

State Customs Service of the Kyrgyz Republic
7 May 2020

Mitigation of the COVID-19

Situation in the Kyrgyz Republic

Institutional development

Coordination

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (the WHO) announced the spread of the new coronavirus infection COVID-19 (hereinafter referred to as coronavirus infection) as a pandemic.

On the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic from 18 to 23 March 2020, the first cases of coronavirus infection from among the citizens arrived from abroad have been confirmed.

In accordance with the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, on 24 March 2020, in order to ensure the protection of life and health of citizens, their safety and public order as well as to prevent the spread of coronavirus infection on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic, the state emergency was introduced on certain territories of the Kyrgyz Republic including the cities of Bishkek and Osh (extended until 10 May 2020).

In order to coordinate the efforts of state bodies in combating and preventing the spread of coronavirus infection, a Republican headquarter has been created headed by the First Vice Prime-Minister composed of heads of the ministries of health, foreign affairs, internal affairs, economy, finance, justice, law enforcement agencies including customs service, they work intensively to monitor the current situation and take appropriate measures.

Measures at the border with the People's Republic of China (PRC)

On 23 January 2020, due to the spread of coronavirus infection in the People's Republic China, the air, road and rail links of the Kyrgyz Republic with the PRC were completely suspended.

On 24 January 2020 a temporary ban on the import of meat and meat products was introduced.

On 3 February 2020 the Governmental Decree No 27 was adopted, which temporarily restricts the admission of persons to the Kyrgyz-Chinese part of the state border through the "Irkesh-Tam-Road" and "Torugart-Road" border posts with the exception of:

- employees of diplomatic missions of the Kyrgyz Republic and the People's Republic China;
- citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic returning to the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic transporting goods (cargo) on freight vehicles;
- citizens of the People's Republic of China returning to the PRC.

The international airports Manas and Osh temporarily suspended regular flights to (from) the Kyrgyz Republic from (to) China until further notification, with exception of flights carrying:

- employees of diplomatic missions of the Kyrgyz Republic and the People's Republic of China;
- Kyrgyz citizens returning to the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Chinese citizens returning to the PRC;
- goods (cargo).

On 24 March 2020 the Republican operational headquarters considered the issue of resuming freight transportation by road across the Kyrgyz-Chinese state border. The corresponding note was sent to China.

The relevant state bodies of the Kyrgyz Republic were instructed to carry out preparatory work with the Chinese side to renew freight transportation via the Torugart and Irkeshtam checkpoints. It was also entrusted to develop a mechanism and algorithm for the actions of this process taking into account the creation of conditions for the Kyrgyz freight carriers.

In order to prevent the cross-border spread of coronavirus infection across the Kyrgyz-Chinese state border as well as to organize the movement of goods from the PRC to the Kyrgyz Republic through the checkpoint Irkeshtam-road a special algorithm has been approved, which was developed jointly with the relevant state bodies with consideration of the requirements of the Chinese side.

According to this algorithm, vehicles (trucks) without trailers leave the Kyrgyz Republic for the “neutral zone” between the Irkeshtam checkpoint and the checkpoint in the PRC, and trucks with trailers from the PRC. Prior to leaving the Irkeshtam border crossing point on neutral territory the drivers will conduct thermometry by the sanitary-epidemiological service (SES).

Further, upon arrival of vehicles in the “neutral zone” for coupling with Chinese trailers, the driver from the Kyrgyz Republic must stop the vehicle in a strictly designated place. When hitching Chinese trailers to Kyrgyz trucks drivers need to carry personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, disinfectants). In addition, drivers are not allowed to leave the cabin before completing hitching operations and arriving at the checkpoint.

At the entrance of trucks to the checkpoint before the border control, the staff of sanitary-quarantine service conducts a drivers’ survey and medical examination with use of express tests. In case of positive results for the presence of coronavirus infection detected, further actions will be carried out in accordance with actions algorithm of the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic.

After transshipping goods from Chinese trailers to Kyrgyz vehicles and passing border controls, Kyrgyz trucks return empty Chinese trailers to the section between the Irkeshtam checkpoint and the checkpoint in China. At the entire stage of the transshipment of goods to Kyrgyz trucks, the sanitary service staff will carry out external and internal disinfection of vehicles and goods.

At the end of sanitary and epidemiological measures in respect of goods, the sanitary service staff will affix appropriate stamps on the shipping documents regarding disinfection and the cargo is allowed to be imported to the Kyrgyz Republic.

If the goods are subject to veterinary and/or phytosanitary control, customs operations will be performed only after obtaining the appropriate certified permit issued by the veterinary and/or phytosanitary control body.

Thus, when organizing the movement of goods on the Kyrgyz-Chinese border all necessary sanitary and epidemiological measures will be adhered to, and the direct contact between the drivers of the two countries will be excluded.

Legal tools

In order to ensure the continuity of international supplies to the Kyrgyz Republic in terms of providing essential goods and medical supplies, certain changes (temporary) to the national legislation have been introduced:

- Governmental Decree No 57 of 03 February 2020 “On Introducing Temporary Ban on the Export of Medicines and Medical Supplies from the Kyrgyz Republic” (wipes and other antibacterial agents, disinfectants, medical masks). Moreover, the import of medical masks is exempt of value added tax. Also, there is a Governmental Decree on temporary permission of supplies, which are in the National List of Essentially Necessary Medicines and Medical Supplies without state registration;
- Governmental Decree No 174 of 22 March 2020 “On the Introduction of a Temporary Ban on the Export of Certain Types of Goods from the Kyrgyz Republic” (wheat flour, vegetable oil, rice, pasta, granulated sugar, chicken eggs, iodized table salt feed (hay, straw, compound feed, bran and grain feed));
- Governmental Decree No 84-r of 17 March 2020 “On the Introduction of a Temporary Restriction at all Checkpoints at the State Border of the Kyrgyz Republic on Entry into the Territory of the Kyrgyz Republic of Citizens of Foreign States and Stateless Persons”.

The introduction of bans does not apply to:

- drivers engaged in international freight traffic: crews, flight crews, train crews;
- accredited and appointed employees of diplomatic missions;
- accredited and appointed employees of international organizations;
- family members of the indicated persons, when informing in advance of their arrival through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- employees of the State Enterprise “National Company Kyrgyz Temir Zholu”, providing daily work on the railway in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan according to ID passports;
- citizens of foreign states and stateless persons who are members of the families of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic, subject to documentary confirmation of the fact of close family ties, or having a permanent residence permit of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Customs formalities

In accordance with international treaties and acts constituting the law of Eurasian Economic Union (hereinafter referred to as the EAEU) as well as the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic in the field of customs, norms are established that regulate the implementation of customs control and customs operations with respect to goods and vehicles arriving in the customs territory of the EAEU.

Responsible regulatory authorities at the customs border of the EAEU are determined by a Decree of the Kyrgyz Government No 556 of 19 November 2007. Inspection measures for freight carriers entering the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic for the presence of COVID-19 have been strengthened. Currently, rapid testing of all truckers crossing the border is being conducted. In the case of a positive result, drivers are on observation until the results of PCR analysis (Polymerase Chain Reaction).

It is important to continue to ensure the unhindered crossing of trucks across border and the timely delivery of food and other necessary goods. However, in order to ensure the safety of health, control is being strengthened, while not creating difficulties for truckers.

Algorithms of actions at border crossings for the implementation of the supply chain of goods are developed. The algorithm of actions during inspections of truckers has been changed in the direction of strengthening control of their location, conducting PCR analysis and observing the rules of self-isolation and limiting contacts after delivery of the cargo until the analysis results are

received. At the same time, the algorithms are being finalized taking into account changes in the epidemiological situation.

When moving goods and vehicles, the customs authorities carry out customs operations in accordance with Interaction Procedures at the relevant checkpoints approved by joint orders of state regulatory authorities. In addition, the State Customs Service, together with state regulatory authorities joint regulations approved the following algorithms for actions when moving goods through checkpoints from countries with an unfavorable epidemiological situation:

- an algorithm of actions to prevent the importation and spread of coronavirus in relation to air passengers, their baggage and hand luggage, as well as goods transported from countries with an unfavorable epidemiological situation to the Kyrgyz Republic by air;
- an algorithm of actions when moving goods through checkpoints from countries with an unfavorable epidemiological situation;
- an algorithm of actions to prevent the importation and spread of coronavirus through the checkpoints "Irkeshtam" and "Torugart" in relation to goods transported from China to the Kyrgyz Republic;
- an algorithm of actions to prevent the importation and spread of coronavirus in respect of goods transported from countries with an unfavorable epidemiological situation to the Kyrgyz Republic by rail.

According to the developed algorithms, all drivers of vehicles arriving from the above countries are placed for observation for a specified period. Goods and vehicles without fail pass all types of state control. Customs operations with respect to goods are carried out only after obtaining appropriate permission from the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic as well as from veterinary and phytosanitary authorities.