

Operational Guidelines and Safety Plan for COVID-19

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1. Objectives

- **Prevent transmission**
- **Protect vulnerable populations**
- **Enjoy a safe trip**

2. Viral Transmission Principles

- You can become infected by being exposed to an infectious dose of viral particles through airborne droplets or from touching surfaces and then introducing the virus to your body nasally, orally or by touching mucosal membranes (eyes, nose, mouth)
- The infectious dose is a minimum density of viral particles that can be produced by breathing in, or touching mucosal membranes with, a small amount or short time exposure to high density particles, a large amount or long exposure to low density particles or anything in between.
- The best ways to protect yourself are by not exposing yourself to potential sources (keeping your distance, wearing protective garments, washing your hands far more regularly than you normally would and not touching your face).
- Minimizing the time you spend in proximity to a potential source is secondarily effective.
- The density of viral particles is lower in regions with large air volumes, such as the outdoors. While the risk of becoming infected outdoors (unless an infected person sneezes or coughs in your face) may be lower, it is wise to keep necessary exposure time very short.

3. Guiding Philosophy

- Small groups (1:6 guide to client ratio for backpacking, 1:8 guide to client ratio for day hiking).
- Participants are self-sufficient (avoid sharing items and surfaces).
- Precautions taken to limit potential viral spread (education, physical distancing, hand hygiene, masks).

4. Foundational Decision-Making Principles

- Maintain provincially recommended physical distancing or don appropriate PPE when you find yourself in a situation where you can't comply.
- Everyone in the group should adhere to provincial travel recommendations.
- Consider whether participants are members of the same household or social cohort when determining group sizes.
- Scale back the seriousness of your objective enough to allow you to follow the guidelines and to reduce the possibility of the need for close contact first aid or external rescue.
- Choose routes and/or activities that minimize transfer of gear.
- Avoid crowded areas or popular routes.
- If you need to make a rapid retreat due to an emergent situation, speed trumps the potential transmission of the virus. The immediate safety of your clients is priority one; preventing possible contagion is lower on the list.
- Limit shared transportation, shared accommodation, shared meals, and shared equipment as much as possible.

5. Best Practices

5.1 Pre-trip Communications

- Inform clients that you are taking precautions to limit potential viral spread.
- Describe those precautions depending on the state of pandemic at the time.
- Inform clients that the waiver has changed and that they need to read it over to ensure they understand and acknowledge those changes.
- Require clients to sign a declaration of health and exposure. You should limit participation to those who can attest to being well, to not having been exposed to anyone who is sick, and to not having experienced any COVID-19 symptoms within the 14 days prior to commencement of trip.
- You may also choose to increase the stringency of your screening by limiting participation to lower risk demographics.
- All payments should be digital.
- Inform clients of any changes to your cancellation/refund policies.
- If you have chosen to reduce the overall level of risk on a trip, describe why.
- If a client chooses his/her own front-country accommodation, ask that he/she vet their viral mitigation procedures before booking.
- Inform clients that agreement to come on the trip indicates agreement to abide by the mitigation procedures.
- Inform clients that despite all precautions, one or more may still contract the virus.

5.2 Pre-trip Meeting

- Hold the meeting virtually or find a space where communication is easily done while respecting physical distancing guidelines.
- Discuss in detail the pandemic-related mitigation you are instituting on the trip.
- Review emergency protocols specific to viral mitigation – see First Aid and Emergency Response.
- Review limits to risk exposure and requirement for consultation before increasing the limit.

5.3 Group Hygiene

- Have alcohol-based hand sanitizer on hand at all times.
- Provide sanitizer to clients during meals or other rest stops; if clients have their own supply and it is as effective as yours, require them to use it during these times.
- Require that clients do not engage in physical contact unless they are residents of the same household.
- Require that clients do not pass around food or beverage to one another unless they are residents of the same household.

5.4 Transportation

- Clients should arrive at the staging area in their own vehicles or having been dropped off, and with an expectation to be picked up, by a resident of their household.

5.5 Front Country Accommodation

- Ensure that disinfection standards of accommodation meet your needs.
- Ensure that alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available in each room/campsite.
- Ensure that clients from different households have their own rooms/campsites.
- Ensure that there is adequate space for physical distancing in common rooms/campsites.

5.6 Backcountry Campsites

- Ensure tents are occupied by one person or members of the same household during times of elevated risk of viral spread.
- Ensure tents are pitched at least four meters apart – this will help prevent accidental contact.

5.7 Rest Stops and Meals

- Maintain appropriate distancing at all rest stops and meal locations. Be vigilant as it is human nature to want to be closer to adventure-mates, especially if weather is inclement.
- Ensure that food and beverage is not passed from person to person except among members of the same household.

5.8 High Winds

- Because wind can carry droplets, you can reduce the chances of viral spread during windy conditions by increasing your physical distancing or by donning masks.

5.9 Passing Others on Trails

- Narrow trails present contact and distancing challenges for people trying to pass one another.
- Where possible, communicate with the approaching person or group and decide on who will move safely off the trail until the others have gone by.
- If it is unsafe to keep a two-meter spread, move as far as is safely possible and ensure the passing party moves by quickly and with no physical contact.

5.10 First Aid and Emergency Response

- Carry additional masks and gloves in the first aid kit.
- Use approved masks, gloves and eye protection for all first aid applications.
- Dispose of mask and gloves after use.
- If rescue is required, ensure the victim is masked.

5.11 Post-trip Communication

- In feedback sessions or forms, ask clients whether they felt adequately protected from viral infection and whether the modified best practices negatively impacted their experience.

5.12 Instructional Settings

Best practices are similar to above with the following changes:

- Use online teaching where possible
- Book classrooms that are large enough to allow appropriate physical distancing
- Ensure classroom has been properly disinfected
- Field demonstrations must allow for appropriate distancing

6. References

6.1 ACMG Members Return to Work - Documents and Practices

- [Suggested COVID-19-related Best Practices for Phased Return to Work for ACMG Members](#)
- [COVID-19 and Communicable Disease Prevention](#)

6.2 BC's Restart Plan

- [BC's Restart: A plan to bring us back together](#)