

Health digitises Covid-19 screening at ports

The Health Department will launch the Covid SA travel system, a digital screening platform that allows travellers to complete the required travel health questionnaire (THQ) on their personal devices ahead of their arrival at ports of entry.



15734951 via [Pxabay](#)

The Covid SA travel system will be live from noon on 15 December 2020.

In a statement on Thursday, the department said it intends to make a move from paper-based screening systems to a digitised screening solution in a phased approach.

"The web-based THQ platform will complement and strengthen the existing method of screening and surveillance at ports of entry. [It is] a user-friendly tool allowing travellers to complete the travel health questionnaire on their personal devices prior to their travel," said the department.

The web-based travel screening solution will allow travellers to complete their travel and symptomatic information at any time from two days ahead of their journey to ensure that the exposure and symptoms information provided is relevant.

Once completed, the traveller will receive a unique number (look-up ID) which they will present to the port health official at the respective port of entry, in order to proceed with the screening process.

Over time, as more travellers use this system, it can save them time and help fast-track screening at ports of entry.

Covid SA travel system can be accessed using this link: <https://sa-covid-19-travel.info/>.

Travellers who have already booked their tickets can still access the web-based THQ at any time after the system goes live.

Travellers will still be subjected to the screening protocols at ports of entry, including temperature screening.

They will still be required to present a negative Covid-19 PCR test result, obtained not more than 72 hours from the time of departure.

As of 17 December 2020, international travellers arriving at O.R. Tambo International Airport, those departing from Cape Town International Airport, those entering the country through the Beit Bridge land border and those exiting through Maseru Bridge land border will be expected to complete the web-based THQ.

The paper-based system for Covid-19 screening will continue to be in operation at all other operational ports of entry. This system is set to play a critical role in assisting port health with managing travellers, identifying potential high-risk travellers and to respond effectively.

"Security of personal information was one of the top priorities throughout the development of this system. Accordingly, best practice guidelines, as per the POPI [Protection of Personal Information] Act, are followed to protect all travellers' personal information at all times.

"The Covid SA travel system provides us with additional armour to better manage and survey travellers to prevent the importation and exporting of the virus," said the department.

The system will also provide better data collection and storage, which can be helpful in identifying potential high-risk travellers.

An algorithm that helps determine the risk profile of travellers is embedded in the system.

"In the event of a positive case, the system will assist with identifying potentially exposed travellers, who were in proximity to a positive case, further assisting with better contact tracing," said the department.

Travellers arriving in South Africa are required to download the COVID Alert SA application on their mobile phones.

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