

Guidance for Reopening Outdoor Special Events during COVID-19

August 28, 2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, the Ontario Government is taking initial steps to ease some of the restrictions in the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990*. Small outdoor events that provide food or retail products, under Stage 3 of the Provincial Re-opening plan, are permitted to operate with [COVID control measures in place](#) and when complying with all applicable laws and regulations.

Large outdoor events, large festivals, parades and amusement fairs are not permitted. Public Health has defined large outdoor events as events with an expected pedestrian attendance of more than 100 attendees at any one time. If you would like to plan an event with more attendees, please submit a proposal through the [Reopening Ontario webpage](#). Note that larger events are permitted that meet the requirements of drive-in & drive-thru venues.

Given that COVID-19 presents some challenges with operation, the information below contains Public Health recommendations that may be considered to ensure Special Event organizers, staff, vendors and patrons minimize their risk of exposure to the virus while on site.

The Phase 3 prohibition of gatherings of more than 100 people does not apply to outdoor food or retail premises, such as [markets](#), provided that crowding is not occurring and a 2-metre distance is able to be reliably maintained between people. In addition, larger entertainment events are permitted if the requirements of a drive-in and drive-thru venue are met. Note that the same principles apply for indoor special events, however the maximum capacity is limited to 50 attendees at any one time.

Drive-in and Drive-thru Venues

All existing and new drive-in and drive-thru venues can open for a variety of purposes, such as theatrical performances, artistic events, cinemas and concerts.

- Operators must have in place procedures for staff to ensure people remain in their cars that are closed to the elements except for purchasing admission, food or drinks, using the washroom or in an emergency.
- The driver of the car must make sure that it is positioned at least two metres away from other cars.
- All performers and staff must remain at least 2 metres apart from cars and every other person except:
 - When it is necessary for performers to be closer to each other for the purposes of the performance
 - When necessary to sell admission, food or drinks
 - Where necessary for health and safety
- Food and/or drinks may only be sold to customers if:
 - It is sold at a concession stand that requires customers to stand at least 2 metres apart while waiting to be served and requires customers to immediately return to their car after being served, or
 - It is delivered directly to the customer's car
- No materials may be exchanged between customers unless they are in the same car
- In addition to other workplace and public health measures, drive-ins and drive-thru venues should:

- Limit the number of vehicles and control how they are parked to ensure physical distancing between vehicles is maintained.
- Ensure that any washrooms open for use are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.

Please note that operating an event or any essential business during these unprecedented times does not go without some risk. Those responsible for organizing and hosting Special Events must decide whether operations under these constraints, and with these risks, is technically, logistically, and financially feasible. Timiskaming Health Unit does not provide advice regarding an Event Organizer's or an individual vendor's ability to operate. It remains the Event Organizer's and vendor's responsibility to ensure that the event complies with all applicable laws, guidance and regulations to operate at this time.

As the COVID-19 landscape is ever-changing, please remain up-to-date by visiting the Ontario Government's [Provincial Emergency Orders and Closures](#) web page regularly.

Recommendations

Organizers/Coordinators responsible for outdoor Special Events, who choose to operate during the COVID pandemic and while an Emergency Order is in effect in Ontario, should follow the Public Health recommendations below to help minimize onsite exposures to COVID-19. In addition, Organizers are to submit plans for operations to Public Health 45 days in advance of the event by contacting a Public Health Inspector at 705-647-4305 or 1-866-747-4305 and completing the online [Special Event Food Permit](#) in order to provide Public Health with sufficient time to review and approve your event. For Special Event applications and resources please visit [Food Safety](#).

Promote Physical Distancing

- COVID-19 is largely transmitted through respiratory droplets that can spread up to two (2) metres or six (6) feet. Thus, physical distancing should be maintained by staff, vendors, and patrons, at all times. Physical distancing means allowing for two (2) metres or six (6) feet distance between individuals.
- When physical distancing is not possible, non-medical face coverings should be worn. Medical masks, including surgical, medical procedure face masks and respirators (e.g., N95 masks), are not essential and the supply should be reserved for health care workers and others providing direct care to individuals. Non-medical masks may reduce the amount of large respiratory droplets that a person spreads when talking, sneezing, or coughing, limiting the spread of the virus.
- Where possible, facilitate the one-way flow of people throughout the event space in order to minimize face-to-face foot traffic. Ideally, people should not pass by one another face-to-face.
- To help promote physical distancing and the safe flow of people, consider using posters or signage, arrows, barriers, or other markings to remind patrons and staff of the need to maintain a safe distance.
- Organizers should also establish a plan for monitoring and maintaining physical distancing and the safe flow of people to ensure crowding does not occur and appropriate distance can be maintained. This may include assigning staff or volunteers to help direct traffic or advise vendors, as appropriate.

Monitor Entry into the Space

- In order to control the number of patrons within the space, and to enable the flow of one-way foot traffic, Event venues should have only one entrance point, where possible.
- Erect barriers to direct people to limited entrance points. Staff or volunteers should be present at the Event entrance points to monitor entry and capacity levels.

- The venue space must not exceed one (1) patron per eight (8) square metres at any given time. This calculation is based on useable patron space, which does not include space occupied by vendors, displays, or other fixed objects. In some cases, Event operators may wish to permit less individuals in order to help ensure physical distancing is maintained.
- To ensure safe capacity levels, Event operators should establish a system for patrons to line up in order to gain access to the Event. Patrons must maintain physical distance of (2) metres or six (6) feet between themselves and others in line. Operators should consider using pylons, staff monitors or other markers to assist patrons with practicing proper physical distancing while in line.
- COVID-19 screening information should be posted near any entrance point into the Event space to help patrons, vendors, and staff identify whether they have any [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and, thus, whether they should enter the space or [self-isolate](#) at home. For example, consider displaying this [poster](#) from the Public Health Agency of Canada. Event operators should establish a plan for restricting entry among those who are ill (patrons or vendors).
- Handwashing stations (equipped with soap, single use towels, and warm, running water) and/or hand sanitizer (with at least 60 per cent alcohol content) should be located at the entrance to the Event. Patrons and anyone else entering the Event should wash or sanitize their hands upon entry.

Implement Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting Practices

- Event operators should establish a plan, in collaboration with vendors, to enhance cleaning and disinfecting practices.
- In addition to standard protocols for routine cleaning and disinfection, all common areas (e.g., washrooms) and high-touch surface areas (e.g., doorknobs, counters, handrails, debit/credit card machines) require disinfecting at increased levels and frequencies (i.e., at least twice daily). Disinfectant solution should have an 8-digit drug identification number (DIN) approved by [Health Canada](#). This indicates that it is effective against COVID-19. Alternatively, diluted bleach solution can be used, but requires surfaces to be cleaned and at least two (2) minute contact time before the solution dries or is wiped away with a clean cloth. Note that bleach solution gets weaker in heat and sun; if kept outside, the solution should be re-mixed at least twice a day. [Health Canada](#) recommends diluted bleach be prepared according to the instructions on the label or, assuming the bleach is 5 per cent sodium hypochlorite, in a ratio of:
 - One (1) teaspoon (5 mL) per cup (250 mL); or
 - Four (4) teaspoons (20 mL) per litre (1000 mL).
- See this fact sheet from Public Health Ontario for [cleaning and disinfection in public settings](#).
- Disinfectants, household cleaners, and bleach are meant to be used to clean surfaces. Never use these products on skin or internally (e.g., by swallowing or injecting these products) as this could cause serious harm.
- Ensure there is a process in place to verify appropriate concentration levels if the disinfectant is not already pre-mixed. Always read and follow manufacturers' instructions for safe use (e.g., wear gloves and use in well-ventilated area).

Promote Good Hand and Respiratory Hygiene

- Event staff, vendors, and patrons should be advised to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Good hand hygiene includes washing hands frequently with warm, soapy water and/or sanitizing hands frequently with hand sanitizer that has at least 60 per cent alcohol content.
- Good respiratory etiquette includes coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow or disposable tissue.

- Event operators should consider posting the following signage from Public Health Ontario in washrooms or other common areas throughout the space: [Hand Hygiene signage](#) and [Cover your Cough signage](#).
- Event staff and vendors should be reminded to properly clean their hands when there is a need to directly handle food items; after processing payments; after coughing, sneezing, or touching the face; after cleaning and sanitizing/disinfecting surfaces; upon returning from a break; or at any other time which may cause hands to become contaminated.
- Handwashing stations (equipped with liquid soap, single use towels, and warm, running water) and/or hand sanitizer (with at least 60 per cent alcohol content) should be located throughout the Event space, including the entrance, at each vendor booth, and other common areas. Event Operators' should establish a plan, in collaboration with vendors, to ensure handwashing or sanitization materials are made available at vendor booths/throughout the space.
- Glove use among Event staff and vendors should not be a requirement. Incorrect glove use can lead to cross-contamination of surfaces.
 - If staff or vendors choose to use gloves, they should practice proper handwashing before they put the gloves on, and after they take the gloves off.
 - Plastic, latex, and nitrile gloves are intended to be single-use only.
- Non-medical face coverings may be used by Event staff, volunteers, vendors, and patrons, at their discretion.
 - Event organizers may wish to make use of such face coverings mandatory in instances where physical distancing of two (2) metres or six (6) feet between cannot be maintained.
 - For those that do wear non-medical face coverings, proper donning and doffing measures should be followed. This includes properly washing or sanitizing hands prior to putting the face covering on and after taking the face covering off.
 - Individuals should handle the face-covering by the elastic ear hooks and avoid touching the part the goes over the mouth and nose.
 - For more information, see Public Health Ontario [When and How to Wear a Mask](#).

Implement Additional Food Handling and Point of Sale Precautions

- In addition to operating in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, such as the Ontario Food Premises Regulation under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, Event organizers and vendors should consider implementing additional food handling and point of sale precautions, such as the following:
 - Vendor booths should be set-up to reduce customer contact with food items.
 - Prepared food items should be packaged (wrapped or bagged) as much as possible. Items that are not wrapped (such as produce, single-serve bakery items, etc.) must be stored in a manner that protects them from contamination. For example, operators or vendors could consider installing barriers, such as Plexiglas or similar.
 - Vendors should select food items for patrons and then place them on a table for patrons to pick the items up. This method of shopping permits physical distancing between customers and vendors.
 - Online or telephone ordering is encouraged so that customer orders are ready for pick-up at the time of their visit. This helps to minimize the amount of time patrons are spending in the area and supports the safe flow of people/physical distancing.
 - Implementing a drive thru food pick-up events consistent with the practices and principles of typical food premises drive through / curbside pick-up reduces COVID-19 risks and is encouraged

- Where feasible, operators and/or vendors should consider implementing cashless payment systems or encouraging only debit or credit card payment. In any case, it is recommended that each vendor have one person to select the items patrons are purchasing and another person to process payments. Proper handwashing/hand sanitizing must be practiced after each payment is processed.
- Patrons may use re-usable bags for their own use only. Re-usable shopping bags should be cleaned and sanitized/disinfected after each use and only be handled by the patron.

Maintain Communications

- Ensure event staff, volunteers, and vendors are aware of any policies or procedures that will be implemented while operating within the context of COVID-19. Event organizers should work with vendors to create individual plans, as needed, and/or to secure signed agreements to any new policies or procedures due to COVID-19.
- Event organizers should ensure all staff, volunteers, and vendors know to stay home if they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#). Event staff, volunteers, and vendors should be made aware of the Ministry of Health’s [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) and asked to use it prior to coming to the space each “shift” or day to help identify any symptoms and/or the need to stay home.
- Event Organizers should consider communicating to patrons about the policies, procedures, or other practices they are implementing to help minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 (e.g., via social media). This will help patrons know what to expect before coming to the space. In addition, as noted above, Event organizers should consider posting signage throughout the space to remind patrons about:
 - COVID-19 symptoms and staying home when ill;
 - Physical distancing practices;
 - Good hygiene and respiratory etiquette; and

Event organizers should maintain a log of staff and vendors that are onsite daily. At a minimum, name, dates and times of entry, places accessed within the venue, and contact information should be documented. Having this information will assist Public Health with close-contact tracing and communication should someone fall ill with COVID-19, or come into close contact with a person that has tested positive for COVID-19.

Applicable Laws and Regulations

Notwithstanding the above, Event organizers and vendors must continue to comply with all applicable legislation, including:

- [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#)
- [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- [Mandatory Masks or Face Coverings in Indoor Public Spaces](#)
- [Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#)
- All other related laws and regulations

Other Resources

The following is a list of other helpful resources and webpages to consider:

- [COVID-19 Guidance for Essential Workplaces](#) (Ministry of Health)
- [COVID-19 self-Assessment Tool](#) (Ontario Health West)
- [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) (Ministry of Health)
- [List of DIN-registered Disinfectants](#) (Health Canada)

For more information regarding the Province's guidelines regarding Infection Prevention and Control, please review the guidance provided by the provincial [Ministry of Health](#).

Public Health does not provide advice regarding your ability to operate and it remains the business's responsibility to ensure compliance with all applicable laws to operate at this time. These guidelines and resources should be reviewed and followed.