

## **COVID-19 PRINCIPLES AND EMERGING PRACTICES FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA WILDERNESS EXPEDITIONS- PHASE THREE AND FOUR**

*\* This document has been developed in conjunction with the COVID-19 Principles and Emerging Practices of the Canadian Led Outdoor Activity Sector*

These guidelines have been developed by experts in wilderness programming from across BC who represent the private sector, not-for-profit organizations, public education, post-secondary education, community service groups, and social service organizations.

### **Working References**

- Adventure Tourism Coalition -Response to COVID-19
- Outdoor Council of Canada - Response to COVID-19
- BC Adventure Programs

### **About Us**

The wilderness expedition, outdoor leadership, and backcountry industry (Led Outdoor Activities) operates on proven real-world strategies and safety protocols which ensure the health and safety of staff and participants. As a sector, LOA already recognizes and manages a host of transmissible infections from a variety of vectors including environmental, fecal-oral, topical, and respiratory. A large body of academic literature and field expertise recognizes that risk and uncertainty are central features of the physical, psychological, and social benefits of LOA. As such, providers accept reasonable levels of consent-based risk in their work and have developed operating standards and best practices for managing the transmission of infection.

The decisions needed, changing concerns, and evolving awareness of COVID-19 is a multi-layered and complex challenge for which providers are well prepared. Expeditionary wilderness trips and outdoor leadership programs are ready, capable, and designed to lead people into the wilderness with reasonable levels of risk to health and safety.

### **Distinguishing Benchmarks for Leading Expeditions and Wilderness Outdoor Leadership Programs**

- Risk management policies and operating procedures, constant review process and continuous staff training
- Appropriate level of Wilderness First Aid training for field staff
- Staff are trained in a variety of ways including specialized professional certification, organizational staff training, mentorship, and communities of practice
- Affiliated membership providing guidance and/or compliance (e.g., RCABC, Paddle Canada, SKGABC, OCC, Life Saving Society)
- RCMP Criminal Record Clearance for working with vulnerable populations

- Ongoing safety management processes including documenting and reviewing safety on a regular basis
- Adherence to several industry and public safety guidelines (e.g., Ministry of Transportation’s Marine Safety protocols)

BC backcountry is characteristically different than front country. Expedition management is characterized by the following

- **Multi day** (typically range from 3 to 28 days)
- **Adaptive and responsive**
- **Small group focused** (i.e. 8 to 12 participants with two instructors leading with children and youth)
- **Front to backcountry travel** (away from populated areas and generally more remote)
- **Mobile, contained, and organizationally supported groups**
- **Independent and competent when in backcountry**
- **Readiness and risk management designed**

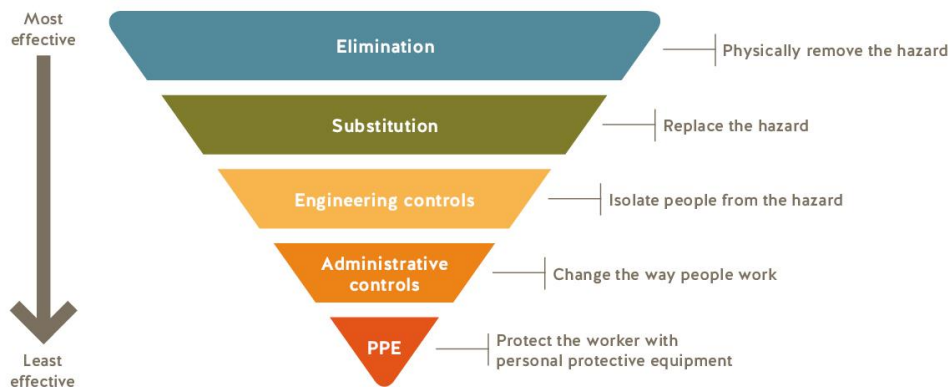
### Preparation and Prevention of COVID-19

Backcountry service providers have identified and used the five principles in the control plan for every situation pertaining to staff and participants in the development of specific group management plans, including:

- Personal Hygiene
- Stay at Home if you are Sick
- Environmental Hygiene
- Safe Physical Distancing
- Physical Modification

The context in which these principles are employed follow the province’s “Hierarchy of Controls” model. Note that while the controls are listed in order of effectiveness, all four types of controls have been considered. As suggested, they often work best in combination.

Hierarchy of controls



## **Expedition and Outdoor Leadership Providers use the Following Sources as Guidance**

- [Government of Canada](#): Risk informed decision-making guidelines
- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#): Risk-informed decision-making COVID-19 guidelines for workplaces
- [WorkSafeBC](#) provides an exposure control plan guide

## **Workplace Safety Practices - Employer Responsibilities**

- Establish, train, and monitor all practices related to safety and hygiene
- Ensure practices are carried out as scheduled
- Review your organizations 2020 policy and procedures, insurance coverage, legal documentation, and membership accreditation if applicable
- Adjust and adapt best practices as required
- Provide proper protective and sanitation supplies
- Provide a safe and healthy workplace

## **Communication**

- Ensure employees are kept informed, and fully understand, expectations around hygiene, company policies, safe work practices, and protocols will ensure better compliance
- When travelling in remote locations employees are to have means of communication (e.g., satellite phone)

## **Employee Specialized Training**

- Training and education will be provided to all employees, contractors, service providers, visitors, or other parties that enter the premises
- Training includes safety measures and procedures, physical distancing, proper hygiene practices, and monitoring and reporting illness
- Emphasis should also be given to employee training regarding trauma informed practices when working with children, youth, and vulnerable populations.
- Focus is employee readiness and preparedness

## **Employee Responsibilities**

- To not come to work if they are feeling ill
- Maintain a high level of personal hygiene at all times following provincial guidelines
- Follow the health and safety guidelines provided by the employer and Provincial Health Officer for staff, client and facility health and hygiene procedures
- Instruct participant on health and safety procedures
- Inform a manager immediately if, during their shift, they feel ill, self-isolate and remove themselves from the work site when safe to do so
- Monitor participants for signs of illness and, if noticed, isolate them from the rest of the client group.
- Inform their manager if there is an incident of illness

## **Pre-Trip Planning**

- A prescreening questionnaire to ensure the client is healthy before travelling and eligible to participate
- A waiver and informed consent to be signed by the participant (guardian if under-age of 18) as part of the liability insurance
- An orientation message at the first point of contact reconfirming their health and welcoming them to participate
- Overview and expectation of participants adherence to the Best Management Practices
- Prepare an *Outdoor Participants Medical Management Plan* for those with more complex needs that is co-created with the family, and if needed a medical professional (i.e. compromised auto-immunity, epilepsy, diabetes)
- Prepare an *Outdoor Medical Management Plan for Containment and Evacuation*
- Training for clients will take place in a two-step process, including a prescreening questionnaire and an on-site orientation

## **Orientation**

- At the first point of in-person contact with participants, all participants must again self-declare their health status, and be given a COVID-19 orientation by the LOA operator
- The orientation will include an explanation of the safety measures and procedures, physical distancing, proper hygiene practices, and monitoring and reporting illness
- These safety measures require the cooperation of all clients through adherence to our policies and procedures
- A full list of the COVID-19 measures implemented is provided on documents that are available on government websites and on business premise

## **Participant Requirements**

- Participants must declare any illness to staff
- Participants must maintain a high level of personal hygiene, including frequent hand washing and/or the use of a sanitizer. In addition, respiratory etiquette is essential in preventing the spread of illness. The key elements of respiratory etiquette are:
- Covering cough/sneeze into a sleeve or tissue
- Disposing of used tissues in garbage
- Cleaning hands after coughing or sneezing

## **Cleaning, Sanitizing Protocols and Disinfectants that Meet Health Canada's Requirements**

- Hard surfaces will be often cleaned and disinfected using approved products
- Textiles, neoprene, and other products requiring specialized detergents and sanitation will be cleaned after each use according to manufactures direction and dried preferably in open air and sunshine
- Disinfectants used must meet Health Canada's requirements for COVID-19

## **Transportation**

- Transportation services will follow Transport Canada guidelines for surface, marine and air transport
- All guests and staff must comply with Public Health Agency of Canada face covering/mask directives for cloth or disposable facemasks when required

## **Exposure Control Plans and Mitigation Strategies**

### **Identify and Assess**

- Identify symptoms suspect of COVID-19 by observing and conversing with participant
- Immediate participant physical distancing measures from group (minimum 15-25 feet)
- Assess participant(s) and record symptoms (date, time, and actual symptoms) in expedition/out-trip log-book
- Review COVID-19 symptom chart (mild-severe), participant intake notes and individual health report
- Contact, inform and consult with your organization's designated field supervisor and local medical authority for potential COVID-19 guidance
- Isolate participant from the rest of the group
- Consider additional disinfect and wash group equipment as precaution

### **Mitigate, Isolate and Monitor**

- Follow directives from health authority
- Participants wear individual PPE if applicable (cloth mask and gloves)
- Revise management and expedition travel plan if required
- Continue participant isolation from the rest of the group
- Monitor participant and group symptoms
- If participant's symptoms are worsening, call field supervisor and local health authority
- If other members display similar symptoms, call field supervisor and local health authority
- Enact group containment strategic plan for duration of expedition

### **Continue or Exit**

- Seek guidance from health authority to continue expedition or exit participant and/or group
- Absolutely no contact with anyone outside your group
- PPE mandatory when exiting for group members
- Seek permission for immediate testing of participants and instructors
- Mandatory 14-day participant quarantine post-expedition if participant has confirmed infection

### **Post-Expedition**

- Submit incident report to field supervisor
- Follow up with participant(s) to ensure quarantining is taking place
- Follow up with health authority and await direction