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TO MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Dear Member:

THE ZIKA VIRUS

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently declared a “*public health emergency of international concern*” regarding the outbreak of the Zika virus.

This virus is transmitted in tropical regions through the bite of an infected *Aedes* mosquito, which also transmits dengue fever, chikungunya and yellow fever. Cases of the Zika virus disease have been recorded in Africa, the Americas, Asia and among Pacific island countries and territories. Outbreaks continue to spread globally. For a map and list of areas where the virus currently prevails click [here](#).

In particular, there are now an estimated 1.5 million reported cases of the Zika virus in the northeast of Brazil. With a substantial spike in infections, health authorities have observed an increase in:

- *Guillain-Barré syndrome*—a rapid onset of muscle weakness as a result of damage to the peripheral nervous system; and
- babies born with *microcephaly*—a neurodevelopmental disorder normally resulting in a significantly reduced head circumference. Agencies investigating these Zika virus outbreaks have found growing evidence of the link between the virus and microcephaly in newborn babies particularly in Brazil and French Polynesia.

It is important to note that it is also possible for the Zika virus to be transmitted via blood transfusions, sexual contact, and from mother to child in the womb.

The Zika virus: symptoms and precautions against contracting it

The incubation period of Zika virus is not certain, but is thought to be 3 to 12 days. Symptoms may be relatively mild and include fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise, and headache. They typically last for about two to seven days. Those who have contracted the virus should get plenty of rest, drink ample fluids, and treat pain and fever with general medicines. If symptoms worsen, they should seek medical care and advice. Symptoms of the virus can also go undetected.

There is presently no vaccine or targeted treatment for Zika infections. Avoiding mosquito bites in infected areas is the best preventative measure. When traveling to areas harboring the Zika virus, as well as other mosquito-borne viruses, the following precautions should be taken:

- wear long sleeve shirts and pants (preferably light colored);
- stay in an air conditioned premises with screened-in windows and doors;

- sleep under a mosquito bed net if outside;
- treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items;
- apply insect repellent as directed on product label;
- if you have contracted the Zika virus, avoid mosquito bites during the first week of illness to prevent others from also contracting the virus;
- it is also important to empty, clean or cover containers that can hold standing water such as buckets, bowls, flower pots, animal dishes, and vases, to remove places where mosquitoes can breed; and
- additional guidance on avoiding insect bites can be found [here](#).

Shipping and travel restrictions

There are currently no specified restrictions for the shipping industry as a result of the outbreak of the Zika virus. However, ships trading in the affected regions should take measures, as described above, to prevent seafarers, employees and passengers from exposure to mosquitoes which may carry the virus. Such precautions should be considered whether personnel are on board ship, on shore leave, or in transit to or from the vessels on which they are employed.

As a result of the possible causal link between the Zika virus and birth defects among the children of women who were infected while pregnant, many health organizations are now advising pregnant women, and women trying to become pregnant, to consider avoiding travel to the affected areas out of concern that the Zika virus may cause microcephaly. This advice should also be considered by women currently serving at sea who are in, or due to visit, one of the affected areas.

Your Managers recommend all Members to consult the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Travel Health Notices: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>, and take most careful preventative precautions.

Charter party clauses concerning infectious diseases

Members are reminded that the [BIMCO Infectious or Contagious Diseases Clauses for Voyage and Time Charter Parties](#) has been developed in response to severe outbreaks of virulent disease. The generic solution offered by BIMCO avoids having to write specific clauses to address individual outbreaks each time they occur.

Nevertheless, should Members have questions or concerns, they are recommended to consult the Managers in order to coordinate their efforts, obtain advice and take appropriate measures to best protect their interests.

The American Club website section on infectious diseases

Members are asked to note that all updates on the status of the Zika virus outbreak will be posted on the Club's website at:

http://www.american-club.com/page/infectious_diseases



This site also includes information on the Ebola virus disease, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) virus, and malaria. Updates on infectious disease outbreaks, any port and immigration requirements for seafarers or passengers, and all other relevant preventative guidance, will be posted to this section of the Club's website as information is made available to your Managers.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph E.M. Hughes, Chairman & CEO
Shipowners Claims Bureau, Inc., Managers for
THE AMERICAN CLUB