

# AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION CIRCULAR 5/21

## REQUESTING PRIORITY HANDLING FOR FLIGHTS CARRYING COVID-19 VACCINES

(Replaces AIC 3/21)

### Introduction

This circular pertains to **critical** flights only,  
it does not apply to all flights carrying COVID-19 vaccines.

Some flights transporting Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines may require special handling, priority, or both. Although COVID-19 vaccine packaging is designed for transport, delays may put the vaccines at risk in some cases.

NAV CANADA and adjacent air navigation service providers (ANSPs) have jointly developed a multi-disciplinary, integrated approach to coordinate the safe and efficient air transportation of COVID-19 vaccine(s).

### Indication of Priority COVID-19 Vaccine Flight Status

Flight operators are responsible for determining which flights carrying COVID-19 vaccines are critical. They should be very selective in their prioritization, to make it possible for ANSPs to provide the necessary, effective assistance to truly critical flights.

1. All flight operators should insert **“STS/ATFMX RMK/VACCINE”** in Item 18 of the Flight Plan to identify any flight they have determined to be a critical flight due to COVID-19 vaccine transport. This will assist the ANSPs in maintaining awareness on these priority flights.
2. These air operators are also requested to contact the NAV CANADA National Operations Center at [NOC\\_Vaccine@navcanada.ca](mailto:NOC_Vaccine@navcanada.ca), at least 24 hours prior, to advise it of this request.
3. For international flights traversing the USA (this includes North Atlantic Oceanic airspace), the operators should also provide advanced notification of the critical flight(s) to the FAA's Command Center. For flights traversing European Airspace managed by the EUROCONTROL Network Manager, operators do not need to provide advance notification because the ATFMX designator is recognized by EUROCONTROL automation and will be accommodated to the extent possible.

### Unplanned Request

If an issue arises after departure, the flight crew may inform air traffic control (ATC) directly, which will use existing procedures to identify downstream impacts. If flying internationally, air operators are encouraged to notify the FAA's Command Center, EUROCONTROL Network Manager Operations Center, or other appropriate authority of the airborne issue, and request assistance. ANSPs will expedite the handling of these flights to the extent possible considering real-time operational limitations and will coordinate with neighbouring ANSPs as necessary.

Example of a request for priority while in flight:

“Toronto Center, BIGAIR123, Requesting unplanned priority due to COVID-19 vaccine transportation”

For further information, please contact:

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