

Recommendations for Operating a Beach During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The following recommendations are intended for lake community associations that are considering operating their beach during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time beaches are not prohibited from opening, however each owner/operator must comply with all Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) orders and all local municipality emergency management requirements.

Information on existing CMOH orders can be found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-orders-and-legislation.aspx>. If the owner/operator is unable to maintain requirements outlined in CMOH orders (or conditions listed under a local municipality's declaration of state of local emergency), they may choose not to open their beach or other outdoor recreational facilities.

Each operator is responsible for developing and enforcing plans to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Plans should include how the operator will ensure that no gatherings of more than 15 people occur and social distancing (greater than 2 meters) is maintained. This plan should also identify the following:

1. How the operator will advise patrons not to enter the park if they have COVID-19 related symptoms. Recommend that the facility advise patrons at higher risk, such as those with underlying health conditions, not attend the beach area. Signage resources can be found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-information-posters.aspx>.
2. How the operator will identify capacity for their park and specifically for popular features such as beach area(s), capacity must address physical distancing requirements (a minimum of 2 meters squared between people is required however, additional space needed for patron mobility and play needs to be incorporated into the plan.
3. How the operator will limit the number of patrons in the park at any given time.
4. How the operator will ensure safe use (including frequent cleaning and ensuring patron access to soap/hand sanitizer) of shared washrooms, and any other recreational activities in the park.
5. How the operator will restrict access in the beach area. For example, the operator may fence off access to the beach and have staff patrol the beach area to ensure an appropriate number of people are on the beach and in the lake at any given time.
6. Monitoring and enforcement measures that will be in place to achieve compliance with occupant capacity, physical distancing and safety measures.

In order to prevent over-crowding, lake community associations should consider setting limits to park admissions such as implementing a policy of member access only or no guests where applicable. The operator may choose to keep only one entrance and one exit to the park open for easier monitoring of numbers.

Note that persons gathering in an outdoor location who are all members of the same household are exempt from the 2 meter physical distancing rule from one another.

Beaches:

- The beach operator can make the decision whether or not beach access should be allowed. Little is known about the risk of COVID-19 transmission through recreational water at this time and recommendations may change as more information becomes available. Although infectious COVID-19 droplets may contaminate natural recreational water, large bodies of water such as lakes should dilute the concentration of the virus making transmission unlikely. Droplet transmission remains possible if physical distancing restrictions are not being followed.
- Beach water sampling (bacteriological and blue green algae) has been postponed until further notice. Alberta Health Services - Safe Healthy Environments (AHS-SHE) will provide further updates as necessary regarding the monitoring program in the event of a change. Patrons should be made aware that beach water quality is not being tested/monitored and swimming is done at their own risk.
- All features that encourage crowding such as floating docks (not boat launch docks) should be removed or made inaccessible.
- Patrons may bring their own lawn chairs to sit on at the beach.
- Water play spray devices (e.g. water guns) are not recommended.
- Children playing in sand and building sand castles is not prohibited, however the risk of COVID-19 transmission in sand is unknown, therefore it is encouraged that education and signage is in place which outlines information regarding hand hygiene, not touching eyes, nose, mouth, etc. Resources can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/prevent-the-spread.aspx>.
- Patrons should be encouraged to bring drinking water for their own personal use and hand sanitizer for frequent hand hygiene.

Other Recreational activities:

- Rental equipment is not recommended. If rentals are made available, items may not be shared unless done so by members of the same household. Items must be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Wherever possible, patrons should use their own equipment. If boats (row boats, canoes/kayaks, paddleboards) are provided, the operator must clean and disinfect the boat and equipment associated with it after each use. Patrons should use their own life jackets as life jackets are hard to clean and disinfect. Boat and water play equipment should be discouraged.
- Basketball hoops, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, disc golf, and pickleball courts are allowed as long as they are used by members of the same household, preferably using their own personal equipment. If equipment is rented, it must be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Singles tennis is allowed with distancing measures. Doubles tennis with members from different households is not recommended at this time. Playing catch, baseball or other activities in open areas by members of the same household is allowed. Organized team games or activities are not recommended. For example, beach volleyball is not recommended unless members are of the

same household using their own personal equipment. Guidance for outdoor recreation can be found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-outdoor-recreation.pdf>

- Walking through the park is allowed.
- Fishing is allowed as long as patrons use their own equipment including rods, tackle, and bait.
- Recommend continued closure of playgrounds and outdoor fitness equipment as per local restrictions.
- Use of spray parks and pools is prohibited.
- Individual or group instruction must only be conducted with appropriate physical distancing of at least 2 meters (greater distancing during exercising is recommended) unless the individuals are from the same household. Numbers must be limited to 15 people.
- Events and programs that encourage mass gathering are prohibited (e.g. movies in park, entertainers, etc.)

Picnics and Barbecues

- Use of picnic shelters, barbecues, and fire pits is not recommended. On site food preparation is not recommended and patrons should be discouraged from bringing food and drinks. However, if families bring food and drinks, it should not be shared among people other than those in the immediate household.
- Benches along walking paths and picnic tables spaced throughout the park for people to sit at are allowed, however groups of picnic tables or benches that encourage gathering are not recommended.
- Signage should be in place to educate patrons to limit touching of benches, garbage cans, and other hard surfaces, to perform hand hygiene, and not touch their face. Resources can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/prevent-the-spread.aspx>.

Clubhouses/washrooms

- Offices can be open with restrictions in place. Measures should be in place to ensure protection of staff dealing with patrons. Refer to the Workplace Guidance Document for Business Owners (<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-workplace-guidance-for-business-owners.pdf>).

- Clubhouses and indoor recreation centers must remain closed but washroom access is allowed as long as the operator implements strict cleaning and disinfecting practices, especially of high touch surfaces such as door handles and taps. Refer to the Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities document (<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-public-facilities.pdf>). Operators must keep restrooms stocked with handwashing supplies.
- Showers should remain closed.
- Drinking fountains are not recommended and access should be restricted.
- Vending machines are not recommended and access should be restricted.
- Waste containers should be available for discarding personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves and must be emptied regularly.

Entrance and Staffing:

- Office staff or security guards checking membership cards should be protected from patrons to prevent direct physical contact.
- Park staff must follow physical distancing rules and other requirements for workers as outlined in The Workplace Guidance for Business Owners Document (<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-workplace-guidance-for-business-owners.pdf>).