of footwear, which will be worn ashore, must be washed.
- iii. Government Officers will inspect boot washing facilities and procedures on visiting vessels (including yachts) and will inspect visitors, including staff and crew before they disembark to ensure biosecurity protocols have been undertaken properly.
- iv. The Biosecurity Audit is a check undertaken by Government Officers, on vessels in respect of their compliance with biosecurity procedures, or more specifically the effectiveness of the procedures in place to reduce biosecurity risk.
- v. Government Officers conduct a standardized inspection of clothing, footwear and bags to check for biosecurity risks.
- vi. The audit is scored as a percentage pass rate based on a statistically significant sample size.

Cleaning Tips from the Field:

- i. To get complete buy in from the guests, start biosecurity briefings and checks early, especially if you are going to different regions. For instance, on a Falklands (Malvinas), South Georgia, and Antarctica expedition, start biosecurity briefings before the Falklands (Malvinas) arrival.
- ii. Assign a crew/staff member to be present at the gangway/sidegate to check guests as they depart and return to the ship.
- iii. Especially on South Georgia beaches, have scrub brushes available before guests embark the small boats back to the ship. This will help with the initial cleaning.
- iv. Have the appropriate tools to assist – large paper clips and hand scrubbing brushes are a must. Pay particular attention to Velcro.

7. King Edward Point wharf redevelopment

Work is due to commence from the 10th January on the KEP wharf redevelopment. From the 16th January a large supply vessel will be alongside at KEP offloading equipment and materials. The Grytviken track will be closed throughout the development project to ensure safety of visitors, and as such access to hope point will need to be made via zodiac landing on the shingle beach in front of the station.

Access to Grytviken will be as normal but access to Tijuca Jetty will be limited during the project. Please contact Government Officers in advance of your arrival if you require use of the jetty for tenders. Zodiac landings on the beach will not be affected.

The redevelopment is vital to enable the new research vessel Sir David Attenborough to access King Edward Point. Thank you for your patience during this time and apologies for any disruption.

8. Database and Live Ship Scheduler

The URLs are:

IAATO Database: LIVE

<https://database.iaato.org>

IAATO Live Map: LIVE

<https://liveshipscheduler.iaato.org>

To access the database, previous database usernames and passwords are still valid. If you have forgotten your password, please click the forgot password button.

As you begin to use the new systems, feedback is essential to making the user journey as easy as possible. Please send any feedback on either the Live Ship Scheduler or the database to operations@iaato.org.

The Secretariat will continue to update Operators with improvements and additions to the database as they come to fruition.

Please note the PVR upload section of the new database is not active yet. Until it is fully functional, please send your PVRs to pvr@iaato.org.

PVRs are due to be sent in two weeks from the end of the voyage.

9. Live Ship Scheduler and PVR Tutorials

The Operations Team has been working on video tutorials to make your use of the Live Ship Scheduler and areas of the database easier. Please find the latest tutorials for the Live Ship Scheduler and Post Visit Reporting [here](#).

10. POLARIS

POLARIS is a tool to help assess operational capabilities of vessels within Polar Code guidelines. Over the last several years, IAATO has helped to fund the development of this tool to assist Operators.

Please find the below web links and login information. This information is proprietary for IAATO Operators, so please do not share the logins outside of your internal Operations.

The latest charts on Polar View

sites: www.polarview.aq/arctic and www.polarview.aq/antarctic.

The historic info and probability grids etc are available on POLARIS:

<https://polarcode.data.bas.ac.uk/restricted/antarctic> and <https://polarcode.data.bas.ac.uk/restricted/arctic>

Username: polarcodemap

Password: YQX2bx9nKh

Additionally, please remember to ask the bridge teams to send in the [POLARIS Ice Condition Reporting Log Book](#). Information from this form will allow developers to continue to strengthen ice reporting and predictions. Logbooks can be sent to operations@iaato.org.

11. Chile and Argentina PANC agreement for Search and Rescue

Please note the dates below

- Nov 15 to Dec 15: Argentina
- Dec 15 to Jan 15: Chile
- Jan 15 to Feb 15: Argentina
- Feb 15 to Mar 15: Chile

12. Transport Requests

South Georgia Briefing Film – Help Requested!

Expedition staff will be familiar with the GSGSSI mandatory South Georgia briefing film which is now well over a decade old, and in urgent need of an update. The film is a valuable opportunity to get across the most important messages to visitors, which are about ensuring visitors have a safe and enjoyable visit without causing harm or disturbance to the wildlife and flora of South Georgia. The film is mandatory viewing for everyone and is intended to complement briefings from expedition staff.

GSGSSI is delighted to announce that Sir David Attenborough will narrate the new film, pledging his support to produce a film which helps visitors understand the need to protect the ecology of South Georgia. GSGSSI have tasked the leading wildlife film makers Silverback Films to produce the film, and are asking IAATO members for assistance by hosting Silverback on board vessels for a day or a few hours during South Georgia visits, to enable GSGSSI to collect the footage they need.

The new film will be created from the perspective of a visitor, and as such Silverback would like to film passengers getting ready for a landing, listening to a briefing before going ashore, enjoying a cruise with South Georgia as a backdrop, as well as filming passengers ashore during landings and zodiac cruising.

No footage of passengers will be used without their consent, and contributor release forms will be provided.

If any vessels are visiting South Georgia between the 10th and 24th January, and are able to help GSGSSI make this film by providing opportunities for footage collection, please get in touch with Ross James on ross.james@gov.gs.

Additionally:

IAATO has been contacted by several National Antarctic Programs (NAP) and Scientists asking for transport to bases and/or field sites for this season. Please see the below requests. If you are able to help, contact Lisa (lkelly@iaato.org).

i. **NAP:** Ukranian Antarctic Program
How Many: Three Station Personnel
When: Early – Mid March
Where: Vernadsky Station

ii. **NAP:** Bulgarian Antarctic Institute
How Many, When and Where:

- 9 scientists from South Bay, Livingston Island to Maxwell Bay, King George Island beginning of February 11 or 12, 2020.

iii. United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust

How Many: Two conservationists

Outgoing: From Port Lockroy to Vernadsky January 21 – 26, 2020

Return: From Vernadsky to Port Lockroy End of January/Early February 2020

13. Your IAATO Operations Team

Cody Ochs – Database Manager

Contact if you have questions about:

- Database Member/Company Management
- Database Registration
- Data Requests
- Annual Meeting inquiries

Erin Delaney – Assistant Operations Manager

Contact if you have questions about:

- Post Visit Reports
- End of Season Reports
- Field Staff Registration
- New Vessel Registration in the Database
- Online Assessment Feedback

Lisa Kelley – Director of Operations and Government Affairs / Deputy Executive Director

Contact if you have questions about:

- Live Ship Scheduler
- FOM Content
- Antarctic Treaty System
- Competent Authorities
- Search and Rescue Coordination
- Code of Conduct Discussions/Concerns

From all of us at the IAATO Secretariat:

Terry, Amanda, Cody, Colleen, Erin, Hayley, Janeen, and Lisa
iaato@iaato.org