

Process for Requesting Special Handling/Priority for Flight(s) Carrying COVID-19 Vaccines

28 January 2021

This process pertains to **critical** flights only; it does not apply to all flights carrying COVID-19 vaccines.

Some flights transporting Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines may require special handling and/or priority. Although COVID-19 vaccine packaging is designed for transport, delays may put the vaccines at risk in some cases.

EUROCONTROL implements the multi-disciplinary, integrated approach described in this process to coordinate the safe and efficient transportation of COVID-19 vaccine(s) by air. EUROCONTROL understands that the FAA and NAV CANADA are also implementing this approach. Flight operators are responsible for determining which flights carrying COVID-19 vaccines are critical. Flight operators should be very selective in their identification of flights that may need special handling and/or priority to facilitate assistance by the Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) to critical flights.

In order to identify critical COVID-19 vaccine distribution flights that may need special air traffic handling and/or priority, stakeholders are asked to implement the following steps in order to facilitate coordination:

1. All flight operators should insert "STS/ATFMX" and "RMK/VACCINE" in Item 18 of the ICAO Flight Plan to identify any flight they have determined to be a critical flight due to COVID-19 vaccine transport. This will assist the ANSPs in maintaining an appropriate level of awareness of these flights.
2. It is understood by EUROCONTROL that for flights operating in airspace in which the FAA is responsible for providing air navigation services, the flight operator should provide advance notification of the critical flight(s) to the FAA's Command Center as specified by the FAA.
3. It is understood by EUROCONTROL that for flights operating in airspace in which NAV CANADA is responsible for providing air navigation services, the flight operator should provide advance notification of the critical flight(s) to the NAV CANADA National Operations Center.

Note: for flights traversing European Airspace managed by the EUROCONTROL Network Manager, operators do not need to provide advance notification because the ATFMX designator is recognized by EUROCONTROL automation and will be accommodated to the extent possible.

If an issue arises after departure, the flight crew may inform Air Traffic Control (ATC) directly, who will use existing procedures to identify downstream impacts. Additionally, flight operators are encouraged to notify the FAA's Command Center, EUROCONTROL Network Manager Operations Center, Canadian ATC, or other appropriate authority of the airborne issue and request assistance. EUROCONTROL NM will expedite the handling of these flights to the extent possible, considering real-time operational limitations. EUROCONTROL NM will coordinate with ANSPs, as necessary.

Aircraft Operators within EUROCONTROL NM Area must follow the published process for the country of origin when applying for ATFM Exemptions.

Contact the FAA or NAV CANADA directly for information about their specific processes.

For additional information, contact the respective organization at:

EUROCONTROL, Network Operations Center - nm.dom@eurocontrol.int

Federal Aviation Administration, Command Center - 9-ATOR-HQ-ATCSCC-NOM@FAA.GOV

NAV CANADA, National Operations Center - NOC@NAVCANADA.CA