

Sports and recreation: Protocols for returning to operation

The following content was posted to WorkSafeBC's website on September 1, 2020. For the most current version, please visit [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

Employers may benefit from reviewing other WorkSafeBC protocols if their workplace includes other work environments including gyms and fitness centres, office space, retail services, or food and drink services. Employers must also ensure they are abiding by any orders, notices, or guidance issued by the provincial health officer, and the appropriate health authority, that are relevant to their workplace.

The protocols below provide guidance around occupational health and safety for sports and recreation activities where there are workers.

- Visit [viaSport](#) for rules and support on gameplay.
- Visit [BCRPA](#) for details on providing a safe indoor or outdoor recreation experience, and for support in accessing recreation facility use.

Developing a COVID-19 safety plan

Employers are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan that outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures they have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Employers must involve frontline workers, joint health and safety committees, and supervisors in identifying protocols for their workplace.

The COVID-19 Safety Plan follows the six steps outlined on [COVID-19 and returning to safe operation](#). You can also refer to the [COVID-19 Safety Plan OHS Guideline](#) for information about developing a safety plan, including the level of detail required and use of supporting documentation.

Employers are not required to submit plans to WorkSafeBC for approval, but in accordance with the order of the provincial health officer, this **plan must be posted** at the worksite and on their website, if they have one. During a WorkSafeBC inspection, we will ask employers about the steps they have taken to protect their workers or to see the plan if it has been developed.

One part of developing your COVID-19 Safety Plan is identifying protocols that everyone at the workplace must follow to keep workers safe. We've provided industry-specific protocols below to consider as you develop the plan for your workplace.

These protocols are not a list of requirements; however, they should be considered and implemented to the extent that they address the risks your workplace. You may need to identify and implement additional protocols if the protocols suggested here do not sufficiently address the risk to your workers.

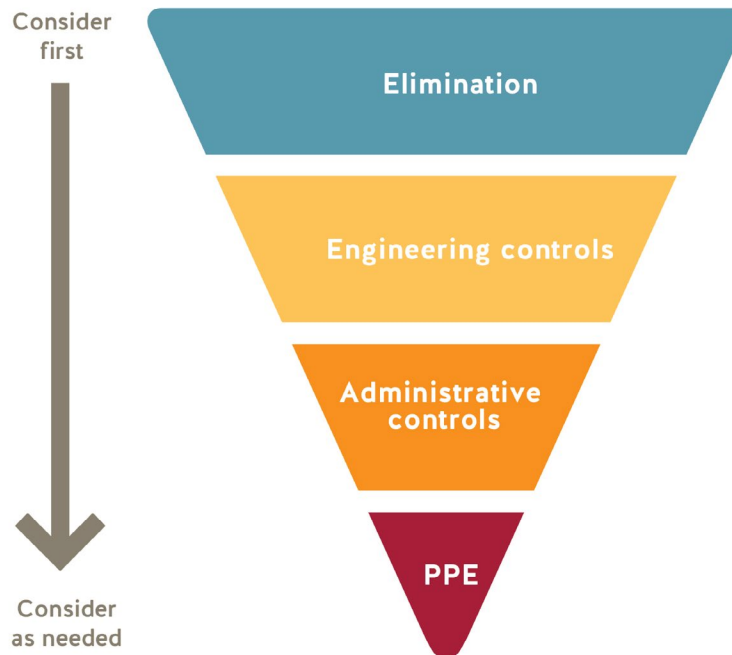
Understanding the risk

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Higher risk situations require adequate protocols to address the risk.

- The risk of person-to-person transmission is increased the closer you come to other people, the amount of time you spend near them, and the number of people you come near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.
- The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time. Effective cleaning and hygiene practices help mitigate this risk.

Selecting protocols for your workplace

Note that different protocols offer different protection. Wherever possible, use the protocols that offer the highest level of protection and add additional protocols as required.



First level protection (elimination): Use policies and procedures to keep people at a safe physical distance from one another. Limit the number of people in your workplace at any one time, and implement protocols to keep workers at least 2 metres from other workers, customers, and members of the public.

Second level protection (engineering controls): If you can't always maintain physical distancing, install barriers such as plexiglass to separate people.

Third level protection (administrative controls): Establish rules and guidelines, such as cleaning protocols, telling workers to not share tools, or implementing one-way doors or walkways.

Fourth level protection (PPE): If the first three levels of protection aren't enough to control the risk, consider the use of masks. Ensure masks are selected and cared for appropriately and that workers are using masks correctly.

Protocols for sports and recreation

General facility considerations

- Post signage to the facility to clearly communicate your policies on who can be at the workplace, which includes following the guidance of the provincial health officer and the BC CDC around self-isolation:
 - » Anyone who has had symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 10 days must self-isolate at home.
 - » Anyone under the direction of the provincial health officer to self-isolate must follow those instructions.
 - » Anyone who has arrived from outside of Canada must self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- Facility owners and management must review expectations including roles and responsibilities with sport and user groups (provincial and local sports organization) to ensure safe use of spaces and adequate safety plans are in place. This should include clear guidance on the use of park spaces and equipment, including cleaning, disinfecting and storage of publicly available sporting equipment and facilities.
- Establish and post occupancy limits for the facility (patrons and staff) to accommodate physical distancing of 2 metres between individuals or family groups/units. The COVID-19 Safety Plan contains guidance about calculating an occupancy limit.
- Arrange spectator areas so that standing and seating areas provide at least 2 metres of physical distancing to be maintained between people. Note that the provincial health officer's order prohibiting mass gatherings applies to the fans and spectators at sporting events. In an arena with multiple areas of play, the order would apply to each area of play, not the facility as a whole. Players would typically not be included in the calculation since they are physically separated from fans and spectators.
- Post occupancy limits for shared work spaces such as break rooms and utility rooms. Consider rearranging these rooms to support the occupancy limit (for example, consider removing tables or chairs from break rooms).
- Ensure physical distancing can be maintained between workers, participants and the public throughout the workplace including the front desk, kiosks and rental shops. The configuration of some workplaces will not allow for physical distancing to be maintained – for example, the width of some reception desks will not ensure adequate distance. In these cases, consider other ways of maintaining distance, such as tape on the floor to indicate where guests should stand, or install a physical barrier to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Install physical markers on the floor, walls or other (cones, lines, stickers, wooden structures, etc.) that indicate appropriate 2 metre spacing distances for patrons waiting in line. If appropriate to the layout of the facility, consider implementing one-way hallways to reduce congestion.
- Implement hand hygiene policies and ensure they are communicated throughout the facility. Ensure handwashing or hand sanitizing stations are available throughout the facility.
- Provide clear and consistent signage/messaging for public and staff throughout the facility regarding COVID-19 transmission mitigation policies and procedures. Consider posting in languages other than English and/or communicating in other manners to accommodate visual and hearing impairments.
- Adjust emergency evacuation procedures and mustering arrangements to support physical distancing requirements in the case of building evacuation, fire etc.

- Some customers will need to pay with cash. For customers using credit cards and loyalty cards, have the customers scan or tap their cards and handle the card readers themselves where possible. Establish hygiene practices that include washing or sanitizing hands after handling cash or cards handled by the public.
- Where appropriate, consider propping open doors or installing motion sensors to reduce the need to touch door handles. Ensure fire code provisions are observed. If a pool is onsite, ensure none of the doors to the secure pool enclosure are propped open.
- Delivery personnel/suppliers should drop off goods at a designated delivery location. Limit the exchange of paperwork; use electronic signatures on contracts or delivery forms.

Staffing

General

- Clearly communicate policies to ensure workers understand who can be at the workplace, which includes following the guidance of the provincial health officer and the BC CDC around self-isolation:
 - » anyone who has had symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 10 days must self-isolate at home; symptoms include fever, chills, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and new muscle aches or headache.
 - » anyone under the direction of the provincial health officer to self-isolate must follow those instructions.
 - » anyone who has arrived from outside of Canada, or who is a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- If the employer operates multiple facilities, identify staff who work at different locations and consider methods to eliminate or reduce travel between sites.
- Where appropriate, create small work “pods” or crews that work together exclusively to minimize the number of interactions. Keep crews consistent across work shifts.

Instructors, coaches, and referees

- Refer to viaSport for guidance on gameplay and follow any related protocols.
- Employers should have COVID-19 related protocols for coaches that includes the management of physical distance with athletes and members of the public.
- Instructors, coaches, and referees should wash or sanitize their hands at the start and end of shift and after taking breaks.
- Avoid drop-in lessons and keep the same group of athletes together for sessions in order to minimize turnover of learners.
- Physical distance of at least 2 metres between each athlete and coaches should be maintained.
- Coaching sessions and refereeing should be conducted in a manner that avoids touching clients. Consider using verbal cues while coaching or using technology to share instructional material and practice plans.
- For activities involving direct contact, ensure that hand hygiene is practiced using an alcohol-based hand rub or handwashing before and after contact.
- In situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained and workers have frequent contact with the public, consider the use of masks. Ensure workers understand proper use of masks. Ensure garbage cans are available for the disposal of masks.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- Develop a cleaning and disinfecting plan that includes high-touchpoint areas and surfaces including washrooms, change rooms, showers, vending machines, key pads, bank machines, shared computers and other office equipment, and POS locations, as well as common switches, door handles, pay phone or public access phones, indoor furnishings, and rental equipment. Remove non-essential items (magazines, newspapers, toys) from common areas to facilitate cleaning.
- Develop and provide staff with training on cleaning plans and offer checklists outlining protocols and frequency.
- Personal protective equipment (e.g., mask, face shield, gloves and goggles, etc.) for workers conducting regular facility maintenance duties are not mandatory unless normally required for safety reasons.
- Control use of equipment to one group of users at a time and clean and disinfect between use.

First aid and emergencies

- Communicate that physical distancing remains a key control for preventing the spread of the virus.
- First aid attendants should follow OFAA protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- See Pools section below for more information on lifeguarding.

Ice sheets and rinks

- If your facility is being reopened after a period of inactivity, ensure that all mechanical systems (including any relevant toxic process gas) are maintained, restarted properly, and operated in good condition.
- If bracelets (wristbands) are required, ask patrons to put them on themselves.
- Arrange spectator areas so that standing and seating areas provide at least 2 metres distance between patrons.
- Do not allow sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect or that are meant to come in contact with the face. Ensure that any play equipment used in skating lessons is cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Each worker should have their own equipment needed for each shift (e.g., radio, first aid fanny packs). Staff should not share helmets.
- Consider new paint lines or dots on the ice to support new rules of sport and encourage distancing requirements.
- Ensure staff are instructed to wash their hands after assisting someone on the ice.
- For ice rinks, additional shared equipment or touchpoints might include: Zamboni steering wheels and controls, spuder, shovels, hose and water valves, ice resurfacer, ice edger, tools shop, refrigeration control room, hockey nets, learn-to-skate equipment, timekeeper equipment (counters and score console) and music players.
- Rental equipment such as skates and helmets must be disinfected between users.
- Ensure ventilation systems are functioning as designed.

Pools

- There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through pool water. Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (e.g., with chlorine and bromine) of pools and hot tubs spas should inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19. Appropriate care should be taken, both in and outside the pool, to protect yourself and others.
- There is no special disinfection procedures to put in place for all equipment that are regularly in contact with chlorinated pool water (e.g., toys, railings, slides, etc.). Equipment that has been in contact with fresh or ocean water should be sanitized regularly.
- Control risks of water-related bacterial disease such as Legionnaires' disease due to prolonged shut down of water systems including drinking fountains, decorative fountains, hot tubs, steam rooms, etc.
- If your facility is recently returning to operation, ensure that all mechanical systems (including recirculation, filtration, and disinfection systems) are maintained, restarted properly, and operated in good condition.
- If bracelets (wrist bands) are required, ask patrons to put them on themselves.
- Do not allow sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect or that are meant to come in contact with the face (e.g., goggles, nose clips, and snorkels).
- Place physical markers on the floor or walls (cones, lines, stickers, wooden structures, etc.) that indicate appropriate two-metre spacing distances for patrons waiting in line. If appropriate to the layout of the facility, consider implementing one-way hallways to reduce congestion. Markings on pool decks must not create a slipping hazard (e.g., no slippery tape) and must not obstruct safety signs (e.g., depth marks, no diving). Care must be taken not to confuse distancing signage with depth marking signage.
- Ensure that the pool apron is sprayed down regularly.
- Lifeguards should have their own personal equipment needed for each shift (e.g., rescue tube, first aid fanny packs). Clean and disinfect rescue equipment (e.g., rescue tube, rescue can, rescue pole, ring buoys) at the end of the day or during an exchange between lifeguards.
- For diving boards, waterslides, rope swings, wading pools and splash pads, install physical markers on the floor or walls (e.g., lines, stickers, cones, etc.) to indicate the distance of 2 metres between patrons in lines.
- Personal Protective Equipment (e.g., mask, face shield, gloves & goggles etc.) for workers conducting regular pool maintenance duties are not mandatory unless normally required for safety reasons (e.g., when handling pool chemicals).

Lifeguarding

- Communicate that physical distancing requirements still remain.
- Specific protocols should be developed for all rescues to ensure lifeguard interventions are not a source COVID-19 transmission.
- Refer to Lifesaving Society BC/Yukon Staff Resuscitation & First Aid Recommendations.
- First aid attendants should follow OFAA protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Related links

See the following links for additional information, guidance, or resources that may assist you in the development of your plan.

- Vancouver Coastal Health Guideline for Swimming Pools
- Recreation Facilities Association
- viaSport
- BC Recreation and Parks Association
- Lifesaving Society

For more information

The information on this page is based on current recommendations and may change. For the latest guidance, please see the health information from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control and the latest news from the government of British Columbia.

If you have a question or concern

Workers and employers with questions or concerns about workplace exposure to COVID-19 can call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland (toll-free within B.C. at 1.888.621.SAFE). You'll be able to speak to a prevention officer to get answers to your questions, and if required, a prevention officer will be assigned to assess the health and safety risk at your workplace.

Translated resources

Our key COVID-19 related resources are also available in Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), French, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.