

COVID-19 Protocol for Fish Harvesters

Under the Authority of the Chief Medical Officer of Health

Last Revised September 8, 2021

The goal of COVID-19 Protocol for Fish Harvesters is to, as much as possible, prevent the introduction of the virus into the province and prevent transmission within the province while balancing the needs of Fish Harvesters in the carrying out of their duties. To do this, government allows a modified form of self-isolation for out-of-province fish harvesters when they travel to Nova Scotia as a requirement of their work.

All fish harvesters must follow the [Public Health Order](#) issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and any direction arising from that Order and directives given under the authority of the Health Protection Act and the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

This document provides direction to fish harvesters for the prevention and control of COVID-19. This protocol is based on the latest available scientific evidence about this emerging disease and may change as new information becomes available. The Public Health Agency of Canada will be posting regular updates and related documents at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca.

1.0 Definitions and scope

1.1 Definitions

This protocol uses the term **fish harvester** to include skilled workers required to enter Nova Scotia to carry out fish harvesting and its required associated activities, which are conducted either on land or via fishing vessel. For the purposes of this definition, fish harvesting is the commercial or licensed activity of catching fish and other seafood for market or other approved activities. It does not include recreational fishery.

For example, fish harvesters would include:

- People who are engaged in the act of fish harvesting,
- People who are essential to the preparation, maintenance, and repair of required fishing infrastructure to support imminent or ongoing fish harvesting activities

This protocol uses the term **place of residence** to refer to the location where fish harvesters reside during their time in Nova Scotia. A place of residence can be a fishing vessel, house, hotel, RV, or vacation rental (house, apartment, cabin, etc.) that allows for isolation as per the requirements below.

The protocol also uses the term **workplace** to refer to the location where the fish harvesters conduct activities directly related to and including fish harvesting. This may be a land-based location or a fishing vessel.

1.2 Scope

This protocol only applies to fish harvesters who are not fully vaccinated and who come from Canadian provinces or territories outside Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador. It does not apply to international workers. International workers are subject to the federal Quarantine Act.

This protocol only applies when these fish harvesters enter Nova Scotia to complete work directly related to planned fish harvesting. Work that is not directly related to fish harvesting, such as boat building and/or annual maintenance, does not fall under this protocol.

This protocol does not apply to temporary foreign workers. Employers wishing to bring temporary foreign workers into Nova Scotia to work in the seafood sector must follow the [Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers in Seafood](#) in order to meet the requirements for these workers as described in the Public Health Order.

Workers who have no COVID-19 symptoms and who have been fully vaccinated (ie both doses of a 2-dose series of vaccine approved by the World Health Organization) at least 14 days before arriving in Nova Scotia can enter the province as regular travelers by completing the [Nova Scotia Safe Check-in](#). They do not follow this protocol. There is no mandatory isolation or testing for regular travelers who are fully vaccinated, although regular testing continues to be recommended.

2.0 Entering Nova Scotia

2.1 Overview

When fish harvesters who are not fully vaccinated must come to Nova Scotia to work, this Protocol for Fish Harvesters allows them to complete their work while self-isolating at their place of residence when not working. Isolation and other requirements are further detailed in Section 3.

2.2 Process

Prior to each trip, fish harvesters must apply to enter the province by completing the [Nova Scotia Safe Check-in](#) form. They cannot enter the province until they receive approval.

They should apply about a week before they intend to travel. It will take up to 3 business days for their application to be reviewed. If they are approved, they will receive an approval letter via email. They must show this approval letter to border officials, along with documentation proving they are entering the province for work as fish harvesters.

Once they receive an approval letter, fish harvesters are permitted to enter and exit Nova Scotia via fishing vessel or drive to and from the airport or border crossing and their place of residence in the province, as long as they meet the requirements in Section 3 below.

3.0 Isolation Requirements

Fish harvesters who are not fully vaccinated must isolate when they are not working for at least seven days. They must get two negative tests results in order to leave isolation after seven days. They must complete the full seven days, regardless of when they receive their test results. If they do not have their second negative test result after seven days, they must continue isolating when they are not working until they get it.

Fish harvesters may self-isolate onboard a vessel if all other occupants of the vessel also follow this Protocol for Fish Harvesters – everyone onboard must remain in isolation (except while working) until the last crew member who arrived onboard completes the self-isolation period.

Testing must be done in Nova Scotia, not in advance of arrival. It must be a standard PCR lab test, not a rapid test. See more information about getting a test in Nova Scotia in Section 4 of this protocol.

Starting on their second day in the province, each fish harvester will receive daily check-in emails to which they must respond. Once a person has met their isolation obligations, they can unsubscribe from the daily check-in email via the unsubscribe link in the email.

During their self-isolation, fish harvesters must:

- Use only contactless services (i.e. gas and drive-thrus for food/banking)
- Wear non-medical masks and/or PPE required for their work
- Maintain physical distance (2 metres/6 feet) while working as much as possible
- Wear a non-medical mask in public spaces where they are working
- Leave their accommodations only to travel to the worksite
- Have meals delivered or use curbside pickup
- Have all required supplies such as groceries, toiletries, fishing supplies, and fuel for fish harvesting delivered to the workplace and/or accommodations
- Travel directly between the worksite and accommodations – no other trips into the community are permitted (no shopping, visiting, or tourism activities)
- Monitor their health closely, and if they develop symptoms, self-isolate and complete the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) to book a test – even if you only have one mild symptom, you need to get tested
- Conduct routine cleaning and sanitization of shared spaces onboard vessels

4.0 Testing

4.1 Testing when you have no symptoms

Fish harvesters who have no symptoms should get tested on day 1 or 2 in Nova Scotia. If they are still in the province, they should get tested again on day 6 or 7 and on day 12, 13 or 14. This testing schedule serves as a guide for fish harvesters because we recognize that their work schedule, especially those who work at sea, may not fit with this testing schedule.

Testing should be done even if you have no signs of illness. There is no cost for testing. While this testing is voluntary, it is strongly recommended for fish harvesters. There is no cost to fish harvesters.

If fish harvesters are allowed to stop isolating after 7 days and 2 negative test results, the third test is not necessary.

A negative test result does not give 100% certainty that a specialized worker does not have COVID-19. However, testing is an added layer of protection because a negative test result is a good indication that a specialized worker is not likely carrying and transmitting the virus unknowingly.

Testing for the purposes of stopping isolation after 7 days must be done in Nova Scotia, not in advance of arrival. It must be a standard PCR lab test which takes up to 72 hours to be processed in Nova Scotia. It cannot be a rapid test which gives a result in minutes.

4.2 Testing when you have symptoms

Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 must complete the online assessment, [book a COVID-19 test](#), and follow the isolation directions provided. Even if you only have one mild symptom, you need to get tested. If you can't book the test online, you can call 811.

4.3 Booking a test

Fish harvesters can get a standard PCR lab test if they arrive by air at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport. They can also book COVID-19 tests at testing sites around the province by completing the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) to book their tests. Follow the directions that the assessment gives. Do not call 811 to book a test unless you cannot access the online self-assessment.

Fish harvesters can leave their work site or their accommodation just to get tested. They should wear a non-medical mask when going between their vehicle and the testing site and stay 2 metres/6 feet apart from others. They should not take a bus or shuttle. Using their own transportation is strongly recommended. However, they can take a taxi, wearing a nonmedical mask, if there is no other alternative.

5.0 Resources

[COVID-19 self-assessment](#)

Nova Scotia [coronavirus website](#)

[Nova Scotia Safe Check-in](#) form

[Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers in Seafood](#)

Nova Scotia Health Authority [Public Health Offices](#)

Guidance for the use of [non-medical masks](#)

[Handwashing poster](#)

Government of Canada [coronavirus website](#)

Government of Canada information line: **1-833-784-4397 (toll-free)**