COUNTRY: Finland
LAST UPDATE: 07/04/2020

Restrictions
The Finnish Parliament have approved the extension of the deadline of the measures currently in force. These measures will remain applicable until 13 May 2020.

The Finnish Government is restricting traffic at external borders. Inbound passenger transport operations have been suspended, with the exception of citizens and residents returning to Finland. In this case, people returning to Finland from another country are required to quarantine for 14 days. Finnish citizens and residents are strongly advised not to travel abroad.

Preparations are currently underway to restrict the flow of traffic across the northern and western borders. Border surveillance has been increased and all passenger sea transport is now extremely limited. Freight transport is however exempt from restriction measures at Finnish ports.

From 28 March (00:00), Finnish government has closed Uusimaa region (Greater Helsinki Capital region). Thus, in practice, temporary internal border has been established to separate Uusimaa from the rest of the country.

The restrictions concern movement to and from the Uusimaa region. The movement restrictions remain in force until 19 April 2020. The purpose of the new restrictions is to prevent coronavirus (COVID-19) infections and to slow the spread of the epidemic from Uusimaa to other parts of Finland.

- Goods and freight transport services continue as usual, but some delays are possible because of the restrictions on movement. There are some 30 crossing points to and from Uusimaa, but no Green Lanes for trucks have been put in place yet. The authorities aim to ensure that heavy goods transports by road and immediate deliveries relating to them will proceed as normally and smoothly as possible.
• Public transport services will not stop. However, the use of the services has already decreased.

• Restrictions on people’s movement do not apply if movements are necessary for:
  ➢ official activities;
  ➢ travel for work, whether as an employee or as an entrepreneur or self-employed person, for studies or in connection with a societal position of trust;
  ➢ the performance of military service or any other statutory obligation;
  ➢ the need for care, risk of death or death of a family member, the right of access to a child, or for any other similar compelling personal reason.

The police will monitor compliance with the movement restrictions. At the crossings, people must provide an account of the reason of their journey.

In Finland, double-manning is allowed, provided that the recommended 1-1.5m “social distancing” rule is respected. However, the Uusimaa region has had special restrictive measures recently introduced and double-manning may be an issue when crossing the Uusimaa regional border. Authorities may not consider the second driver as a necessity, as restrictions on the movement of people crossing the regional border is being strictly enforced.

The Finnish government issued instructions to the border guards relating to which travel is allowed crossing the internal Schengen and the external borders. The following categories are distinguished: people returning Finland, people transiting through Finland on the way back to another country (Schengen, non-Schengen and third countries) and necessary cross-border work and other traffic. The latter two categories include workers (mobile and non-mobile) in the transport sector and workers commuting between two countries and are allowed to travel without restrictions. Detailed information relating to the travel conditions are available here.

On 7 April, the Finnish Government decided to prolong the validity of the temporary reintroduction of border controls at the borders and the restrictions on traffic; border controls will be performed until 13 May 2020. Related decrees will
be issued to Parliament for approval tomorrow (8 April) and are expected to be approved during this week.

Controls aim at further reducing movement at the main commuting border crossing points with Sweden, Norway and Estonia; only work travel that is strictly necessary will be permitted, and employees must carry an employer’s certificate stating that the work is essential.

Maritime passenger transport is prohibited: companies operating from Sweden, Estonia and Germany to Finland are requested to suspend the sale of tickets for ships departing on or after 11 April 2020. The provision does not apply to goods and freight transport operations.

Regarding the Åland Islands, air passenger transport is permitted only on scheduled flights from Stockholm, Helsinki and Turku to Mariehamn. Passengers travelling from Åland with the destination of mainland Finland are also permitted to travel.

People entering Finland are obliged to remain under quarantine-like conditions for 14 days. Such requirements do not apply to essential border crossings of emergency medical services and rescue service personnel or to freight transport.

Regarding traffic between Finland and non-Schengen countries (i.e. Russia), Finnish Border Guard officials allow the entry/exit of the following:

- Return to Finland: Finnish nationals and their family members; nationals of other EU and Schengen countries and their family members who are residing in Finland; third country nationals residing in Finland with residence permit.
- Returning transit traffic to other EU or Schengen countries or via them: nationals of EU and Schengen countries and their family members, third country nationals residing in another EU or Schengen country with residence permit.
- Exit of third country nationals.
- Necessary traffic, which is:
  - Healthcare and rescue service professionals/personnel, health researchers, and elderly care professionals.
➢ Transport personnel and other transport staff to the extent necessary. Companies should be aware that, despite additional controls the borders remain open and functional; previous restrictions are still in place
➢ Diplomats, staff of international organisations, military personnel and humanitarian aid workers carrying out their work.
➢ Necessary transit and return trips.
➢ Passengers travelling for imperative family reasons.
➢ Persons in need of international protection or for other humanitarian reasons.
➢ Other necessary and justified traffic (e.g. maintenance works that require a specific maintenance team or person arriving from another country and whose work cannot be postponed).

The restrictions set by Russia on the Finland-Russia border apply until 1 May 2020.

Relieves

On 26 March 2020, the Government issued a decree on extending the driving times and shortening the rest periods of drivers of buses and heavy goods vehicles due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The exemption would be applied to road transport from 27 March to 25 April 2020, allowing a shortening of the daily rest period of drivers to 9 hours and weekly rest period to 24 hours. The Government also proposes that the required minimum rest period of 45 minutes be allowed to be more freely split into periods of 15 and 30 minutes within a period of four and a half hours.

The full press release can be found here.

On 2 April, the Finnish Government issued a decree with the aim to ensure continuity of dangerous goods transport operations.

Current exceptional circumstances may make it impossible to provide training and tests related to professional qualifications in the transport of dangerous goods, or scheduled and interim inspections of tanks, or vehicle inspections for the carriage of dangerous goods. Therefore, the validity of licences, approvals and certificates which will expire in the near future can, on an exceptional basis, be further extended in 2020.
SOURCE: FinMobility, SKAL and Ministry of Transport and Communication