

EU aviation agency tells airlines to disinfect planes

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The EU's air safety agency on Friday told airlines to fully disinfect planes coming from coronavirus hotspots, and said passengers should be spaced out when possible and handed wipes to clean their own seats.

The Cologne-based European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) called its new guidance "the first EU-wide operational measure to control the spread of COVID-19 in Europe".

Flights have been cancelled around the world in a bid to slow the pandemic, causing travel chaos for passengers and financial pain for airlines.

The United States has announced a ban on visitors from mainland Europe from Friday, while Russia said it would limit flights with the European Union from Monday.

"We need to reassure the passengers, the airline crews and the airport staff that their health and safety is our top priority," European Commissioner for Transport Adina Valean said in a statement.

The EASA's directive mandates that aircraft coming from "high-risk" areas, as defined by the

World Health Organization and other public health bodies, be "fully disinfected" after each [flight](#).

Airlines on all routes are also urged to "step up the frequency of cleaning", and thoroughly disinfect any plane that carried a [passenger](#) suspected or confirmed to have been infected with the novel coronavirus.

Crew members who have had contact with a person sick with COVID-19 should go into quarantine for 14 days.

Airport operators should disinfect terminals regularly, it added.

EASA director Patrick Ky said many airlines had already taken action to keep their planes clean and their workers safe.

"Given that air transport is by its nature international—and we are dealing with a global pandemic—standardisation at European level will make these measures even more efficient," he said.

The EASA will "shortly" publish additional guidelines to recommend that passengers should be spaced out when flights that aren't fully booked.

When possible, "passengers should also be provided with single-use disinfection wipes allowing them to additionally clean their seat area for personal reassurance".

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