

Guidelines for Venues & Facilities

All businesses, organizations and employees need to follow the [Health Protection Act Order and public health directives](#) to limit the spread of COVID-19. It is important that we all understand the current restrictions and public health advice currently in place. You can read the full Health Protection Act order [here](#).

This document is designed for venues and facilities that have the capacity to host large gatherings or events. This document will guide you through building a plan that will help our Province limit the spread of COVID-19.

For your facility to host audiences larger than the current gathering limits your facility plan needs to outline how the facility will safely manage zones of 200 (indoors) and 250 (outdoors), along with how all public health directives will be followed.

This guide is meant to help you build a plan to manage those zones and implement all necessary public health recommendations. If your facility does not have the capacity to manage separate zones, you must operate within the current gathering limits.

Your plan must be available for onsite inspectors and all venues are responsible for its implementation. Inspections may happen at any time.

The NS COVID-19 website has a check list for creating a prevention plan too. You can find it here: <https://novascotia.ca/reopening-nova-scotia/prevention-plans/#reopening>

The plan must outline:

- How many zones can be managed
- How you plan to prevent crossover of zones. This must include separate entrances/exits, separate washrooms, separate concessions for each of 200 and separate walking paths into/out of the venue. Or a well communicated process that ensures no mixing or mingling between zones and how the zones will be formed and managed at the entrance and exits.
- Clarity on the process for managing and monitoring the individual zones

- The logistics of the event activity and how guidelines will be followed.
- A plan for tracking all participants, volunteers, attendees, and event officials. It is recommended facilities keep these records for a minimum of 21 days after the event or activity has taken place.
- An emergency plan for individuals displaying symptoms and how they will be isolated.
- How the facility will communicate the public health directives to stakeholders and attendees prior to and during the event.
- How the facility will ensure the use of non-medical masks by all participants, except when eating or drinking, along with maintaining a 2m (6ft) distance.
- How the venue will limit risk of transmission and promote hygiene practices.
- How workers and or vendors involved will be managed

Each venue must develop a plan for each specific activity. For example, a hockey game with spectators might look different than an event featuring vendors or a concert.

Plans may need to be adjusted as new information regarding COVID-19 becomes available.

It's recommended to consult with your local municipality, sport/cultural governing body, occupational health and safety, local community officials, venue tenants or others who may be impacted throughout the development of your facility plan.

Gathering Limits

As of October 13, 2020, businesses or organizations may host up to host up to 50% of legal capacity of the indoor establishment in which the activity is held, to an overall maximum of 200 persons; or up to a maximum of 250 persons if the event is outdoors.

Note that these limits can change quickly and will be reflected in the Health Protection Act Order. If changes occur, this guide will need to be updated and/or revised.

- All persons in attendance must practice physical distancing, except persons residing in the same household or social group of up to 10 persons.

- The maximum number of persons and physical distancing requirements do not include players, participants, and officials engaged in organized sport activity (recreational, amateur and professional leagues), or in an organized arts and culture event.
- As mentioned above, these gathering limits may change and it is the responsibility of the venue to keep up to date on Public Health requirements and adjust the plan as needed.

Developing Your Plan – Required Information

The following outlines a series of required protocols to ensure appropriate management of attendee safety, venue zones (not exceeding 200 attendees), capacity management, flow of people, cleaning, concessions, staff and suppliers. These protocols must align with the Public Health Order and should be regularly monitored and adjusted based on evolving public health guidance.

Venues must do a risk assessment to assess the hazards at their venue. The risk assessment will inform what control measures are required.

Seating & Ticketing

The seating and ticketing plan must be designed to facilitate zones of 200, while maintaining physical distancing, enabling contact tracing and supporting the health and safety of facility staff and attendees. This list will be provided to Public Health to assist with any necessary contact tracing.

Some additional requirements include:

- All seating is required to be assigned in advance through a ticketing system.
- Seating must allow for a minimum of 2m (6ft) between each party and/or group of seats.
- Tickets must not be sold in groups larger than 10.
- The ticket purchaser will be the primary contact used and must be able to provide the names of those in their party if there is a requirement for contact tracing.

- Tickets should be sold via an online/mobile ticketing solution. If online is not an option, the facility needs to consider alternatives such as an outside lineup with physical distancing or arrangements for individuals to pick up tickets at arranged times.
- At the time of ticket purchase, facilities should consider the opportunity to provide a disclaimer notifying the purchaser that their contact information is being collected in the event that contact tracing is required. The purchaser should agree to this requirement to finalize their order. Following the purchase, information should be provided outlining requirements for self-assessment, travel restrictions and reinforcing general COVID-19 safety requirements if attending an event. A summary of COVID-19 safety requirements should be on all tickets and reinforced at the venue through signage and announcements, if possible. Venues are also encouraged to make COVID-19 safety requirements available online via their website, social media and emails sent prior to the event.
- Each ticket will be assigned a zone based on location in the venue, which will indicate to the ticket holder which entrance/exit they must use as well as concessions and washroom amenities. Assigning zones based on seating location in the venue will minimize attendee crossover and enable efficient contact tracing if required.
- Attendee contact information should be maintained for a minimum of 21 days in case COVID-19 is detected and contact tracing is required.
- Plan should include a seating map outlining locations of available seats for the event.

Venue Zones & Crowd Management

Physical distancing of 2 metres or 6 feet between all individuals helps reduce the spread of illness. Gatherings make this more difficult, so your plan must implement measures to encourage physical distancing across all facets of your facility and operation.

- A 2 metre / 6-foot physical distance must be maintained
 - Between families or groupings of people.
 - Between staff and/or volunteers throughout the venue/event, including back of house

- Between any booth or vendor spaces
- Between participants/attendees
- Each ticket holder must be assigned to a zone within the facility.
- Zones are required to have their own designated washrooms, concessions and entrances/exits and outline how zones will be managed and prevent crossover between zones.
- Signage and/or colour coding system should be used to manage each zone, which can aid attendees to clearly understand zone boundaries.
- Have staff monitor line-ups to ensure physical distancing is being maintained.
- Visual cues such as drawing circles in the venue or on the grounds where seating isn't available to encourage family/group physical distancing
- Signage should be posted throughout the facility to promote physical distancing.
- Clear directional signage for entry and exit locations, with extra staff to monitor physical distancing
- Signage must be posted to promote and ensure one-way traffic for entering and exiting the venue, as well as the flow of people to and from washrooms and concessions
- Increase the distance between seating, picnic tables and benches to ensure there is a 2 meter/6-foot distance between the participants at one table and attendees at another table.
- From the entry point through to the seating location, a mix of staff, stanchions and floor markings will be used to separate the zones and guide attendees to their seats.

Declarations

Achieving a safe venue/event requires that an effective and responsible social contract be in place with patrons. They need to participate and contribute to achieving a safe event. Events and venues should include a patron declaration step in their COVID safety plans. The following questions should be used to identify individuals with a heightened risk for transmission.

- Is the person feeling unwell?
<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/symptoms-and-testing/>
- Have they traveled outside Atlantic Canada within the last 14 days?
- Are they a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- Are they waiting for results of a COVID-19 test?
- Are you self-isolating for any reason?

These declarations must be asked at the ticket purchase stage and upon arrival at the venue. If they answer Yes to any of these questions they need to be asked to not enter the facility.

Washrooms

- Limit the number of people who occupy the restroom at one time to allow for physical distancing
- Do not allow lines or crowds to form near the restroom without maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres/6 feet from other people. Clearly post signs or markers to help attendees maintain the appropriate physical distance of at least 2 metres/6 feet
- Ensure open restrooms are:
 - Operational with functional toilets.
 - Cleaned and disinfected regularly, particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, stall doors, doorknobs, countertops, diaper changing tables, and light switches. High touch surfaces, like those found in a washroom, should be cleaned and disinfected twice daily at a minimum and more often if necessary.

- Clean and disinfect restrooms with Health Canada-recommended disinfectants against COVID-19
- Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep products away from children
- Adequately stocked with supplies for handwashing, including soap and water or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans Portable washrooms for outdoor activities
- If you are providing portable toilets (outdoor events), also provide portable handwashing stations and ensure that they remain stocked throughout the duration of the event. If possible, provide hand sanitizer stations that are touch-free
- Organizers should develop a maintenance plan for these items that could include having staff in place to sanitize, determine number of washrooms per person and frequency of cleaning

Food & Beverage Service

- Place minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers at booth for customer use.
- Use single service condiments, dispensed by staff, to avoid contamination. Avoid contact and maintain physical distance from customers when providing food orders.
- Consider a limited food and beverage menu that will be offered in each zone.
- Consider the option of offering food and beverage through a dedicated online/in-seat app.
- Alcohol purchases from concession stands is not permitted. In-seat service only.
- Attendees will only be permitted to eat and drink while in their seats and communication should be posted to advise on this requirement.
- All vendors must have a food permit, unless exempt. Information on food permits can be found at <https://novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection/retailers.asp>

- Directional arrows and stations, ropes, or other form of physical crowd management will be in place at all concessions areas to facilitate physical distancing in queues.
- As an additional precaution to wearing non-medical masks within the venue, all concessions service areas will have plexiglass screens to protect staff and attendees.
- Cashless payment options available and encouraged in all concession areas and bars.
 - If not an option, dedicate one staff person to handling money and one to food service if you are unable to adequately wash hands between tasks
- Follow the Restaurant COVID-19 Rapid Recovery Guide for Nova Scotia Reopening Resource for Foodservice Operators http://rans.ca/files/shares/Reopening%20Guide_Revised_Jun22_2020-compressed.pdf

Building Sanitization

Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This will reduce the chance of people becoming ill after touching dirty surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs but helps remove them from the surface. Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces are cleaned. Both steps are important to reduce the spread of infection. Do not mix cleaning agents and disinfectants together or use multiple disinfectants together.

- Areas touched often (e.g. tables, railings, light switches, doorknobs, toilets, cash boxes, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily and more often as needed
- Disinfectants should be used to eliminate the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Consult the product's Safety Data Sheets for instructions on how to store, handle, and use these chemicals. For a list of recommended disinfectants, refer to: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>
- Items used between customers (i.e. point of sale systems) must be disinfected between each use

- Sharing of items used by venue staff, participants or performers (i.e. equipment, instruments) should be avoided
- Equipment, instruments and other items that must be shared or passed between individuals should be cleaned and disinfected at an increased frequency. If this is not possible, individuals touching these props should perform hand hygiene before and after touching the items
- Try to avoid the use and handling of cash by using contactless payment. If not possible, it is recommended you keep the cash you receive separate from the cash you use to make change. Try to round your prices to dollar values that will not require change. Have a designated area on the table for customers to leave cash
- Building mechanical ventilation systems(s) should be checked before the event, and each day after, to ensure equipment is operating as it was intended.
- Consideration should be given to changing ventilation system air filters between events, where applicable.
- At indoor events, opening windows to increase air flow when weather permits may help reduce the spread of illness
- Waste should be disposed of regularly. Hands should be washed after waste removal. No-touch waste receptacles should be used.
- Plan should outline the frequency of cleaning high touch surfaces and the deep cleaning protocols used for the cleaning and sanitization of front-of-house and participant/team spaces post event.
- Contactless alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations (minimum 60%) should be located throughout the facility zones and at seating area entrance points with posted signage to support hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Communicating Your Plan

Ensuring attendees, clients and participants are properly informed and reminded about requirements is important to delivering a safe event. There are a variety of channels to consider clearly communicating expectations and ensure an enjoyable experience for all attendees.

- Consider how the facility will communicate the new COVID related protocols to stakeholders, ticket buyers, tenants and regular users of the facility well in advance of the changes taking place.
- Use in-venue digital signage (if available), such as a video scoreboard or concourse signage, to reinforce the facility and hygiene protocols.
- Make announcements throughout the event to remind attendees of the protocols.
- Use facility social media channels and website to post the protocols.
- Signage throughout the facility and within back-of-house spaces to outline COVID protocols, including reinforcement of the importance of monitoring for symptoms.

Employee & Supplier Protocols

Recognize the importance of keeping your staff safe and ensuring that they are properly informed and trained.

- Provide advance communication on what to expect when returning to work, including information about new procedures.
- Conduct training with facility staff and third-party suppliers to ensure they are aware of the protocols and their responsibilities for enforcement.
- Implement an employee self-assessment tool to ensure a pre-screening prior to reporting to work. Staff who feel unwell or have limitations due to travel restrictions will be asked to stay home. If an employee begins showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19 once arriving to work, they must be isolated and sent home to complete the COVID-19 self-assessment [tool](#) for further guidance.

- Staff should be restricted to entering and exiting the venue through dedicated staff entrances that require an individual sign in process to support contact tracing.
- Supplier access to the venue should be managed through a single-entry point and will require sign-in.
- Require non-medical mask wearing for all staff, regardless of role.
- Provide cleaning stations in all common areas and staff areas, including disinfectant wipes and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Proper handwashing guidelines posted in all staff areas and restrooms to ensure frequent reminders.
- Consider the appointment of a facility safety lead by team and shift to ensure protocols are adhered to.
- Provide safety checklists by team and shift for clear monitoring of protocols and procedures.

Venue Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the venue and the event organizer hosting the event or the activity to maintain oversight of the gathering and for ensuring that all persons in attendance comply with the requirement of the facilities COVID plan as well as the requirements under Nova Scotia Health Protection Act Order. <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf>

Inspectors will be onsite, without notice.

In the situation where a facility is renting the venue to an organization or event, it's the responsibility of the facility to ensure the facility guidelines are provided in advance and followed. Facilities are encouraged to work with the organization to develop and submit a plan to the facility for review.

Event Organizer / Rental Responsibilities

The renter of the facility must ensure each event is organized and hosted within the requirements as set out in the Health Protection Act Order <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf> and within the requirements as defined by the facility. The facility is ultimately responsible for the oversight of all the protocols related to their facility.

Enforcement

Government inspectors may do spot checks at the facilities without notice and will request a copy of the facility and event/organizers COVID plan. They will ensure that the facility is following their plan and meeting public health and health and safety requirements. Failure to comply or manage the requirements of the Health Protection Act Order <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf> may result in closure of the facility and/or penalties.

If you have any questions or concerns about these guidelines you can contact the Events Nova Scotia team here: <https://events.novascotia.ca/contact>

Links

Link to COVID-19 Prevention Guide for event organizers, theatres and performance venues

Link to Coronavirus (COVID-19): occupational health and safety hazards
(<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/occupational-health-and-safety/>)

Health Protection Act Order

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf>

Self Assessment Tool

<https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/en>

Daily Checklist

<https://novascotia.ca/CoronaVirus/docs/Daily-COVID-checklist-en.pdf>