



ALBERTA WHITEWATER ASSOCIATION

Covid-19 Information Bulletin #1 for Clubs, Program Leaders, Coaches & Instructors

Dear Paddlers,

May 12, 2020

With the spring weather upon us and the river levels coming up, we know that the 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 Sport Governing Organization, CanoeKayak Canada (CKC) and Alberta Health Services (AHS) to bring the best information to the table about the "Return to Play" plan for paddling sports. Guidelines and information are changing frequently and the AWA will attempt to keep abreast of the changes as they arise.

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.

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 hard surfaces such as boats and paddles. Cloth and soft surfaces such as PFDs, wetsuits, and sprayskirts retain the virus for shorter periods.

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? *

* other than health care workers who were wearing proper personal protective equipment at the time

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 (especially boats and paddles) and the facilities to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 from contacting a contaminated surface.

A cleaning log must be kept of the cleaning activities for any shared facilities (i.e. bathrooms, lockers, gathering spaces).

Ideally paddlers will use their own personal boat and paddling gear and keep it separate from others.

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. At the end of the program, all soft paddling gear (pfd's, sprayskirts, westuits) should be washed in soap and water and hung to dry. Hard smooth plastic items (boats, paddles, helmets) need to be wiped down with disinfectants or soap and water before being stored away.

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's/skirts.

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. Youth groups are restricted to 10 people 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 10 meter 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.

Program Activities & Physical Distance (2 meters)

Always maintain 2 meters between all individuals before, during and after paddling activity. This is not required for members of the same household.

Paddlers should assemble their own equipment, boat and gear. They need to get on and off the water while remaining physically distanced (one person at a time if necessary).

Beginner Programs can proceed but need to have a higher degree of monitoring and precautions due to the increased likelihood of contact between the participants and the need for direct assistance from the program leaders. This is especially true with youth programs. It is therefore recommended that other family members (i.e. parents or siblings) be recruited to join all activities. The family members can assist with getting dressed and kitted, fitting boats, carrying equipment, helping with rescues and emptying

boats. Having an Assistant Leader to monitor participants will help all participants maintain the 2 Meter distancing requirements.

Some previous activities and games will need to be suspended until further notice. Games that involve close contact or touching other people's boats such as Tag, British Bulldog, What time is It Mr/Mrs Wolf, and Canoe Polo will need to be replaced with other non-contact activities.

For **Intermediate and Advanced Paddlers** social distancing is easily achieved on the water.

- 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.
- Boat to swimmer rescues are acceptable but minimize contact as much as possible.
- Throwbag rescues are acceptable but avoid multiple throws with 1 bag on different swimmers.
- Paddle well within your abilities, to minimize the risk of requiring contact for rescues or injuries.

Youth Programs have special restrictions placed upon them.

- The maximum group size for a youth program is 10 including Instructors and Assistants.
- A pre-activity screening with the parents of all participants must be undertaken daily to detect any symptoms of even a mild cold or flu. Program Leaders must ask parents and guardians to check the temperatures of their children daily before coming to the program.
- A daily record of anyone attending the program who stays for 15 minutes or more must be maintained and available.
- Any child that develops symptoms of a cold or flu must be isolated and the parents notified to pick up their child immediately. Symptoms to look for include: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, headache, and a general feeling of being unwell.
- Busing participants on an excursion (i.e. shuttling the group to the river in a van) is not allowed.

Canoe Polo competitions are not permitted at this time because of the contact between players and the multiple contacts with the ball by different people. Training and practice activities need to modify activities to reduce contact between players, ensure the ball is not handled by bare hands, or to have paddlers practicing skills in isolation from others. Each paddler should be given their own ball to practice with.

Slalom training and races can be held with small groups isolated from other participants.

Freestyle training and comps can be held with small groups isolated from other participants.

Teaching the roll is not recommended at this time because of the direct contact between the instructor and the participant.

NCCP leadership training courses can continue to run within the parameters outlined because the participants have more control over their boats and equipment.

We will not be able to provide NCCP Evaluations for the Lake Kayak Instructor or the River Leader 2 – River Instructor 2 at this time due to the higher probability of the real life participants not having the same boat control as the Instructor Candidates.

Swift Water Rescue courses are suspended until further notice due to the close personal contact involved in training rescues in the river.

Shuttles

Carpooling is not prohibited under the Province of Alberta's pandemic restrictions. However, packing people into a vehicle 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. Youth cannot be transported in a shuttle bus/van/ together as a group.

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 person per row of seats (except if two or more passengers are members of the same household). No passengers in the front seat row. The vehicle needs to be sanitized between users; wipe down door handles, seat belts and other surfaces that might be touched by the passengers.

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 SUV's: 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, wash or use sanitizer on your hands 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 such as boats, paddles and helmets - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html>

Soft surfaces such as pfd's, sprayskirts, wetsuits/drysuits, booties can be washed with soap and water.

Safety Contingencies

Responding to an incident on or off the water (swims/other injury) may cause the program leader or other responsible person to come in physical contact with the paddler. 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.

The AWA Waiver and Acknowledgement of Risk forms were amended on May 8, 2020 to recognize the risk of infection from contagious diseases. This will help to protect our Association, Clubs, Officers and

Leaders from lawsuits that might occur due to one of our programs. We will need to get our Members who signed up prior to this date to agree to this revised Waiver and Acknowledgement of Risk forms.

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>

Alberta May 14 Guidelines: https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx?utm_source=google&utm_medium=sem&utm_campaign=Covid19&utm_term=Guidance Documents&utm_content=v1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIz_CajlOt6QIVUxh9Ch1-jgIEEAAYASAAEgIfVPD_BwE#guidance

A Great Opportunity for Paddling Sports in 2020

All traditional youth sports programs have been suspended for the spring/summer of 2020, including swimming, soccer, baseball, rugby, etc. Parents will be looking for sports programs for their children this year to replace the loss of other sports programs. Outdoor sports and kayaking in particular is great because it is an individual boat where social distancing can be practiced. A little bit of advertising to promote your club's kayaking programs could be a great boost for our sport in your community.