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News & Types: Client Advisories

Pre-U.S. Travel COVID Testing Returns for Travelers from China, Macau and Hong Kong

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Practices: Immigration

Due to a surge in the number of COVID cases and new viral variant cases in China, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced the reinstatement of COVID testing requirements for air passengers from the People's Republic of China and the Special Administrative Regions of Macau and Hong Kong.

WHO DOES THIS AFFECT?

- Passengers aged two and older who are boarding flights to the United States from China, Macau or Hong Kong.
- Passengers aged two and older who are boarding flights to the United States from Incheon International Airport (Seoul, South Korea), Toronto Pearson International Airport (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), and Vancouver International Airport (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada) who have been in China, Macau or Hong Kong within the ten-day period preceding the flight.
- Travelers from China, Macau or Hong Kong arriving in the United States from a third country (not a direct flight from China, Macau or Hong Kong).
- Travelers from China, Macau or Hong Kong who are only in the United States on a layover or connection when travelling onward to another destination.
- Finally, the requirement applies to these travelers irrespective of their nationality or having received COVID vaccinations.

WHAT DOCUMENTATION IS NEEDED?

Travelers will need to provide the airline either a negative COVID-19 viral test taken within two days of boarding the flight or proof of recovery from the virus. Documentation of a negative COVID-19 test result may be in either paper or digital format. Persons who tested positive for COVID-19 more than ten days before the flight may provide documentation proving recovery from the virus in lieu of a negative COVID-19 viral test.

Additionally, the COVID vaccination requirements remain in place for Non-U.S. Citizen and Non-U.S. Immigrants travelling to the United States.

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WHEN IS THE REQUIREMENT ACTIVE?
This COVID test results or COVID recovery documentation is required for travelers starting January 5, 2023, at 12:01AM (Eastern). The CDC does offer a Travel Assessment Tool to help travelers determine the COVID-related travel requirements.

WHAT IS THE TRAVELER-BASED GENOMIC SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM (TGS)?
The Traveler-Based Genomic Surveillance Program (TGS) is a voluntary program at major U.S. international airports where arriving international passengers from selected flights can help support the early detection of new COVID-19 variants by providing an anonymous nasal swab. TGS is active at seven U.S. airports (Atlanta, Newark, New York-JFK, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.-Dulles) and covers approximately 500 flights from 30 countries each week. TGS has been successful in detecting the Omnicom subvariants BA.2, BA.3, and other COVID variants at the early stage. Participation by arriving international passengers is voluntary.

AM I REQUIRED TO QUARANTINE UPON ARRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES?
At this time there is no quarantine requirement upon arrival to the United States. All travelers are encouraged to wear a mask during travel and self-monitor for COVID symptoms. Taking a COVID test during the three-day period upon arriving in the United States is also recommended.

If you have questions about how this change may affect your travel to the US, please contact an attorney at our firm.

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