



INSTITUTO DE ASTROFÍSICA DE CANARIAS

C/ Vía Láctea, s/n. 38200 – San Cristóbal de La Laguna.
Santa Cruz de Tenerife. España www.iac.es

IAC Action Plan in the face of an international public health emergency caused by the new coronavirus COVID-19

Document updated on 24th March

[Update, regarding the previous version \(dated 12 March\) in BLUE color](#)

[Update, regarding the previous version \(dated 16 March\) in GREEN color](#)

BACKGROUND: On December 31, 2019, China reported cases of pneumonia of an unknown cause related to a fish market in the city of Wuhan in the Hubei province. On January 9, Chinese authorities identified a new type of coronavirus unlike any other seen to date as the cause of the outbreak. This coronavirus is known as SARS-CoV-2 and the disease it produces is called COVID-19.

Currently, on the recommendation of the IHR Emergency Committee (2005) or the IHR (2005), the Director-General of the WHO has declared the outbreak of the new coronavirus 2019 (nCoV) in the People's Republic of China a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

The Emergency Committee makes specific recommendations for China on the one hand and for the rest of the countries on the other. The main recommendations are:

- Set up active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, and follow-up of contacts with the aim of reducing human infection, preventing secondary transmission and international spread.
- Inform the WHO continuously and contribute to the international response through multi-sectoral communication and collaboration and active participation to increase knowledge about the virus and the disease, as well as progress in research.

All the activities proposed by the WHO and by the Emergency Committee are currently underway in Spain and coordinated with all the autonomous communities.

A PHEIC is defined in the RSI (2005) as “an extraordinary event which will constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease and to potentially require a coordinated international response”. This definition implies a situation that is (1) serious, sudden, unusual or unexpected; (2) carries implications for public health beyond the affected State's national border; and (3) may require immediate international action.

So far, the source of infection is unknown and there is uncertainty regarding the severity and transmission capacity. Due to similarities with other known coronaviruses, SARS-CoV-2 is thought to be transmitted mainly by respiratory drops of more than 5 microns and by direct contact with the secretions of infected people. Other possible routes of transmission are being assessed.

The incubation period of the disease has been estimated at between 2 and 14 days. Evidence of virus transmission prior to the onset of symptoms has not been verified to date. Currently, there is no specific treatment for SARS-CoV-2.

The most common symptoms of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) are: fever, cough and shortness of breath. In some cases there may also be digestive symptoms such as diarrhea and abdominal pain. In more severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia, significant difficulty breathing, kidney failure and even death. The most serious cases generally occur in the elderly or those with underlying conditions such as heart, respiratory or immune system problems.

The COVID-19 virus is similar to other respiratory viruses and the form of transmission between humans is mainly via air and close contact with respiratory secretions from the coughs and sneezes of a sick person. It can also be contracted by touching a contaminated surface and then touching the mouth, nose or eyes. Some people may become infected but not go on to develop significant clinical symptoms.

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19



1 SCOPE

The scope of this Action Plan is the implementation and monitoring of actions aimed at guaranteeing the maintenance and operation of the IAC at its headquarters, the Teide Observatory, the IACTEC offices, CALP and the Roque de los Muchachos Observatory, during the period of International Public Health Emergency caused by the new coronavirus COVID-19. The actions are for prevention and for the protection of the health of IAC employees, collaborators and assigned personnel.

2. THE IAC MONITORING COMMITTEE

2.1. Composition

The Plan's Monitoring Committee at the IAC will be the Management Committee, comprising the following members:

Chair: Director.

Secretary: Head of General Administration.

Members: Deputy Director, Research Coordinator, Graduate Studies Coordinator, Tehcnology Coordinator.

It will have an ordinary weekly meeting via phone/video conference as well as extraordinary meetings upon the request of members made to the President.

2.2. Functions of the IAC Monitoring Committee

The Committee will have the following functions:

- Implement this IAC Action Plan and the planned preventive and executive measures.
- Inform staff in IAC work centers of the procedures to be followed in each case.
- Report on the development of actions and the evolution of the emergency in the IAC, incidences of the disease and incidents that may arise in the service operation during the application of the actions, and propose any additional actions deemed appropriate in relation to this alert.
- Propose those essential services that must be guaranteed in the event that Human Resources are seriously affected.
- Guarantee new chains of command and responsibility in the event that the existing ones are broken.
- Establish a procedure to control the incidence of the disease.
- Propose, where appropriate, the extension of time limits to resolve administrative procedures, selection processes, etc.
- If necessary, implement measures aimed at facilitating and improving the use of information technologies and communication systems or home working.
- Urge user institutions, external companies, contractors, etc. to establish their own contingency plans.
- Report regularly to the Health and Safety Committee and the Workers' Committee.
- Communicate functions and tasks to the relevant personnel within the framework of this Action Plan.

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19



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3. IAC Monitoring Subcommittee

3.1. Composition of the Monitoring Subcommittee

The Monitoring Subcommittee will comprise following members:

Chair: Head of General Administration.
Secretary: President of the Health and Safety Committee.
Members: Head of Human Resources,
OT Administrator, ORM Administrator,
IT Services Manager,
Research and Graduate Studies Manager,
Operational Manager,
IACTec Manager,
Starlight Director,
Production Manager,
Head of Emergencies (IAC Headquarters),
Head of the Telescopic Operations Department,
Health and Safety expert.

It will have an ordinary weekly meeting via phone/video conference as well as extraordinary meetings upon the request of members made to the President.

3.2. Functions of the Monitoring Subcommittee

The Monitoring Subcommittee will have the following functions:

- Implement the measures in the Plan and those requested by the Monitoring Committee.
- Propose additional measures to the Monitoring Committee to improve the Plan.
- Report to the Monitoring Committee on the development of the actions.
- Carry out whatever other actions are requested by the Monitoring Committee.

4. PLAN FOR DISEASE PREVENTION AND PROTECTION OF WORKERS' HEALTH. Preventive measures.

4.1. Staff information.

Staff are informed that the following preventive measures will be the first to be considered:

- Sudden onset of symptoms: fever, cough and/or shortness of breath. Anyone who observes these symptoms in the workplace should go home and remain there, and should contact 112 (also 900 112 061). They should inform their line manager that they are leaving the workplace. The line manager will immediately notify the Health and Safety Department (uprl@iac.es).
- It is indicated likewise to the staff which informs to the IAC (uprl@iac.es) that in the event of being in a situation of isolation due to recommendation of 112 or, even, if it is a confirmed case of contagion.
- If suffering a respiratory infection, avoid close contact with other people.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover the mouth and nose with your bent elbow or with a tissue.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth.
- Frequent hand washing. Soapy water is better than alcohol or disinfectant solutions, which should be used when soap and water are not readily available.
- Maintain physical distance from other people: transmission of the virus by air at distances greater than 1-2 meters appears unlikely.
- Avoid any close contact with people who show signs of respiratory infection.
- Do not travel to areas with a risk of contagion.

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19



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4.2. Equipment & cleaning.

The following basic measures will be taken in the various work centers, with the collaboration of – and under the responsibility of – the IAC staff:

- Availability of soap and disposable paper towels in all IAC bathrooms.
- Frequent cleaning of surfaces, especially handrails and similar.

4.3. Infographics and other informative tools.

The following informative tools are accessible online and are particularly relevant:



4.4. Official information.

Ministry of Health:

Website, with updated information, questions and answers and infographics:

Website for professionals, with technical documentation:

<https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov-China/documentos.htm>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation:

Updated information on the situation in all countries via a map that directs users to country embassies:

<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/SiViajasAlExtranjero/Paginas/RecomendacionesDeViaje.aspx>

4.5. Prevention of workplace risk.

The IAC's Health and Safety Department will constantly monitor the situation in the IAC, make the appropriate recommendations and report regularly to the Chair of the Monitoring Subcommittee.

The "Health and Safety Action Plan against exposure to the new coronavirus (SARS-COV-2)" is attached as an annex to this document (version March 5), coordinated by the General Sub-directorate of Environmental Health and Occupational Health of the General Directorate of Public Health, Quality and Innovation (Ministry of Health). The recommendations included in this document are under continuous review, depending on the evolution of the situation and new information that becomes available. Likewise, the "Procedure for dealing with cases of infection with the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)" ([updated version at the Health Ministry webpage](#)),

4.6. Effectiveness of the Observatories of the Canary Islands.

The Canary Islands Observatories continue to operate scientifically with important restrictions to ensure the health protection of personnel in accordance with the requirements established by the health

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19



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authorities. During the month of March and until further notice, at the Roque de los Muchachos Observatory most of the telescopes have closed their scientific operation. Only the Nordic optical Telescope (NOT) and the Gran Telescopio Canarias (GTC) will operate in reduced service mode without the presence of visiting astronomers. In addition, some robotic telescope such as the Liverpool Telescope will continue to observe without face-to-face attention. The Swedish Solar Telescope (SST) is slated to begin operation on April 13. For both the NOT and the SST, an exception is made with the observers belonging to the IAC of CAT time proposals who must make the observations in person. CAT time PIs with proposals approved in the NOT or in the SST must inform the IAC Sub-Directorate (subdireccion@iac.es) and the Head of the Research Division (corinv@iac.es) about who will act as observer for each approved proposal. in this telescope at least one week in advance. Only one observer will attend, designated, as usual, by the PI of the proposal. The IAC will make a vehicle available to the observer on La Palma that it will always be of exclusive use for the astronomer.

All telescopes keep the minimum technical activity necessary to maintain the operability of the instruments and avoid irreparable damage to detectors and other sensitive equipment. This will require a minimum movement of personnel that goes up and down daily to carry out these tasks.

The Residences will work with the essential services in the kitchen as well as in reception and cleaning. Preventive measures will be taken to guarantee health security. A protocol of notice to the Residence is established for all the personnel that move daily, informing of the people who move and data of the vehicle. All vehicles must have a station connected to the operating frequency in each observatory and only one passenger per vehicle except in extraordinary circumstances.

4.7. Travels.

Trips to WHO declared risk areas should not be made if they are not essential. The IAC staff is reminded, in relation to this point, of the instructions and need for compliance of the Steering Committee for trips to risk areas (CD Acts of February 12 and 26, 2020).

Likewise, the new provisions of this Plan of Action must be taken into account.

- Risk areas: <https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov-China/areas.htm>

- Recommendations for trips from Spain to risk areas:

- Recommendations for people returning from trips from risk areas:

Likewise, and following the recommendations received from the Secretary of State for Territorial Policy and Public Service, on the measures to be adopted in work centers dependent on the General State Administration, on the occasion of COVID-19, it is recommended to postpone all those trips work that are not essential for normal activity.

4.8. Work meetings.

With regard to meetings, those that may be postponed will be avoided by promoting, where appropriate, the use of videoconferencing, with the suspension of those involving trips to another location. Avoid face-to-face meetings.

4.9. Conferences, courses and training activities.

Conferences, courses and face-to-face training activities will be postponed, valuing the use of telematic means as an alternative, when possible.

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19



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4.10. Selective processes.

Selective tests of the ongoing processes will be postponed, for the necessary time, as long as may be necessary.

4.11. Attention to the public and internal users.

In attention to the public, priority will be given to telematic attention (registration, secretaries, computer support, etc.). In the case of face-to-face attention, the necessary shifts will be established, when necessary, so as to guarantee the provision of the service. The e-mail consultas@iac.es is enabled, where every petition can be centralized. This service will transfer the queries to the corresponding units.

4.12. Telephone lines.

Diversion of telephone lines is going to occur in necessary cases, to the recording of a message due to this alert, and to the diversion of telephone queries to telematic means (e-mail accounts of the units). The telephone for calls is 922605200.

4.13. Working visits or training of external personnel.

External personnel who are going to carry out work, or periods of training, at the IAC headquarters or in the facilities of its Observatories will be subject to the same measures as for the IAC's own personnel, especially as regards non-contractual modalities.

The staff visits to facilities of the User Institutions of the Observatories must respect the Contingency Plans of these institutions, in addition to those of the IAC as the operating entity of the Canary Islands Observatories.

In any case, these external staff visits must be reduced to the essential minimum.

4.14. External group visits.

External visits to the IAC headquarters, in La Laguna and in Breña Baja, both from schools and from any other group, will be suspended until further notice.

With regard to visits to the Canary Islands Observatories, they remain suspended until further notice as well.

4.15. Security Service.

Security services at headquarters and observatories will be maintained normally, with the presence of a single person from these contracts. These companies must establish their own contingency plans, in which they must foresee the maintenance of an appropriate level of activity for the operation of the services they provide. They will be informed through the corresponding channels of the preventive measures and recommendations indicated in this plan, in particular hygienic and safety distances, for compliance.

It is not authorized the presence of staff near security surpassing the time needed for the access control.

4.16. Reception service.

The service of reception of the headquarters of La Laguna will be suspended since Wednesday 18 March. There will be remote telephone assistance, so extension 5200 will work normally. The reception

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19



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services at Centers and Observatories will be maintained normally, with the presence of a single person from these contracts. These companies must establish their own contingency plans, in which they must foresee the maintenance of an appropriate level of activity for the operation of the services they provide. They will be informed through the corresponding channels of the preventive measures and recommendations indicated in this plan, in particular hygienic and safety distances, for compliance.

The permanence of staff is not authorized near the reception over the needed time.

4.17. Cafeteria service.

The cafeteria and dining room services at headquarters and observatories will remain closed until further notice.

Likewise, the vending machines will not be refilled.

In the event of Observatories, as indicated before, the Residences will work with minimum services, both in reception and cleaning. Preventive measures will be stricter.

4.18. Cleaning service and other services.

Cleaning services in the IAC work centers will suffer interruptions and in some cases suspensions.

These companies, where appropriate, must establish their own contingency plans. They will be informed through the corresponding channels about the preventive measures and recommendations indicated in this plan, particularly the hygienic ones and distance of security, for its compliance.

This will also apply to other external services that are carried out in the IAC work centers (electrical maintenance, etc.).

4.19. Collection and delivery of merchandise and postal service.

The formal collection and delivery of merchandise at the different headquarters and sites of the IAC will be carried out only one day a week. [More information associated appears in the Protocol of remote work modality.](#) The units involved are the ones in charge of organizing this service. A storeroom will be provided for the temporary deposit of packages until their processing.

Regarding the collection and sending of documents and packages by ordinary mail, this service will be provided by the Operational Management once a week, which will organize the service to that end. [More information associated appears in the Protocol of remote work modality.](#) The units involved are the ones in charge of organizing this service.

4.20. Invoices.

The invoices that are brought in paper to the IAC headquarters will be collected in a single tray, at an accessible point as near to the outside as possible. [More information associated appears in the Protocol of remote work modality.](#) The units involved are the ones in charge of organizing this service. The units involved in their processing will designate one day a week for their face-to-face treatment.

4.21. Minimum services.

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19



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The different units of the IAC, through the corresponding Area managers, will communicate to the IAC Management the services that cannot be provided as a consequence of these preventive measures. Likewise, they will indicate the minimum services that, where appropriate, will have to be provided physically, from the headquarters or observatories, with the indications of minimum days or time slots for the provision of said service. In determining these ranges, special consideration shall be given to the prevention and protection of the health of the workers of this entity, collaborators and assigned personnel, **taking special care not to assign to minimum services those workers who reveal previous pathologies or current health conditions that belong to groups that are considered especially sensitive with regard to exposure to existing biological risk, as indicated by the Ministry of Health in its ACTION PROCEDURE FOR LABOR RISK PREVENTION SERVICES AGAINST EXPOSURE TO THE NEW CORONAVIRUS (SARS-COV-2)..**

In any case, and when possible, the telematic service or telephone attention will take precedence over the attendance or face-to-face service.

The operation and maintenance of the IAC telescopes will be treated in a specific paragraph of this document.

4.22. Connectivity.

The IAC's Computer Services will take the appropriate measures, preferably electronically, to ensure connectivity to the center's servers and information systems. This connectivity is considered as a service that must be provided completely and without interruption.

4.23. Installations.

From the Operational Management and from the Administrators of the OT and the ORM, the appropriate measures will be adopted, preferably telematic, to ensure the correct operation of all the facilities of the IAC, also guaranteeing that the necessary supplies for this are available (electricity, water, etc). In particular, the continuity of the air conditioning systems of facilities such as the AIV room, CPD or the like will be ensured. The operation of the essential facilities is considered a service to be provided completely and without interruption.

4.24. Non-attendance modality of work.

By Resolution of the Secretary of State of Territory Policy and Public Function dated 10 March 2020, of measures to adopt in the working centers which depend on the General Administration of State due to COVID-19, it is established, among others, a specific instruction to enable the remote work modality, in the events duly justified, and with the aim of guaranteeing the provision of the public services, favoring at the same time the protection of the health of the public employees. The evolution of the COVID-19 made essential to complete the previous Resolution with new measures of organizational nature (Resolution dated 12 March), about the temporary suspension of activities in units and working centers, and flexibilization of the working day and permanence in domiciles.

On 14 March, the Royal Decree 463/2020 comes into force, through which it is declared the alarm status for the management of the situation of health crisis caused by the COVID-19.

The Director of the IAC, don 13 March, communicates all the staff that it is established until further notice, the flexibilization of the working day and the permanence of the staff of the center in their domiciles carrying out the work in a telematic manner. It is communicated as well, the relationship of the staff which has to provide on-site services in branches and observatories. Taking into account that this situation may extend in time since Monday 10 March there will be an appropriate review and organization of these services and in which conditions.

A Protocol has been elaborated for the application of the remote work modality facing this emergency of coronavirus. It is a single Protocol for all these centers and for their staff, which identifies the services to

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19



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provide for the achievement of their purposes, and particularly those who are susceptible of being provided in a remote manner. The minimum services are detailed, with possible limitations or not in their scope or in time slots; these minimum services will have the consideration of essential services.

Finally, instructions are established for the monitoring mechanism of this work modality, and the needs of means to enable de facto the performance of functions in a remote manner.

It is desirable the utmost collaboration of the whole staff of the IAC before this emergency situation.

4.25. Chain of command.

The chains of command will be the ones established for the IAC. Regarding the Monitoring Commission and Subcommittee for this Action Plan, the chain of command will go to the next member, in order in which they have been arranged (see 2.1. and 3.1).

This Action Plan may be updated, as new developments occur in relation to this international alert. This version of it is approved by the IAC Management Committee at its meeting on March 11, 2020 (CD09 / 20), and is immediately applicable.

5. More information

Updated information and documentation at: <https://www.iac.es/en/coronavirus-alert>

A specific section has been enabled within the new internal website of the IAC, with General Information, the Action Plan, and the Protocol as well as any other information of interest for our staff. There is an access to it from the external website itself, identifying in the profile, in accordance to the appearance in the top right margin of the page.

Document updated on 25th March

Update, regarding the previous version (dated 12 March) in BLUE color

Update, regarding the previous version (dated 16 March) in GREEN color

Action Plan – Coronavirus COVID-19