



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®
SOCIÉTÉ DE SAUVETAGE

The Lifeguarding Experts
Les experts en surveillance aquatique

Lifesaving Society Canada
Suite 001 – 1145 Hunt Club Road, Ottawa, Ontario K1V 0Y3
Telephone: 613-746-5694
E-mail: experts@lifesaving.ca Web: www.lifesaving.ca

Information Bulletin
COVID-19 Facility Operations
Recommendations for Progressive Reopening

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Background

Aquatic recreational activities have many physical and mental health benefits for the population. In the context of climate change, swimming is an accessible cooling measure to better adapt to increasing and extreme heat conditions.

Swimming is the second most popular activity (after bicycling) in Canada among school-age children between 5 and 12 years of age, thus contributing to the adoption and maintenance of healthy lifestyle habits. To take full advantage of its many benefits, it is imperative that the population be able to participate in these aquatic activities in a safe manner and minimize potential health risks.

Less than 1% of all fatal drownings in Canada occur in lifeguard supervised swimming locations. Aquatic facilities provide an essential public service at all times and especially during heat waves; opening them is part of many public health injury prevention plans. Therefore, as COVID-19 poses a public health threat, it is essential to address operational concerns for aquatic facilities while maintaining the prevention measures recommended by provincial/territorial public health authorities.

In the event of increasing summer temperatures and heat wave health advisories, in consultation with local health authorities, owners and operators of public aquatic facilities need to plan to open their pools and waterfronts to allow the public to cool off while continuing to adhere to all current COVID-19 precautions.

The Lifesaving Society advises owners, operators, lifeguards, aquatic instructors and coaches to follow the existing recommendations outlined on the World Health Organization (WHO) website. Refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and guidelines provided by provincial and territorial public health authorities. These resources provide the most up to date information on basic protective measures against COVID-19.

Implementation

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated questions and concerns about potential exposure to the virus when aquatic facilities reopen.

The objective of this Information Bulletin is to assist owners and operators of aquatic facilities in minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission to employees and the public when facilities reopen. These recommendations provide guidance both to facility operators and lifeguards at swimming pools and waterfronts.

Owners and operators should review the following Lifesaving Society Information Bulletins as found on the Lifesaving Society Canada website at <https://www.lifesaving.ca/safety-management-services.php>

- COVID-19 Aquatic Facility Maintenance: Cleaning, Decontamination and Safe Water Management of Aquatic Facilities
- COVID-19 Facility Operations: Recommendations for Aquatic Staff Training
- COVID-19 Resuscitation & First Aid Recommendations

Owners and operators should also review Lifesaving Society Canada's national standards providing additional operational details to assist swimming pool and waterfront operators.

This guidance is based on expert opinion and evidence-based research from many credible health organizations throughout Canada and globally. Recommendations should be adapted to meet local conditions of the disease burden as well as resource availability.

The Lifesaving Society continues to reassess the public health risk based on the best available evidence as the COVID-19 situation evolves. These recommendations will be updated as additional information becomes available.

COVID-19 Facility Operations: Recommendations for Progressive Reopening

The owner and/or operator should:

1. Create a plan for the reopening of aquatic facilities according to provincial and territorial health authority requirements.
2. Ensure that every employee suspected or confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 stay home or seek medical attention and have a detailed plan to manage their return to work.
3. Establish a strategy for safe employee access to the facility.
4. Develop human resource policies that are fully compliant with existing workplace health and safety regulations and labour codes.
5. Avoid sharing equipment and supplies between employees, or shared equipment must be disinfected before re-use.
6. Ensure employees are provided with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the work being performed, and that the equipment is cleaned and sanitized between users.
7. Post signs at the facility entrance to inform all bathers that:
 - a. Patrons may not enter the facility if they suspect they have COVID-19 symptoms.
 - b. If admitted, maintain a physical distance of 2 meters from other bathers and employees.
 - c. All patrons maintain proper hygiene when in the facility.

8. Provide facility access with one entry point and a separate exit point.
9. Install physical markers on the floor or walls (cones, lines, stickers, wooden structures, etc.) that indicate appropriate two meters spacing distances for patrons waiting in line.
10. Ensure that a physical barrier is provided between the cashier and the client and that no physical contact is made between the employee and the patron.
11. Take measures to avoid crowds gathering or long waiting times such as a reservation system giving bathers a time limitation for use of the aquatic facility.
12. Encourage bathers, where possible, to shower at home before and after swimming.
13. Ensure that the occupancy rate in changerooms is reduced to allow physical distancing, and that the total occupancy always allows a minimum space of 5 square meters per person.
14. Ensure delivery personnel/suppliers drop off goods at a designated delivery location.
15. Limit the exchange of paperwork and encourage electronic signatures on contracts or delivery forms.
16. If a bathroom is available on the pool deck, encourage bathers to use this toilet to avoid patrons from entering other areas of the facility.
17. Post signs to inform patrons on how to hand wash.
18. Ensure that surfaces, sinks and toilets are cleaned and disinfected regularly.
19. Educate patrons that treated pool water is an effective disinfectant and that risk while in contact with treated pool water is considered minimal.
20. Use hard-surface disinfectants that meet Health Canada's requirements for emerging viral pathogens. These authorized disinfectants may be used against SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>
21. Use antiseptic/antibacterial skin cleansers or hand sanitizers that meet Health Canada's requirements for emerging viral pathogens. The list of authorized products is available online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/hand-sanitizer.html>
22. Ensure that policies for the use of diving boards, waterslides and rope swings are adjusted to establish physical distancing measures.
23. Prevent access to whirlpools (including hot tubs and spas), saunas and steam rooms which present a higher risk of COVID-19 contamination due to the close proximity of users.

The owner and/or operator can consult Lifesaving Society resources to assist in the implementation of adequate measures to address these recommendations.

Definitions

- **Coronavirus:** Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

- **COVID-19:** COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. As of January 2020 COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, affecting countries world-wide.
- **Operator:** the trained individual designated by the owner to be responsible for the day-to-day operation of an aquatic facility.
- **Owner:** the person or corporation who is the owner of an aquatic facility.

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Approval

- Approved by the Lifesaving Society Canada Safety Standards Commission on 06 May 2020.
- Approved by the Lifesaving Society Canada Management Team on 12 May 2020.
- Approved by the Lifesaving Society Canada Board of Directors on 15 May 2020.

Disclaimer

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards are developed using Coroners' recommendations, the latest evidence-based research, and reflect the aquatics industry's best practices at the time the publication was approved.

In the rapidly changing COVID-19 era, Lifesaving Society Canada will update the COVID-19 Information Bulletins as evidence-based research becomes available. The information contained within this document does not replace or supersede local, provincial/territorial or federal health authority guidelines.