
COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS for Restarting Swimming Pool Operations

JUNE 18, 2020

Developed by
BC RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION and
RECREATION FACILITIES ASSOCIATION OF BC



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I. PANDEMIC SIGNAGE GUIDE

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1 INTRODUCTION

COVID signage has become commonplace, and serves to encourage modified behaviour in public spaces in order to limit the spread of the virus. This document offers signage strategy to help you provide important information without overdoing or underdoing it.

2 GOALS OF THE GUIDELINES

- ▶ Suggestions for signs in employee and public spaces to communicate important information about COVID-19;
- ▶ Provide critical information, in addition to rules and regulations, in a brief and effective manner;
- ▶ Signage to help you discharge your duty to warn by making participants aware of the risks they face.

3

SIGN OBJECTIVES

1. Letting people know what is expected of them.

Example:

- Wash hands frequently and do not touch your face.
- Practice physical distancing (2 m / 6 ft).
- Do not enter if you are sick or have symptoms. Stay home.

2. Letting people know what they can expect of you.

Example:

- This washroom is cleaned once per day.
- This playground is not supervised.
- Staff are not trained to screen patrons.

3. Letting people know what they can expect from your facility.

Example:

- Maximum occupancy of area.
- Surfaces have not been disinfected.
- Changerooms are closed. Please arrive ready to participate.

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SIGN USE CONSIDERATIONS

- Place signs at entrances telling anyone entering not to enter if they are feeling ill.
- Post physical distancing signs in common areas.
- Post hand washing signs in washrooms and changing rooms.
- Post signage indicating the new reduced bather load(s) where applicable.
- Ensure signs contain clear language that is easy to understand.
- Do not put too much information on any one sign.
- Be creative and enhance adherence and retention by including levity, diagrams and pictures.
- Use signs as a way to support/reflect your community dynamic and your recreation site culture.
- Include your logo, as well as contact information if there is a problem with the facility.
- Be aware of signage fatigue; the more signs you post, the less effective they may be. Follow the adage “less is more”.
- When changes happen that require new signage, make it different looking so that regular patrons pay attention.
- Inspect and maintain signage; replace missing or damaged signs.

5 POOL SIGNAGE SUGGESTIONS

General Information

- Do not use the pool if you are sick or feel unwell.
- Everyone must wash hands when entering the pool area with liquid soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Shower before and after using the pool.
- Do not spit or blow your nose into the water.
- Practice physical distancing by keeping 2 meters from one another.
- Chlorinated pool water is an effective disinfectant and the risk of transmission from contact with properly treated pool water is considered minimal. <Salt water and ozone pools are also chlorinated. (Alberta)>

Washrooms

- Only < occupancy limit-ex: 3> people allowed in the washroom at one time (young children may be accompanied by an adult).
- People in queue must maintain social distancing (2 m / 6 ft).
- This washroom is cleaned < # daily cleanings – ex: once per day>.
- Avoid touching surfaces unnecessarily.
- If anything in the washroom is not functioning properly or if supplies are depleted, please call <phone number> and use an alternative washroom.

SAMPLE SIGN AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE FACILITY

Welcome Back!

Please be aware that we have developed policies and procedures to minimize the risk COVID-19 poses to the health of our employees, and to our patrons. For your safety and those around you, these procedures must be followed, or you will be asked to leave the facility. Have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Can the COVID-19 virus spread through pool water?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the 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. (insert Local Health Authority)

6 RESOURCE WEBSITES

- ▶ **Government of Canada**
[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Awareness Resources](#)
- ▶ **BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)**
[COVID-19 Resources At a Glance](#)
[COVID-19 Signage and Posters](#)
- ▶ **WorkSafe BC**
[Various posters and signs](#)

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SWIMMING POOL

PATRON FLOW AND CAPACITY

When planning operational considerations to re-opening your aquatic facility, the capacity of your space to accommodate a 2-metre distance between patrons is well documented in the [BCRPA Recreation and Parks Sector Guideline for Restarting Operations](#). The Guideline does not cover details and tools, such as the consideration for bather load.

This Swimming Pool Patron Flow and Capacity guide, a joint project of BCRPA and RFABC, offers some considerations for municipal aquatic facility re-opening operations. The items in this section come as our well-informed recommendations and considerations from the joint working group of ten professionals from both organizations. Some of the points listed are intended to be incorporated into your pre-planning check list to ensure your spaces, such as change rooms and showers, do not become too challenging to manage.

FLOW

When conducting a facility assessment, look at your spaces through a 2-metre physical distancing lens. Review how people flow and move around your building. Involve all front-line staff when appropriate to assist with risk assessment.

Facilities have passage points such as hallways and corners that may take some creative solutions to manage or which can be converted to one-way flow spaces. In many cases, it will be impossible to avoid breaching the 2-metre distance because of the layout of your facility. Provincial Health Officer Dr. Henry has noted that passing by a person in these transitory spaces comes with an infinitesimal risk of transmission.

Tips:

- Look at marking your spaces to limit sharp corners. Consider mirrors or barriers that would encourage people to go wide and so they can see down hallways before turning a corner.
- When possible, try to make the flow of your facility directional. Having people double back around the outside of a building is something to consider to limit passing side by side.
- Consider posting 'no stopping zones' and "please wait your turn" in places you cannot avoid having 2-way traffic flow.
- Consider posting a reminder to not linger in spaces that can't provide 2-metre separation.
- Remove the obstacles that could create a choke point. Simple re-organization of lobby furniture could limit the challenges with choke points and flow in your facility.
- Emergency management plans – ensuring any modifications to evacuation points do not hinder evacuations if you are using these spaces as make-shift exits.
- Using an Access and Ticketing application (a list of options is appended) may assist to reduce congesting and decrease queuing.

2 CAPACITY CONSIDERATIONS OR BATHER LOAD

There are two primary documents that speak to *occupancy rates* – the [BCRPA Recreation and Park Sector Guideline for Restarting Operations \(The Guideline\)](#), and the [LifeSaving Society Guidelines for Reopening BC & Yukon Pools and Waterfronts \(LSS Guidelines\)](#). The [Regional Health Authorities Guideline for Swimming Pools](#) (RHA Guideline) offers important information and tips on ensuring adequate space for people, and adhering to the 2-metre distancing requirement, but does not provide pool capacity calculations.

When determining the bather load capacity, you must remember the rule of 2m distance between patrons. To determine your overall bather load you should use the rule of thumb of 5m² per person in the pool and throughout the aquatic facility. For length swimming the RHA Guideline recommends consistent 2 metre spacing or a maximum of 7 people per 25m lane. See the chart on page 12 as a guideline for the specific areas in the pool facility.

The bather load will be constrained by the facility's pinch points such as change room and shower capacity.

Health Inspection Note: Two metres between patrons must be observed to the extent it is possible, as cited in the RHA Guidelines and the [BCRPA Guideline](#). Your pool will continue to be inspected by your local health inspector, and they will be looking for your COVID Safety protocols. Health inspectors are employed by regional health authorities and they will follow the RHA Pool Guide; this has been confirmed with the Director of the Provincial Health Protection program.

CHANGE ROOMS AND SHOWERS

Closing change rooms is not recommended by this task force; people need access to safe storage of their belonging. Closing showers is not an option as showering before and after pool use is required by the Ministry of Health. However, change rooms and showers are natural choke points and must be strategically thought out in how to manage the occupancy load to ensure physical distancing measures are in place. The BCRPA recommends one metre radius per person, which can be calculated as 3m² of space per person in the space. This calculation is for unencumbered space.

Provincial Health has stated that transitory crossing of individuals within a 2-metre choke point is acceptable as long as it is in passing and not prolonged.

Tips:

- If you are considering closing change rooms, first review all your pre-COVID health guidelines that provide rationale on why you should keep these spaces open.
- To allow for physical distancing, you may need to remove some lockers from use, and label one-way movement to direct changing room flow.
- Encourage patrons to come prepared and suited up to keep people moving quickly through change rooms.
- Showers must not be closed: RHA Guidelines requires that bathers shower before entering the pool and on leaving the pool. This is to ensure the pool water is not contaminated, and that good water quality may be maintained
- Like other aspects of your facility, provide signage on your sanitization schedule.

POOL AREA

Each Tank needs to be evaluated for the type of activity that will be occurring in it. Using the LSS guidelines of how to set up successful lane swimming is recommended, and adhering to the RHA Guideline of no more than 7 swimmers per 25m lane.

Where aquafit, water walking, or other vigorous activity is occurring in a tank, BCRPA recommends 5m² to allow people to move appropriately and safely in the space.

Hot Tubs are another choke point and the RHA and the LSS guidelines of 2m separation must be adhered to. It is the responsibility of the facility operator to lay out a plan that meets this guideline.

Auxiliary areas where physical distancing is difficult or impossible should remain closed (e.g. saunas, steam rooms, exercise areas), according to the RHA Guidelines.

Specifics	Comments / Details	Definition / Clarity	Support / Resources
<p>Dry area occupancy: 2 metre distance between people for common areas including the pool deck assume 5m² per person</p>	<p>Determine your dry area square meters of unencumbered space.</p> <p>Ensure change rooms and line-up areas have 2 metre distance markings.</p>	<p>To determine occupancies in spaces you must divide the unencumbered square metres of the room by 3 for low activity (queueing), and by 5 for high activity (aquafit).</p>	<p>Source: BCRPA Sector Guideline for Restarting Operations.</p>
<p>In Pool occupancy: Allow 2 metre bubble per person; no more than 7 swimmers per lane (25m lanes), and 5m² per person for other water surface area.</p>	<p>You must balance the occupancy of your pool with the ability to move people through your change room and showers while maintaining a 2m bubble.</p> <p>Scheduled swims will be key to meeting the intent of the guidelines in maintaining physical distance and maximizing the pool occupancy.</p>	<p>Calculate the square metres of the surface of the water in each of your pool tanks and that will determine your maximum bather load. Note that LSS suggests a slightly lower bather load.</p> <p>Follow the Regional Health Authority, BCRPA, and LSS guides in order to incrementally restore activity.</p>	<p>Refer to the Regional Health Authorities' Guideline for Swimming Pools (June 3), and LifeSaving Society Reopening Pools and Waterfronts.</p>
<p>Public Health Order on Mass Gatherings: This is specifically for "social events" and not regular activity. An event is where a cohort of participants gathers together for one purpose (e.g. swim meet, birthday party).</p>	<p>Regular activity in recreational spaces is not defined as a social event, and is not restricted to 50 participants.</p> <p>Facilities can accommodate more than 50 participants in multiple areas of their facilities based on 5m² per person and the ability to maintaining appropriate physical distancing.</p>	<p>Facilities may host Mass Gathering Events if the cohort is 50 or fewer, provides the municipality with a COVID-19 safety plan, and can ensure physical distancing. This event could be a swim meet, birthday party, etc.</p>	<p>Public Health Order – Mass Gathering Events.</p>
<p>Capacity of Spas/Hot tubs: Must ensure 2 metre distancing.</p>	<p>Hot Tubs with a diameter of less than 2 m should only be used by one person or family unit at a time.</p>	<p>For many hot tubs 2m distance between people isn't possible; facilities may choose to close them rather than have a one person limit.</p>	<p>Regional Health Authorities' Guideline for Swimming Pools (June 3)</p>

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FOR RESTARTING SWIMMING POOL OPERATIONS

III. SWIMMING POOL HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

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1 CONSIDERATIONS TO DEVELOP A SITE-SPECIFIC APPROACH

The BCRPA and RFABC joint task force on swimming pool reopening operations recognizes that providing first aid response in aquatic settings during COVID-19 comes with challenges.

Using guidelines provided by [The Regional Health Authorities/Ministry of Health/BCCDC](#), [The LifeSaving Society - BC & Yukon](#), [The Canadian Red Cross – BC & Yukon](#), and [WorkSafe BC](#), our joint task force developed a framework to assist with establishing policies for your location.

Every aquatic site has individual characteristics, and this framework will assist you in determining your site-specific approach.

Potential Risk: Exposure through being in close proximity to other employees		Protocols to be implemented (if required):
Identify locations where employees gather (break rooms, meeting rooms, etc.):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff lunch room • Meeting rooms • Guard room • Control rooms/first aid rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotation of Breaks • Limit participants • Set Limits and guidelines to over ride those limits where necessary (first aid room). • Physical Distancing Guidelines, communications & signage • Handwashing guidelines, facilities communications & signage • Occupancy Limits set and posted
Identify job tasks and processes where workers are close to one another:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OFA Attendants • Lifeguards • Staff Training • Instructors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design workloads to avoid close proximity. • Physical Distancing Guidelines, communications & signage • Handwashing guidelines, facilities communications & signage
During a life saving event is it expected staff work in teams?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate appropriate duties in advance for team members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design scenarios to better understand divided roles to enhance physical distance.
While working closely together is staff PPE always required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine preferred PPE and require it always while on duty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment should take into account ease of use, longevity, cost and effectiveness. Extras should be readily available.
Will staffing allow for breaks for personal hygiene?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure staff are moving to wash their hands regularly at intervals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still the number one way to limit transmission. Sink with soap preferred.
Conversation can lead to closer contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove background noise and enhance sound quality where able. • Work on non-verbal communication in training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure sound deadening devices are working correctly. • Limit music and other noise from space. • Hand signal use. • Make use of whistles and other devices for alerts.
Status of all staff during work hours should be known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sickness • Allergies • Pre-existing Conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checks can be done daily to inform staff members. • Share new info immediately.
Determine safe disinfectant for use in sterilization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSDS understanding • Effective sanitizer • Policy for use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use government standards in choosing products.
Trained Staff in best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSS • Red Cross • Worksafe • Facility Policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Links above

Potential Risk: Exposure through contact with tools, machinery and equipment		Protocols to be implemented (if required):
Identify tools, machinery and equipment that workers share while working:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine shared and not shared lists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train for appropriate use.
Some life saving gear must be shared.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where appropriate – disinfect life saving gear after every use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disinfect any gear used including spaces and equipment as simple as chairs. Allow for longer care time.
PPE should not be shared.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal PPE is specific to users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget for all staff to carry and be responsible for their own gear.
Shared resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove hard copy sharing where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Soft copies where possible. Post Worksafe and H & S information online or by email.
Assess toys, slide and equipment for use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce points of contact from equipment use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider restricting equipment to reduce shared contact.
Types of PPE to use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not specifically defined by governing bodies. 	<p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks - Cloth is reusable for staff Paper can be used for patrons (Several may be needed for one Patient during one incident).

Potential Risk: Exposure through interaction with / being in close proximity to members of the public		Protocols to be implemented (if required):
Identify job tasks and processes where workers are in close proximity to members of the public:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor • Life Guard • Fitness Instructor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing class size • Communications posted requesting sick individuals to not attend sites • No drop in activities - registration required for program and facility use • Line up queues created with physical distancing markers • Signage reminding public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to stay home if sick • Washing hands when they arrive • Maintain physical distance
Identify what materials may be exchanged during these job tasks and processes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paperwork • Locker tokens • Program equipment • First aid supplies 	
Reduce interaction with observers and caregivers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict access. • Determine what can be communicated through email text or phone. • Keep distance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create systems that can operate outside the natatorium to enhance communication. • Signage. • Education before program use.
Status of all patrons should be known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sickness • Allergies • Pre-existing Conditions 	
Keep distance while in a rescue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Life Hook • 2. Rope & Buoy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From LSS - "At all times, rescuers should use the lowest risk rescue possible given the situation. Rescues that allow for a quick response and recovery while maintaining physical distancing should be encouraged."

Potential Risk: Exposure through contact with “high-touch” surfaces		Protocols to be implemented (if required):
Identify surfaces that people touch often (doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, etc):	Determine new standards and policies around: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinets and other storage with communal access requirements 2. Change room door 3. Kitchen appliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications posted requesting sick individuals to not attend sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cleaning • Spray and paper towels available • Occupancy limits posted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cleaning • Spray and paper towels available • Increased cleaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spray and paper towels available

Other Potential Risks:		Protocols to be implemented (if required):
	Staff training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing size • Virtual Training • Ongoing communication with staff

2 RESOURCE WEBSITES

- ▶ **The LifeSaving Society – BC & Yukon**
[Staff Training](#)
[First Aid](#)
- ▶ **Canadian Red Cross – BC & Yukon**
[First Aid](#)
- ▶ **WorkSafe BC**
[First Aid](#)