



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Service**

Public Health

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

December 29, 2020

Dominic Mancini
Acting Deputy Director
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C.

Subject: Request for Emergency Clearance

Dear Mr. Mancini:

Pursuant to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) procedures established at 5 CFR 1320, *Controlling Paperwork Burdens on the Public*, I request that the following collection of information, Requirement For Proof Of Negative Covid-19 Test Result For All Airline Passengers Arriving Into The United States from The United Kingdom, be processed in accordance with section 1320.13 Emergency Processing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread throughout the world. Individuals who travel may be at risk for exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, before, during, or after travel. This could result in travelers' further spreading the virus to others during travel, upon arrival in the United States, or at their destinations.

Over the last few weeks, the United Kingdom (UK) has faced a rapid increase in COVID-19 cases in South East England, leading to enhanced epidemiological and virological investigations. On December 14, 2020, Public Health England announced that a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 had been identified across the southeast of England (i.e., Kent and the surrounding areas).¹

While it is known and expected that viruses constantly change through mutation leading to the emergence of new variants, preliminary analysis in the UK suggests that this variant may be more transmissible than previously circulating variants, with an estimated potential to increase the reproductive number (R) by 0.4 or greater with an estimated increased transmissibility of up to 70%.² This new variant has emerged at a time of the year when there has traditionally been increased family and social mixing and travel.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-investigating-a-novel-variant-of-covid-19>

² <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/threat-assessment-brief-rapid-increase-sars-cov-2-variant-united-kingdom>

On December 19, 2020, in response to the emergence of this new variant, the countries comprising the UK announced stricter measures to be applied from December 20 and over the coming weeks, with affected areas going into a ‘Tier 4’ level with movement restrictions within and between more and less heavily affected areas. These measures include recommendations for residents of the most affected areas to restrict movements and travel, including international travel, outside of these areas. The government of Scotland announced a travel ban between Scotland and rest of UK. In addition, the Netherlands issued a travel ban from the UK effective through January 1, 2021, and Belgium halted flight and train travel from the UK. Other countries have taken similar measures to restrict travel from the UK.³

On March 14, 2020, the United States issued a “Proclamation on the Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus” applicable to the UK.⁴ While this suspension remains in place and has slowed the introduction of travelers into the United States from the UK, the Suspension by its nature does not apply to U.S. persons and legal permanent residents and contains other necessary exemptions for eligible travelers. Thus, urgent efforts are needed to mitigate the potential spread of this new virus variant into the United States. This additional testing requirement, which applies to US persons, with limited exemptions, will fortify our efforts to protect the health and safety of the American public and ensure responsible international travel. The order is consistent with existing CDC testing guidance and the Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Transportation, and Department of Homeland Security joint guidance in the “Runway to Recovery” document.

The proposed collection of information will require that all travelers over the age of 2 provide airlines with proof of a negative viral test for COVID-19 prior to boarding. Airlines must refuse to board anyone who is unable to demonstrate proof of a negative viral COVID-19 test within 3 days of departure. Passengers must demonstrate proof of identity, specimen collection date test done within 3 days of departure, the type of the viral test, and a negative test result in order to be able to board. Passengers must also complete an attestation, and submit it to the airline, in addition to providing the above documentation. Regarding individuals who have been recovered from COVID-19, CDC does not recommend getting tested again in the three months after a positive viral test, as long as you do not have symptoms of COVID-19. If a traveler has had a positive viral test in the past 3 months, and meets the criteria to end isolation, those travelers are required to travel with a copy of their test results and a letter from their doctor or health department stating that they have been cleared for travel.

Predeparture testing may detect travelers infected with SARS-CoV-2 before they initiate their travel. The accompanying Order requires viral testing and receipt of results within 3

³ On December 20, 2020, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, and the Netherlands announced travel bans from the United Kingdom. The measures vary in scope and generally are short-term. The Republic of Ireland, Portugal, Latvia, Estonia, and Czech Republic also announcing new travel restrictions, testing requirements, and quarantine rules. Bulgaria suspended flights to and from the UK until January 31, 2021, one of the longer bans announced. Greece issued new rules requiring a seven-day quarantine for travelers from the UK, rather than the current three-day period, starting December 21, 2020. Turkey temporarily has banned all flights from the UK, as has Switzerland. Eurostar train service will be cut beginning on December 21, between London, Brussels, and Amsterdam.

⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-suspension-entry-immigrants-nonimmigrants-certain-additional-persons-pose-risk-transmitting-coronavirus-2/>

calendar days⁵ prior to departure from the UK for international travelers arriving in the U.S. This Order also applies to individuals whose travel began in the UK, but are connecting to the United States through another country. This Order does not apply to individuals who have a layover in the UK lasting less than 24 hours.

Testing does not eliminate all risk, but when predeparture testing is combined with other measures such as self-monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19, wearing masks, social distancing, and hand hygiene, it can make travel safer by reducing spread on conveyances and in transportation hubs. Mitigating the risk of spread of this new variant by requiring negative tests of air travelers from the UK to the US is an urgent public health need.

As such, I have determined that this information must be collected prior to the expiration of time periods established under Part 1320, and that this information is essential to CDC's ability to effectively address this public health emergency. CDC cannot reasonably comply with the normal clearance procedures due to the public harm that could result if routine processing of this request is required. CDC requests emergency clearance to require air travelers from the UK to the US to provide negative COVID-19 tests to airlines prior to boarding and to attest that those tests are truthful and accurate.

The information will not be collected or maintained by CDC and is instead primarily a 3rd party disclosure requirement between travelers and airlines. In limited circumstances, CDC may require that the traveler provide the test results in the course of an individual public health response. However, travelers are expected to retain these materials. Please provide an approval/disapproval determination of this request to collect information under an emergency clearance by close of business Tuesday, December 29, 2020.

Respectfully,

Michael J. Beach, PhD
Principal Deputy Incident Manager
CDC COVID-19 Emergency Response
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-air-travel.html>