

Safety Guidelines for Event Organizers, Venues, and Facilities

March 7, 2022

This document is designed for event organizers and staff of venues and facilities that host gatherings or events and will guide you through some of the preventive public health measures organizations can undertake to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The measures detailed in this document conform to Phase 2 of the provincial Reopening Plan. These measures go into effect at 12:01am on Monday, March 7, and will remain in place until Monday, March 21.

As per section 4.11 of the [Public Health Order](#) issued under Section 32 of the Health Protection Act, any person, business or organization that hosts a formal gathering authorized by sections 4.4 to 4.10 is responsible for maintaining oversight of the gathering and for ensuring that all persons in attendance comply with the requirements of the Order.

Gathering Limits

Stay up to date on the latest gathering limits and how they apply to your operation. These gathering limits may change and it is the responsibility of the event organizer and venue to stay up to date on public health requirements and adjust their plan as needed. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): restrictions and guidance - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada](#)

Informal Events

As per section 4.3, the limit for informal in-person gatherings is 25 people indoors and 50 people outdoors. Informal gatherings are typically at home and include persons residing in the same household or a close social group.

Formal Events

As per section 4.4, persons, business and organizations may host formal in-person gatherings whether indoors or outdoors, up to a maximum of 75% of legal capacity of the establishments.

Attendees and participants must practice masking requirements set out in section 5 and physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) as much as possible, except within close social groups as outlined in section 4.3.

Event hosts must have a COVID-19 Prevention Plan that adheres to the Order and guidelines outlined here.

Large Venues

As per section 4.6, where an existing business or organization hosts a formal event at one of the following large venues: Centre 200, Scotiabank Centre, Wanderers Grounds, Riverside Speedway, Scotia Speedworld, Halifax Convention Centre, or Halifax Exhibition Centre, the business or organization may host up to 75% of the legal capacity of the establishment or facility up to a maximum of 5000 persons, whether the activity is held indoors or outdoors. Attendees and participants must practice masking requirements set out in section 5 and physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) as much as possible, except within close social groups as outlined in section 4.3.

Outdoor Festivals

For outdoor events with no clear capacity limits or entry/exit points, organizers are responsible for building and executing a COVID-19 event plan which ensures social distancing and masking where appropriate as per section 5 of the Order.

If there is no clear boundary for an outdoor festival venue, organizers should do their best to establish one. Physical distancing is required. Masks are recommended. Organizers need to have a COVID-19 Prevention Plan.

Weddings, Faith Gatherings, Funerals

As per section 4.5. (a), when informal weddings, funerals and informal faith gatherings are not hosted by a recognized business or organization, they are subject to informal gathering limits (i.e., 25 persons if indoors or 50 persons if outdoors from the same household or close social group) plus one officiant. This is the limit even if you have a business like a wedding planner or caterer supporting your event at home. Masks and physical distance are not required.

As per section 4.5. (b), when weddings, faith gatherings and funerals (including receptions and visitation) are hosted by an existing business or organization legally operating in Nova Scotia, then the business or organization may host up to 75% of legal capacity of the establishment in which the event or activity is held. Attendees and participants must practice masking requirements set out in section 5 and physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) as much as possible, except within close social groups as outlined in section 4.3.

Performances / Field of Play

The above guidelines concern the management of event attendees and spectators. It

is the organization's responsibility to ensure that the activity is also compliant with the Order, including section 4.7 which outlines gathering limits for players, participants and officials.

Proof of Vaccination

- The proof of full vaccination requirement for discretionary activities was lifted on February 28.
- Businesses and organizations can set their own policies, but should consider the legal and ethical implications of those policies.

Masks

- Individuals, businesses, and organizations all have responsibility for ensuring masking requirements are followed in accordance with section 5.1 and can all be subject to enforcement action.
- As per section 5 of the Order, all persons must wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth while present in a public place, as defined in the Order.
- For special events, concerts, sport events and cultural events indoors, masking is required unless actively eating or drinking. Event hosts must ensure that patrons are seated when consuming food or beverages at events.

Food & Beverage Service

- 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> or by calling 1-877-936-8476.
- Event hosts must provide hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol or hand washing facilities at all entrances and exits, each vending area, as well as near highly touched surfaces such as elevators and check-outs.
- Event hosts must ensure that patrons are seated when consuming food or beverages at events. They no longer need to limit eating and drinking to a designated area.

Ticketing & Crowd Management

- If attendee contact information is being collected anyway, such as through the ticket sale process, consider securely keeping this contact information for a minimum of 30 days after the event or activities to aid in contact tracing if needed. There is no requirement under the Order to collect contact information at the door.
- Communication on tickets or in pre-event communications that discourages attendees, volunteers and others from coming into the venue or facility when sick, to get tested if you have [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#), and to stay home until well is required.
- Communication in advance of an event, encouraging attendees to socially distance as much as possible is required.

Venue/Facility Cleaning Practices

- Continue regular cleaning and disinfecting of all general surfaces that are frequently touched, such as doorknobs, handrails, equipment, etc. Increase the frequency of cleaning with increased use.
- High touch surfaces, like those found in a washroom, should be cleaned, and disinfected twice daily at a minimum and more often if necessary.
- Use a Health Canada-approved disinfectant, which is stored away from children.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations (minimum 60%) should be located throughout the facility and at seating area entrance points with posted signage to support hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- If the event organizer is providing portable toilets (outdoor events), they must provide portable handwashing stations and ensure that they remain stocked throughout the duration of the event. If possible, they should also provide hand sanitizer stations, ideally ones that are touch-free.

Building Ventilation

- Building mechanical ventilation systems(s) should be checked before the event, and each day after, to ensure equipment is operating as intended.
- Ensure ventilation is adequate for the number of people attending, the size of the venue, and the nature of the event or activity.

Communications / Signage

- Consider communication prior to the event or activities taking place that outline preventive measures to attendees, suppliers, volunteers and others who are attending the activities.
- Communicate to participants, workers and volunteers in advance of the event, the importance of staying home if feeling sick.
- Post signage at the venue/facility entrances that discourages attendees, volunteers, and others from coming into the venue or facility when sick, encourages them to practice good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette, to get tested when any COVID-19 symptoms develop, and to stay home until well.
- Keep signs visible (including in areas of the establishment not open to the general public) to remind employees, patrons, and participants to properly hand wash or sanitize and to use good respiratory hygiene practices.
- Use in-venue digital signage (if available), such as a video scoreboard or concourse signage, to reinforce both facility and personal hygiene protocols.
- Use facility social media channels and website to post the protocols.
- Consider post-event evaluations to survey attendees or others on measuring their level of comfort or facility cleanliness. This can provide important feedback and provide you an evaluation of your measures.

Healthy Workplace Policies

- Encourage your employees, participants, and volunteers to get tested if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or are directed by Public Health to isolate and/or be tested.
- Encourage your employees to get fully vaccinated. Businesses and organizations are encouraged to set their own vaccination policies. Any policies should take legal and ethical implications into consideration.
- Discourage attendees, volunteers, and others from coming into the venue or facility when sick, to get tested if COVID-19 symptoms develop, and to stay home until well.
- Masks are required in areas of workplaces where physical distance is not possible, as well as in common areas, areas where people are serving the public and areas with poor ventilation.

- Good health and safety program is crucial for developing a sustainable workplace safety culture. Government has developed a set of guidelines that can be used by workplaces to incorporate into their operations where warranted. Nova Scotia Government Protocols for Workplaces <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Protocols-for-workplaces.pdf>

Process for illness and exposure

- Consider keeping an isolation space in the venue/facility that can be used should someone show signs of COVID symptoms that can be close to exits to encourage the individual to return home, isolate, and seek testing.
- Advise attendees, volunteers, staff and others to adhere to Public Health instructions regarding isolation and contact notification should they test positive for COVID-19. <https://www.nshealth.ca/coronavirus>

Developing Your Plan

As per sections 4.4 of the Order, persons, business and organizations hosting formal gatherings in-person whether indoors or outdoors must have a COVID-19 Prevention Plan and must adhere to the Health Protection Act Order as well as the present COVID-19 Advice For Events Guidelines.

The following outlines a series of required protocols to ensure appropriate management of attendee safety, gathering limits, capacity management, flow of people, cleaning, concessions, staff and suppliers. These protocols must align with the Health Protection Act Order and should be regularly monitored and adjusted based on evolving public health requirements. Venues must do a risk assessment of potential hazards at their venue, which will inform what control measures are required.

Once your plan is complete, you must send it to nseconomy@novascotia.ca, demonstrating that you are adhering to the Order, as well as guidelines within this document. There is no formal approval requirement for plans.

Staff at Communities, Culture and Heritage will be notified and will log the event for future inspection by compliance officers. Organizers and/or venues are responsible for ensuring the plan is adhered to and that a copy is available on hand for compliance officers.

Masks

- Individuals, businesses, and organizations all have responsibility for ensuring masking requirements are followed in accordance with section 5 and can all be subject to enforcement action. Your event plan must demonstrate how you will ensure masking requirements are met.

Seating & Ticketing

While organizers are not required under the Order to collect contact information, list of attendees, where one exists, may be requested by Public Health to assist with any necessary contact tracing.

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 encouraged to make COVID-19 safety requirements available online via their website, social media and emails sent prior to the event.

Plans should include a seating map outlining locations of available seats for the event. Your plan must implement measures to encourage physical distancing across all facets of your facility and operation.

- From the entry point through to the seating location, a mix of staff, stanchions and floor markings will be used to guide attendees to their seats.
- Signage must be posted throughout the facility to promote physical distancing. Clear directional signage for entry and exit locations should be displayed 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.
- Signage and/or colour coding system should be used to flow of attendees. Use visual cues such as drawing circles in the venue or on the grounds where seating is not available to encourage physical distancing between households or close social groups.
- Staff should monitor queues to promote physical distancing.

Food & Beverage Service

- Beverages and food must be served and consumed within a designated seating area (See above masking requirements.)

- 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.
- 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 stanchions, 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.
- Make 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.

Process for illness and exposure

- Consider keeping an isolation space in the venue/facility that can be used should someone show signs of COVID symptoms that can be close to exits to encourage the individual to return home, isolate, and seek testing.
- Advise attendees, volunteers, staff and others to adhere to Public Health advice regarding isolation and contact notification should they test positive for COVID-19.

Washrooms

- Limit the number of occupants in the restroom at a 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, dispensers, 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.

- Cleaned and disinfected with a [Health Canada-recommended disinfectant](#), which is stored 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), you must also provide portable handwashing stations and ensure that they remain stocked throughout the duration of the event. If possible, also provide hand sanitizer stations, ideally ones that are touch-free.
- Organizers should develop a maintenance plan in place that outlines the number of washrooms and handwashing/sanitizing stations required, the frequency of cleaning, staffing requirements, etc.

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.

- 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
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations (minimum 60%) should be located throughout the venue 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 and ensuring an enjoyable experience for all.
- Consider how the facility will communicate the new COVID-19 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 both facility and personal hygiene protocols.

- Make announcements throughout the event to remind attendees of the protocols.
- Use facility social media channels and website to post the protocols.
- Use signage throughout the facility and within back-of-house spaces to outline COVID-19 protocols, including reinforcement of the importance of monitoring for symptoms.

Volunteer, Employee & Supplier Protocols

- Recognize the importance of keeping your volunteers and 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 volunteers, facility staff and third-party suppliers to ensure they are aware of the protocols and their responsibilities for enforcement.
- Implement a self-assessment tool to ensure a pre-screening prior to reporting to work. Volunteers and staff who feel unwell, were present at an exposure site or are close contacts of someone who was, or have limitations due to travel restrictions will be asked to stay home. If a volunteer or 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.
- Supplier access to the venue should be managed through a single-entry point and require sign-in.
- Require all volunteers and staff, regardless of role, to wear a non-medical mask while at the venue.
- Provide cleaning stations in all common areas and staff areas, including disinfectant wipes and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Post proper handwashing guidelines in all staff areas 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.