



Modification of home/hotel quarantine – journalists

Journalists who must travel to Iceland for assignment while quarantine procedures are in effect for people traveling to Iceland from abroad must fulfil certain criteria and follow precautions as instructed by the chief epidemiologist for Iceland to be permitted to conduct interviews or other tasks of their trade during the quarantine period.

Criteria and limitations of this modified approach to quarantine:

1. Journalists must **apply** for [modified quarantine](#) to the chief epidemiologist prior to arrival in Iceland, providing rationale for the need for conducting interviews in person rather than remotely. These instructions may be adjusted for specific situations if required, although acceptable scenarios for interview conditions are listed below.
2. As much as possible, the journalist applying for this modification should provide information on likely or intended contacts during the quarantine, so that the chief epidemiologist may ensure that the modified rules are available to the interviewees prior to the interview. At the latest, once the interview is confirmed, the journalist should provide this document to the interviewee. A copy to the chief epidemiologist is recommended, as this confirms to the chief epidemiologist and the interviewee that the journalist is fulfilling their obligations related to the modification of quarantine and allows the interviewee an avenue to request clarifications or additional information on the recommended precautions. Unplanned interviews are **not recommended**, but if the interviewee is aware of the quarantine and the recommended precautions can be applied, not strictly prohibited. Unplanned interviews of members of the general public, in public spaces, by persons in quarantine are **strictly prohibited**. Visits to certain locations where vulnerable groups are likely to be present, such as care homes for the elderly, by persons in quarantine are **strictly prohibited**.
3. The journalist(s) will be registered into quarantine no later than on arrival if travel route has included [risk areas for COVID19](#). The chief epidemiologist is responsible for labeling the individual as allowed to perform certain tasks (interviews) despite quarantine. Failure to apply for modified quarantine or imperfect adherence to the required precautions during modified quarantine may therefore lead to a journalist being found in violation of [quarantine rules](#) (in Icelandic), which may result in [fines](#) (also in Icelandic). Downloading the [mobile application](#) used in case of diagnosis of COVID-19 in a quarantined individual is **highly recommended**. This application keeps information on locations of the mobile device for 5 days and makes tracing unknown/casual contacts considered at risk of infection possible. Therefore, it is requested that those who download it wait until 5 days after leaving Iceland to delete the application again in case the data for the last day in Iceland and/or travel from Iceland is needed for contact tracing purposes. Please note that the data **cannot be accessed** by the authorities unless the individual diagnosed with COVID-19 gives **permission** for use of the location data.
4. At any time, changes in the execution of national response measures may result in additional demands on journalists requesting a modified quarantine. This may include testing for SARS-CoV-2 by PCR or rapid antigen test (at this time no rapid tests are validated or licensed for use in Iceland). This would require a nasopharyngeal swab, ideally with throat swab as well. While uncomfortable, this test is not invasive. Another possibility, once validation has been completed,

is that serological tests will be used to assess likelihood of prior immunity to the disease. This type of test would require a blood sample and would be on a voluntary basis in order to potentially reduce the limitations during the quarantine period. Certificates of disease or immunity from other countries are not currently valid in Iceland due to the lack of reliable, validated documentation and tests.

5. Exemption from the full quarantine procedure applies only to the tasks and under the conditions described in the application for exemption. The journalist must have travelled solely for work and must follow to the letter instructions given by the chief epidemiologist according to the current rules in effect in Iceland on hygiene and distancing measures to avoid infection while at work (see below). Outside of tasks and situations related to their work, they should observe the [requirements for quarantine](#).
6. Should the journalist be notified of exposure to COVID-19 infection occurring in the 14 days before coming to Iceland, whether the exposure is at work or within the family or circle of friends, the involved party is **no longer eligible for this exemption** and must **cease all contact** with unrelated individuals and remain in accommodation for his private use or be transferred to a local, official quarantine facility to observe fully the quarantine instructions as put forth by the chief epidemiologist for Iceland.
7. Individuals in this situation must pay careful attention to any symptoms of illness:
 - a. Cold symptoms or sore throat, sudden changes in sense of taste or smell
 - b. Cough or breathlessness
 - c. Fatigue, body aches or headache
 - d. Fever over 38°C

If any of a-c arise the journalist must check their temperature. Even if there is no fever the journalist should contact the national helpline (1700/+354 544 4113) who will assist in seeking appropriate medical care and/or accessing testing for COVID-19 disease. The helpline should also provide them with information and clarifications on the [requirements for isolation](#). If applicable, the journalist may find instructions for cleaning and other considerations on the website for the [Directorate of Health](#). **Please note that illness that is confirmed to be related to COVID-19 may result in quarantine for colleagues and anyone else the person who is ill has been in contact with while symptomatic or 24-48 hours prior to symptoms according to [current rules in effect in Iceland](#).**

Precautions for working in journalism while in quarantine:

1. Hygiene measures and general infection control measures
 - a. Journalists should practice strict infection control throughout the assignment, including during travel. This includes maintaining 2 metre distance from others as much as possible during travel, avoiding touching common surfaces without gloves and/or strict hand hygiene afterwards. The AME staff should carry hand disinfectant while travelling and during the mission, to be used frequently.
 - b. Disinfectant, disposable gloves, masks and universal precaution kits should be available and be used if needed. See scenarios below.
2. Travel between KEF international airport and hotel and from hotel to worksites
 - a. Persons in quarantine may use rental car or taxi for all domestic transport in Iceland. Please note that taxis limit the number of passengers allowed during the COVID19 crisis. Use of public transportation is prohibited while in quarantine, this includes domestic air travel. In all areas where other people may be encountered, such as the airport and hotel lobby, persons in quarantine should practice strict infection control measures, such as maintaining at least 2 metre distance from all other people, avoidance of touching common surfaces and strict hygiene measures, especially careful hand hygiene.

3. Outside of workplace:
 - a. During the stay in Iceland the AME should observe the general [rules for quarantine](#), with the sole modification that they are allowed to perform interviews in specified settings with precautions in place, see scenarios below. In rare instances, if the application includes sound reasoning for necessity for travel between areas in Iceland, this may also be accommodated within reason.
 - b. When not at work, quarantined individuals should remain in their hotel room, and dine in their room. All necessities must be ordered online for delivery or pickup without interaction with staff in the store/restaurant.
 - c. Persons in quarantine can go for a walk for the purposes of exercise but must maintain careful distance from passersby and should avoid crowded areas such as downtown Reykjavik and tourist attractions.
4. Worksite precautions:
 - a. Journalists in quarantine on assignment should practice strict infection control measures, such as maintaining at least 2 meter distance from all other people, avoidance of touching common surfaces and strict hygiene measures, especially careful hand hygiene and disinfection of surfaces that must be touched with bare hands.
 - b. Only those being interviewed should have direct interaction with the journalist. Even those being interviewed should maintain 2 metres distance from the journalist in quarantine as much as possible. Interviews should be performed in well ventilated areas and last only as long as necessary. Any interaction longer than 15 minutes may result in quarantine for the exposed person(s) should a journalist in quarantine fall ill with COVID-19 within 48 hrs. of the interview.
 - c. The area where an interview is performed should be cleared of other personnel if feasible during the completion of the interview by a journalist arriving from abroad.
 - d. The journalist should pay careful attention to scheduling of interviews and planning breaks, as persons in quarantine may not use public hygiene facilities. Interviewees may provide facilities for use of the journalist in quarantine but should arrange for labeling and thorough [cleaning](#) of the facilities used by the quarantined individual after the workday or once the quarantined individual no longer requires the facilities. In urgent situations, if use of public facilities is unavoidable, the quarantined individual should sanitize all surfaces touched and maintain careful distance from others in such facilities.
 - e. Persons in quarantine may not use public spaces, whether inside buildings (waiting rooms, lobbies, restaurants etc.) or outside (park benches, outside dining facilities and so on). Once the journalist arrives in any place for an interview, they should be directed immediately to the space where the interview will be conducted and not wait in an area where interaction with others may be unavoidable. Interviewees may provide break facilities which then should be designated specifically for the quarantined journalist for the duration of the visit to the interviewee. Meals should be delivered to the person in quarantine in the designated area and consumed there or alternately they may return to their hotel rooms for meals.

Scenarios:

1. Interview of a public servant in the workplace: Allowed with precautions. The director of the public entity must be informed and assent to the interview even if they are not the interviewee. Interaction with individuals other than the interviewee should be avoided. The interview must take place in a space not needed by others for the duration of the interview. The space (and any facilities) used by the journalist in quarantine should be well ventilated and [cleaned](#) after the interview is completed. The journalist should not explore the site, even

with a guide, but only visit the space designated for the interview. Any deviations from this should be deliberate and pre-considered, ideally included in the rationale for the application for modifications. Unplanned changes to the interviewee list are strongly discouraged as they will not have had time to take in the precautions recommended and may not feel refusal is an option if their superior suggests they participate.

2. Interview of a public figure in a private company setting: Allowed with precautions strongly recommended. The director of the company in question must allow the interview to take place on company premises, even if they are not the interviewee. Interaction with individuals other than the interviewee should be avoided. The interview should take place in a space not needed by others for the duration of the interview. The space (and any facilities) used by the journalist in quarantine should be well ventilated and [cleaned](#) after the interview is completed. The journalist should not explore the site, even with a guide, but only visit the space designated for the interview. Unplanned changes to the interviewee list are strongly discouraged as they will not have had time to take in the precautions recommended and may not feel refusal is an option if their superior suggests they participate.
3. Interview of any person in a private home: Not recommended but allowed with precautions strongly recommended. Only the interviewee(s) should be at home, while the journalist is present. Interviewing children while interviewer is in quarantine is prohibited as children may not understand the need for precautions. In person interview of any person [at risk of serious COVID-19 infection](#) is strongly discouraged.
4. Interview of any person in a private setting out of doors: Allowed with precautions. Example: private garden or outdoor space closed to the public. If proximity to members of the public becomes unavoidable, the interviewer should maintain what distance is possible and leave the area as soon as they can, whether the interview has been completed or not.
5. Interview of any person in a public indoor setting: **Prohibited**. Examples: cafe, restaurant, hotel lobby and any other setting where members of the public may inadvertently be exposed to a person in quarantine.
6. Interview of any person in a public setting out of doors: Allowed with precautions. The interviewer should defer to the interviewee regarding the location and likelihood of unavoidable interaction with the general public during the interview (presumes familiarity of interviewee with the location and public traffic in the location). If proximity to members of the public becomes unavoidable, the interviewer should maintain what distance is possible and leave the area as soon as they can, whether the interview has been completed or not. If interviewer and interviewee are uncertain whether a suggested location is a prohibited area due to likely proximity of members of the public, queries may be sent to the chief epidemiologist.

If a journalist has plans for an interview that is not listed in the scenarios, please contact the chief epidemiologist for clarification (see application form).