



ALBERTA WHITEWATER ASSOCIATION

Dear Paddlers,

With the spring weather upon us and the river levels coming up, we know that our paddling community will want to get onto the water again. Especially because we have been cooped up waiting for the Covid-19 lockdowns to end. With that in mind, the Alberta Whitewater Association (AWA) has been working with our Provincial/Territorial counterparts and National Governing Organization, CanoeKayak Canada (CKC) and Alberta Health Services to bring the best information to the table about the “Return to Play” plan for paddling sports.

This is not an official position document of the AWA, CKC or Alberta Health Services. As with all things on the river, it is information you can use to improve, not to guarantee, your safety, and just as in whitewater the ultimate choices and assumption of risks are yours.

In the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, Canoe Kayak Canada and the Alberta Whitewater Association continue to ask the paddling community to respect the Government’s direction to carefully follow physical distancing practices and to respect the directives and regulations of Alberta Health Services and governments at every level. Now is the opportunity for us to be diligent leaders in our communities. Through our actions, we can contribute to the control of the spread of this virus.

CKC will continue to monitor and assess the national situation and the AWA will continue to monitor and assess the provincial situation. Please note that Club and Provincial paddling programs should only resume when the appropriate Municipal and Provincial Public Health and government authorities modify applicable restrictions and/or closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CKC and AWA recognizes that these restrictions may be modified, lifted or reinstated at different times depending on the evolution of the pandemic and the actions taken by the various levels of government in specific jurisdictions.

The following guidelines have been created for our member organizations and the general paddling public, to assist in their modification of operations and personal activities to align with the varied and evolving public health measures. At no time should these guidelines be interpreted as superseding or providing a justification for not closely following public health directives and government regulations in a given member organization’s municipality/province/territory. According to tools developed by Own the Podium, paddling can be a low risk activity as it relates to contracting COVID-19 if proper steps are taken and if the vast majority of activity takes place outdoors and at the required physical distance.

It is important to note that CKC’s On-Water Safety Policies apply at all times. All members should be aware of the serious risks posed by cold water conditions.

Background Information

This information is prepared with the best known information at this time.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause respiratory illness in people, ranging from mild colds to severe illness. The Covid-19 virus is believed to be spread mainly by coughing, sneezing or direct contact with someone who is sick with Covid-19.

It can also be spread through contact with surfaces that have been recently touched by an infected person. The virus can survive for 3 days on a hard surface. The virus can be killed with ordinary soap and water, bleach, alcohol (including hand sanitizer), or UV light. Washing hands and not touching your face is an important protective mechanism for everyone.

Exposure to direct sunlight and UVA radiation is a proven and quick disinfectant against bacteria and viruses. Clouds will absorb UV radiation, reducing ground-level UV intensity. Clear skies allow virtually 100% of UV to pass through, scattered clouds transmit 89%, broken clouds transmit 73%, and **overcast** skies transmit 31%.

The outdoors has been shown to be a very low risk environment for transmission of the virus.

Masks & Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In the outdoor environment where social distancing is possible, masks are not required. Masks are especially **not** recommended for water-based activities.

There are situations involving other people where wearing a facemask is highly recommended. This includes indoor spaces such as boat houses and in a vehicle with other people.

Wearing a mask helps prevent passing illnesses on to other people. Masks should be dry and tight fitting. A wet mask does not let air pass through resulting in air leaking around the edges. When wet the micro-fibres in masks are also not effective in capturing viral contaminants.

Wearing a non-medical mask, such as a homemade cloth mask, has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. However, wearing a non-medical mask may be helpful in protecting others around you. This is because face coverings are another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating other people or surfaces. Additionally, wearing a mask may stop you from touching your nose and mouth.

If you choose to wear a non-medical mask or face covering:

- Ensure your mask is well-fitted and does not gape at the sides.
- Be aware that masks can become contaminated on the outside. Avoid moving or adjusting the mask. Assume the mask has been contaminated and take proper precautions.
- Critically, if you wear a mask, you must wash/disinfect your hands before putting it on, as well as before and after taking it off.
- Cloth masks should be worn only a short time, as there is some evidence that they can trap virus particles after they become damp, which may put the wearer at greater risk.
- For those choosing to wear non-medical masks, carry a bag with several clean masks in it and a plastic bag that can be used to safely store used masks until they can be washed at home.

- It is critical that used masks be carefully handled to avoid spreading infection to others.

Personal Responsibility

Before going paddling, review this list. If the answer to any of these is yes, stay home. Do not paddle.

1. Do you have any of the following symptoms which are new (or worsened if associated with allergies, chronic or pre-existing conditions): fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, sore throat, and/or runny nose?
2. Have you returned to Canada from outside the country (including the US) in the past 14 days?
3. In the past 14 days, have you had close contact (living with, providing care to, or being within 2 m of) with someone who has a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19?
4. In the past 14 days, have you had close contact with a person who had acute respiratory illness that started within 14 days of their close contact to someone with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19?
5. In the past 14 days, have you had close contact with a person who had acute respiratory illness who returned from travel outside of Canada in the 14 days before they became sick?

Items #3, #4, and #5 do not apply to health care workers who were wearing the recommended personal protective equipment. The official position on #2 is returning from outside the country, but it would be best to extend that to returning from high-prevalence areas within Canada, such as Montreal, as well.

Modified use of Club/Recreation Facilities and Equipment

Clubs and Leaders should consult Provincial/Municipal Health authorities to understand the local guidelines for resuming outdoor activities, in addition to the use of club facilities or any public areas used for outdoor activity. This may include use of boats/equipment and accessing public waterways. If the activity is being organized at a location other than an organization's conventional training location, all potential restrictions or considerations for the place of meeting/launching should be understood (for example, if a city park or private property is being used).

Leaders should arrive ahead of paddlers and prepare the facility/club environment/equipment for paddler arrival. Leaders should always have gloves, masks and hand sanitizer available to protect themselves and paddlers. Leaders may need to disinfect equipment and the facilities to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 from contacting a contaminated surface.

Ideally paddlers will use their own personal boat and paddling gear.

If paddlers are using club or rental equipment, assigning this equipment to one person for the duration of the paddling program is best. Paddlers can take this equipment home with them and bring it back to the next session.

Paddlers should not enter facilities except where necessary, such as personal safety, sanitary or health-related reasons. Anyone entering a facility should follow all relevant guidance in relation to physical distancing and limiting contact with surfaces. Facility managers should follow sanitation guidelines (see below). Paddlers should enter boat bays/containers one at a time to retrieve boat/paddle/PFD.

Where possible, boats should be stored outdoors to remove the necessity of entering a facility and to allow the disinfecting power of sunlight on all equipment.

Paddlers should arrive wearing their paddling clothing or be prepared to change outdoors.

Group Gathering Size

Group size, including all paddlers, leaders and safety personnel must respect Alberta Health's group gathering size restrictions of 15 or less. Notwithstanding the government's restrictions, CKC recommends no groups larger than 12 paddlers. Maintaining the CKC standard will help to lessen the visual appearance to outsiders that might trigger complaints against the paddling community.

Breaking up into groups of 6 is better than going as a dozen, and into fours is even better.

If multiple groups are on site at the same time, they should maintain a very wide physical distance between each group. Where a club has regular groups, each group should be kept intact so that the same group of people are paddling together and the circle of potential contact is not expanded unnecessarily.

Physical Distance (2 meters)

Always maintain 2 meters between all individuals before, during and after paddling activity.

Paddlers should prepare and get on and off the water while remaining physically distanced (one person at a time if necessary)

On the river, social distancing is easily achieved.

- Maintain 2m distance between people on the river, at the put-in, and at the take-out. Do not bunch up in parking areas or in eddies. Avoid rafting up while on the water.
- Handle your own gear only.
- Rescuing swimmers is acceptable but minimize contact as much as possible.
- Paddle well within your abilities, to minimize the risk of requiring contact for rescues or injuries.

Shuttles

Carpooling is not prohibited under the Province of Alberta's pandemic restrictions. However, packing people into a car is. There is no official rule against giving a friend a ride, and no requirement that it be for essential services only. It could be taking a friend to the park for a walk, or to one of the newly-reopened museums, or shuttling for a paddling trip.

When considering risk of transmission, giving one friend with no symptoms or recent exposures to Covid-19 a ride two or three times over a paddling weekend is a very different risk profile than a taxi, which may have two dozen or more people of unknown risk status sitting in it every day. Nonetheless, though the risk is generally low, measures to minimize risk must be observed.

If participants need to be transported to the start or from the finish points as part of a planned paddling activity, it is recommended that people provide their own transportation and only members of the same household travel together.

Once at the paddling activity, consider whether a shuttle can be avoided entirely. Hike or bike shuttles are preferable when feasible.

If you choose to shuttle by vehicle, treat it as a car-for-hire: no more than one passenger (except if two or more passengers are members of the same household, or if the vehicle is sized and designed to allow separation as in a larger SUV or Van), no passengers in the front seat, and sanitizing between users.

During the shuttle distancing must be maintained, and precautions to prevent transmission attended to conscientiously. It is strongly recommended to use masks in any confined space (such as a vehicle) that does not allow > 2 m separation.

When people not of the same household are involved:

- No more than 1 person in each seating row in a vehicle, with passenger in the back seat on the opposite side from the driver.
 - No pickup trucks without extended cabs.
 - 3-row vehicles like vans or Suburbans: driver, passenger 1 in middle row on right, passenger 2 in back row on left.
- Everyone should wear a mask while in the vehicle. Cloth masks are acceptable, but masks must not be wet. Masks should not be put back on once taken off, so bring another for the return trip.
- Handwashing or hand sanitizer before getting in and upon getting out.
- The driver should be the vehicle's owner; don't drive other people's cars.
- Everyone handles their own gear only.
- For multi-day outings, it is best to have the same "shuttle buddy" the whole time.

Caution should be taken when unloading and loading boats to avoid handling other people's boats. If handling other people's boats or equipment, disinfect after contact is completed.

Sanitation

All surfaces which may be touched by multiple individuals should be sanitized before and after each paddling session. Sanitation practices should follow the Canadian Government guidelines for cleaning hard surfaces - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html>

Safety Contingencies

Responding to an incident on or off the water (athlete tips/other injury) may cause the program leader or other responsible person to come in physical contact. As such, leaders should always have gloves, masks and hand sanitizer available to protect themselves and paddlers should contact become necessary.

During this time, unnecessary risks should be avoided. Paddlers and leaders should use their own common sense to avoid any situation which involves undue risk and the potential need for emergency personnel to respond, or that unnecessary personal contact becomes necessary. A pandemic is not the time to push your limits. The gnar should remain un-run for now.

Communication & Governance

Paddlers, guardians, and all relevant community members should be fully informed of all measures, so that they can be safely followed at all times.

Relevant signage and marking should be put into place so that all measures are easy to follow and that participants are continually reminded of the modifications required.

Member organizations should ensure participants are properly registered and insured, proper waivers have been signed and all other normal membership considerations have been taken into account.

References to National and Provincial Standards

A chart has been included below with links to the relevant Federal, Provincial and Territorial COVID-19 public health sources.

Federal <https://www.canada.ca/en/publichealth/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid19.html>

Alberta <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-foralbertans.aspx>