



**Guidelines for Re-Opening and Operating Community Visitor Centres
During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Prepared for Members of the Visitor Services Network Program
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1.0 Introduction

This document provides guidance to Visitor Centre Managers and Visitor Services Network Sponsor Organizations in planning for opening/re-opening and operating community visitor services to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

It is important to note that, Visitor Centres were never ordered to close their physical locations in 2020 but elected to do so in accordance with advice from the Provincial Health Officer to “stay home”. As was the case last year, it remains up to the sponsor organization whether a Visitor Centre will open/re-open for the 2021 season. However, it is imperative that, **if the decision to open is made, it be done in compliance with the current guidelines put forward by the Provincial Health Officer and WorkSafeBC.**

In June 2020, in an effort to assist Visitor Centres through the process of ensuring a safe re-opening, Destination BC brought together information from WorkSafeBC, the Office of the Public Health Officer (as of May 14, 2020), and the BC Centre for Disease Control on behalf of the Visitor Services Network, in this Re-Opening and Operating document, which has been revised in January 2021. The procedures and directives outlined within this document were not developed by Destination BC. Should guidelines change, this document will be updated, and communicated to Network members.

2.0 Directive Authorities

Provincial Health Officer

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) is the senior public health official for BC, responsible for monitoring the health of the population across the province and providing independent advice to public officials on public health issues.

To limit the spread of COVID-19, the PHO has issued orders that impact the hospitality and tourism industry. While there was no order issued regarding Visitor Centres, it is important to understand those issued for related industries. **Please note the Order Issued on May 14, 2020 titled [Workplace COVID-19 Safety Plans](#)**; in particular Section F. (i) and (ii). You can find all orders [here](#).

WorkSafeBC

WorkSafeBC is the provincial agency dedicated to promoting safe and healthy workplaces across BC. They partner with workers and employers to prevent work-related injury, disease, and disability. They help businesses meet their obligations under the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Employers in BC have an obligation under the *Workers Compensation Act* to ensure the health and safety of workers at their workplace, and places where work is being done. With respect to COVID-19, this obligation includes protecting workers by following the orders of the [PHO](#), and guidance provided by the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#). In addition, employers must implement policies and procedures to protect workers from the risk of exposure to COVID-19, including requirements for employers to develop and post a COVID-19 Safety Plan.

BC Centre for Disease Control:

The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) provides health promotion and prevention services, analytical and policy support to government and health authorities, and diagnostic and treatment

services to reduce communicable and chronic disease, preventable injury, and environmental health risks.

3.0 Phased Approach to Reopening BC Businesses – The Need for a Plan

On May 6, 2020, Premier John Horgan [announced](#) a phased approach for reopening BC businesses and has since implemented the [BC Restart Plan](#). The plan recognizes the need to balance the management of the virus' transmission and demands on our health care system, with the work of rebuilding our economy and social fabric in our communities.

For organizations that are reopening or have reopened, the PHO has highlighted three things: processes to open safely, measures to keep people safe to avoid further outbreaks, and a plan in the event that a case or an outbreak should occur.

WorkSafeBC has partnered with the Province on this initiative and has indicated that, as employers begin to reopen and resume operations, they must **develop a plan** that reduces the risk of exposure. Individual businesses, including Visitor Centres, will not be required to submit COVID-19 mitigation plans to WorkSafeBC, but are required to **“post a copy of your COVID-19 Safety Plan on your website, if you have one, and at your workplace so that it is readily available for review by workers, other persons who may attend at the workplace to provide services and members of the public”, and “provide a copy of your COVID-19 Safety Plan to a health officer or a WorkSafeBC officer, on request.”** (Section F of the [May 14, 2020 PHO Order](#))

A key part of this plan is for employers to conduct a **risk assessment** specific to your workplace, assessing all areas of work and implementing relevant controls. Another key element of the safety plan is the inclusion of **provisions for reviewing and adjusting** the plan if needed. Compliance with these plans will be enforced by random checks, and an investigation of complaints, by Public Health and WorkSafeBC.

3.1 WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plan

WorkSafeBC has developed a [six-step process](#) for developing your COVID-19 Safety Plan which you may use to guide you through this important and necessary step prior to reopening. Each step has checklists with items you need to address before resuming operations.

3.2 WorkSafeBC General Guide on COVID-19 and Returning to a Safe Operation

WorkSafeBC has developed a [general guide on COVID-19 and returning to a safe operation](#) to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, as business operations resume.

It is **imperative** that employers develop policies to manage your workplace, including policies around who can be at the workplace, how to address illness that arise at your workplace, and how workers can be kept safe in adjusted working conditions. This includes the training and supervision of workers regarding these new standards and protocols. The PHO and the BC Centre for Disease Control have issued the following guidance around self-isolation, which must be reflected in your policies:

- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing, must self-isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days.
- Anyone under the direction of the PHO to self-isolate must follow those instructions.
- Anyone that has arrived from outside Canada, or who has been in contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

3.3 BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool

The [BC COVID-19 Self- Assessment Tool](#) is available for anyone that develops symptoms and can be used to help determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19.

3.4 WorkSafeBC Guide to reducing the Risk of COVID-19

Steps to help you develop a plan to ensure you are minimizing the risk of COVID-19 appropriately and that your Visitor Centre can operate safely are noted in [WorkSafeBC's guide to reducing the risk of COVID-19](#).

Please read this guide very carefully as it contains information about:

1. Assessing the risk at your workplace;
2. Implementing measures to reduce the risk (i.e.: cleanliness and hygiene, maintaining physical distance);
3. Developing policies (i.e.: self-isolation, sick workers etc.);
4. Creating communication plans and training;
5. Monitoring your workplace and updating your plan; and
6. Assessing risks that arise from resuming operations.

3.5 Worker's Rights:

[Workers have three key rights:](#)

- the right to know about hazards in the workplace;
- the right to participate in health and safety activities in the workplace; and
- the right to refuse unsafe work.

Encourage staff participation and feedback in the implementation of your Safety Plan.

In addition, as the Health and Safety Association for BC's tourism and hospitality industry, **go2HR** is liaising with WorkSafeBC, industry associations, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport, Destination BC, Regional Destination Marketing Organizations, and TIABC to assist tourism industry employers with the development and implementation of appropriate COVID-19 Safety Plans for their businesses. [Learn more](#).

4.0 General Operating Guidelines

While every Visitor Centre is unique in its location, building environment, reporting requirements, and accountabilities, there are some general guidelines that must be adhered to:

- Maintain physical distancing (also called “social distancing”) of at least 2 metres;
- Frequent hand hygiene;
- Cleaning and disinfection of facility;
- [Adherence to current PHO Orders pertaining to gatherings](#);
- Self-Isolation for employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 for a minimum of 10 days (or self-isolation for 14 days if they are returning to Canada); and
- [Mandatory masks for public indoor settings](#).

4.1 Physical Distancing

You must implement physical distancing or physical barriers to reduce opportunities for interactions among large groups that would have prolonged close contact, and you must ensure that employees and visitors to your Visitor Centre (as well as any mobile visitor servicing you are doing) are able to follow the physical distancing guidelines put in place by the PHO (of at least 2 metres).

Ways in which Visitor Centres may achieve physical distancing include the following:

- Mark the floor at 2 metre intervals to promote physical distancing in aisles, line-ups, and at counters.
- Use signs and markings to direct customers, to indicate appropriate distances to stand, to mark direction of travel, to designate entrances and exits, or to identify pick up zones for materials.
- Post occupancy limits, and limit the number of people in the Visitor Centre at any given time to ensure physical distancing is maintained.
- Provide a waiting area outdoors, with markers to designate safe distances, providing it is safe to do so.
- Place a staff member at the entrance to monitor visitor entries and verbally remind visitors of the guidelines (in addition to posted signage).
- Install barriers, such as plexiglass dividers, at and between counters and open areas to prevent encroachment.
- Label certain tables and chairs unavailable for use, or remove entirely, to maintain appropriate distances between customers.
- Affix signage reminding employees and visitors to maintain physical distancing.
- Use tape to mark off areas where staff and visitors can/cannot walk, or to mark off areas where staff may walk only in one direction (such as down an aisle or narrow corridor).

Other ways businesses may achieve physical distancing among employees include:

- Reconfigure the workplace to maintain appropriate distance between employees.
- Limit the number of employees at one time in break locations by staggering break times.
- Reduce in-person meetings and other gatherings, as well as non-essential visitors to the Visitor Centre (i.e.: family and friends).
- Be aware of and monitor the number of staff on site at any given time.
- Postpone, re-arrange, or plan work tasks in such a way that employees are not required to work in proximity to one another.

- Stagger start times and break times to avoid large groups of employees.
- Designate additional rooms for breaks.
- Remove furniture from break rooms, increase the spacing or add “do not use” signs to fixed seating.
- Provide pre-opening training on procedures and protocols prior to opening; consider doing so in a virtual manner (Zoom, Skype etc.), and on-going coaching/reminders post-opening.

4.2 Sanitation & Hygiene

4.2.1 *Personal Hygiene (Employees)*

Respiratory viruses, like COVID-19, spread when mucus or droplets containing the virus get into your body through your eyes, nose, or throat. Hands are one of the most common ways that the virus spreads from one person to the next. During an outbreak, one of the cheapest, easiest, and most effective ways to prevent the spread of a virus is to wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

Employees must:

- Keep hands clean, and wash hands properly*:
 - before touching eyes, nose, and mouth, if there is a need to do so;
 - after handling objects soiled by respiratory or other body secretions;
 - after touching high contact surfaces or equipment, such as escalator handrails, elevator control panels, or door handles; and
 - after handling cash/credit/debit cards, touching common items and after each delivery.
- Cover their nose and mouth with tissue paper while sneezing or coughing, and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly. Avoid touching their face.
- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene.
- Not shake hands with colleagues or visitors.
- Must stay at home and keep a safe distance from others in their family until symptoms have completely disappeared, if they have symptoms of a cold, flu, or COVID-19, including a cough, sneezing, runny nose, sore throat, or fatigue.

*Below is a step-by-step process for effective handwashing, to remove all traces of the virus:

- Step 1: Wet hands with running water.
- Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands.
- Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including back of hands, between fingers, and under nails – for at least 20 seconds.
- Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water.
- Step 5: Dry hands with a single-use paper towel.
- Step 6: Use paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Handwashing posters can be downloaded here: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_Handwashing%20Poster_MD%20offices.pdf

4.2.2 *Personal Protective Equipment*

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is specialized clothing or equipment worn by an employee for protection against infectious materials. It should serve as an additional measure, after considering

physical distancing and barriers, and should not replace any other risk control and infection control measures.

Refer to the [Order of the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General](#) regarding the November 24, 2020 “Mask Mandate Order”.

4.2.3 *Personal Hygiene (for your visitors)*

Visitor Centres should ensure that materials for adhering to hand hygiene are available on their premises.

- Provide receptacles for used tissue paper disposal.
- Provide conveniently located dispensers of alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Where sinks are available, ensure that supplies for handwashing (i.e., liquid soap and disposable towels) are consistently available.
- Post information on step-by-step process for hand-washing (see above).

4.2.4 *Hygiene & Decontamination at the Visitor Centre*

Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of different materials. The thorough cleaning of surfaces and structures, followed by disinfection, is therefore a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19. Employers should work with their local and health departments to ensure appropriate local protocols and guidelines, such as updated/additional guidance for cleaning and disinfection, are followed.

Suggestions for your Visitor Centre include:

- Increase sanitation and disinfection practices throughout the Visitor Centre. See: [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) for more information including guidelines for frequency. See WorkSafeBC [Guide to Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)
- Establish a schedule for regular sanitation, especially high-touch areas, and include spaces outside your Visitor Centre that employees and visitors may come in contact with.
- Ensure good ventilation; open doors and windows if possible.
- Maintain proper function of washrooms, drains and pipes.
- Remove any unnecessary items from counters that may elevate the risk of transmission.
- Pre-package popular and frequently asked-for brochures and place at a ‘pick up’ area to avoid need for additional handling of brochures.
- Create a “touch free” Visitor Centre by removing brochures and publications from public spaces and offer them ‘by request only’ for distribution by staff.
- Consider digitizing popular publications (when possible), so you can email them to visitors upon request.
- Explore the use of technology for visitor servicing (eg: Visitors use Skype or Zoom from outside the Visitor Centre).

For disinfection purposes, common household disinfectants, such as ready-to-use disinfecting wipes and pre-made solutions (no dilution needed) can be used. Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions printed on the bottle. Ensure that the disinfectant product has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) on its label. Always follow product instructions for dilution, contact time, and safe use. All visibly dirty surfaces should be cleaned with water and detergent before disinfecting (unless otherwise stated on the product label).

Please refer to the [BC Centre for Disease Control website](#) for more information and guidance on cleaning and disinfecting and see [Poster on Cleaning and Disinfectants](#). Also refer to [WorkSafeBC Cleaning and Disinfecting](#).

5.0 [Messaging to Visitors:](#)

Visitor Centres must post signage to ensure that everyone that enters the Visitor Centre including visitors, employees, and suppliers know how to keep themselves safe while on site. Messaging should:

- Welcome them to the premises, and state specifics about the current operating environment (e.g. all provincial health directives that apply).
- Outline the steps that you are undertaking to ensure customer health & safety.
- Instruct visitors that if they have underlying medical conditions, it is recommended that they not visit the facility.
- Instruct that anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 will not be permitted on the premises. You can use the [WorkSafeBC Poster](#).
- Explain that anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or who lives in a household where someone is showing symptoms of COVID-19, must stay home.
- Remind visitors that if they have travelled outside Canada, they are not permitted on the premises until they have self-isolated for a minimum of 14 days. People returning from outside the province/country must follow public health guidelines on their return.
- Encourage visitors to obey the physical distancing protocols at all times (minimum of 2 metres).
- Inform of the facility's occupancy limits: eg. "We are limiting the number of visitors to our Visitor Centre to _____ at a time, to enable us to adhere to physical distancing rules, and keep you and our staff safe". Occupancy poster can be downloaded here: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-occupancy-limit?lang=en>
- Provide notice that those failing to observe physical distancing risks closure of the facility and as such, will be asked to leave the premises.
- Notify that washrooms on the premises are disinfected frequently; hand sanitizers are located at _____.
- Post information regarding the [mandatory mask order](#) for public indoor spaces. [WorkSafeBC Poster can be downloaded here](#).

This communication should be available in English and other languages as appropriate, and should be featured on your Visitor Centre website, if applicable, signage at the premises and in other digital communication means you are using.

6.0 [Additional Resources:](#)

For additional information about COVID-19, including information used to prepare this document, please visit:

- [BC's Restart Plan](#)
- [Go Forward Management Strategy](#)
- [WorkSafeBC COVID-19 Safety Plan](#)

- [WorkSafeBC Returning to Safe Operation](#)
- [WorkSafeBC COVID-19 FAQs](#)
- [Go2HR – COVID-19 What You Need to Know](#)
- [WorkSafeBC Entry Check Poster](#)
- [WorkSafeBC Mandatory Mask Poster](#)
- [WorkSafeBC Occupancy Limit Poster](#)

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Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



Hand Hygiene

SOAP OR ALCOHOL-BASED HAND RUB: Which is best?



Either will clean your hands: use soap and water if hands are visibly soiled.



Remove hand and wrist jewellery

HOW TO HAND WASH



1
Wet hands with warm (not hot or cold) running water



2
Apply liquid or foam soap



3
Lather soap covering all surfaces of hands for 20-30 seconds



4
Rinse thoroughly under running water



5
Pat hands dry thoroughly with paper towel



6
Use paper towel to turn off the tap

HOW TO USE HAND RUB



1
Ensure hands are visibly clean (if soiled, follow hand washing steps)



2
Apply about a loonie-sized amount to your hands



3
Rub all surfaces of your hand and wrist until completely dry (15-20 seconds)

COVID19_HH_D01



Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.

