

Performing Arts: Protocols for returning to operation

The following content was posted to WorkSafeBC's website on June 24, 2020. For the most current version, please visit [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

These protocols provide guidance to employers in the performing arts industry, including live theatre and musical theatre, dance, opera, performance art, and symphonies. Employers may also benefit from reviewing other protocols if their workplace includes other work environments such as offices, personal services, retail, arts and culture, and food and drink services.

Employers must also ensure they are abiding by any orders, notices, or guidance issued by the provincial health officer, and the appropriate health authority, that are relevant to their workplace.

Developing a COVID-19 safety plan

Employers are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan that outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures they have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Employers must involve frontline workers, joint health and safety committees, and supervisors in identifying protocols for their workplace.

The COVID-19 Safety Plan follows the six steps outlined on COVID-19 and returning to safe operation. You can also refer to the COVID-19 Safety Plan OHS Guideline for information about developing a safety plan, including the level of detail required and use of supporting documentation.

Employers are not required to submit plans to WorkSafeBC for approval, but in accordance with the order of the provincial health officer, this **plan must be posted** at the worksite and on their website, if they have one. During a WorkSafeBC inspection, we will ask employers about the steps they have taken to protect their workers or to see the plan if it has been developed.

One part of developing your COVID-19 Safety Plan is identifying protocols that everyone at the workplace must follow to keep workers safe. We've provided industry-specific protocols below to consider as you develop the plan for your workplace.

These protocols are not a list of requirements; however, they should be considered and implemented to the extent that they address the risks your workplace. You may need to identify and implement additional protocols if the protocols suggested here do not sufficiently address the risk to your workers.

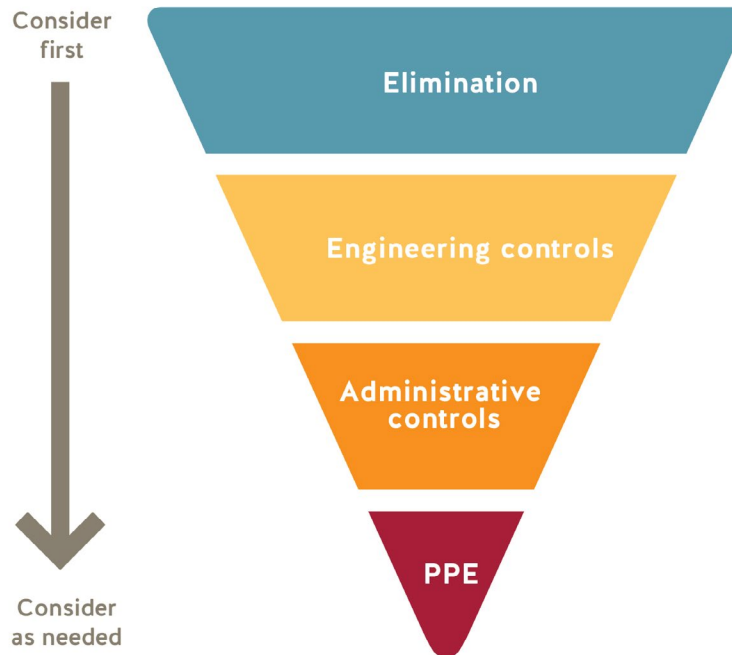
Understanding the risk

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Higher risk situations require adequate protocols to address the risk.

- The risk of person-to-person transmission is increased the closer you come to other people, the amount of time you spend near them, and the number of people you come near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.
- The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time. Effective cleaning and hygiene practices help mitigate this risk.

Selecting protocols for your workplace

Note that different protocols offer different protection. Wherever possible, use the protocols that offer the highest level of protection and add additional protocols as required.



First level protection (elimination): Use policies and procedures to keep people at a safe physical distance from one another. Limit the number of people in your workplace at any one time, and implement protocols to keep workers at least 2 metres from other workers, customers, and members of the public.

Second level protection (engineering controls): If you can't always maintain physical distancing, install barriers such as plexiglass to separate people.

Third level protection (administrative controls): Establish rules and guidelines, such as cleaning protocols, telling workers to not share tools, or implementing one-way doors or walkways.

Fourth level protection (PPE): If the first three levels of protection aren't enough to control the risk, consider the use of masks. Ensure masks are selected and cared for appropriately and that workers are using masks correctly.

Protocols for performing arts

General considerations

- Establish and post an occupancy limit for the facility that includes members of the public and staff. See the COVID-19 Safety Plan for guidance on establishing occupancy limits. Establish and post occupancy limits for areas within the facility including dressing rooms, break rooms, and washrooms. Performing arts venues are subject to the provincial health officer's order prohibiting mass gatherings of 50 people or more. Ensure that physical distancing can be maintained throughout the facility.
- Post the COVID-19 Safety Plan and other related policies or procedures for workers. Communicate COVID-19 protocols to workers prior to their arrival on site. Send day calls a copy of the COVID-19 Safety Plan in advance of their call.
- Clearly communicate policies to ensure workers understand who can be at the workplace, which includes following the guidance of the provincial health officer and the BC CDC around self-isolation:
 - » anyone who has had symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 10 days must self-isolate at home; symptoms include fever, chills, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and new muscle aches or headache
 - » anyone under the direction of the provincial health officer to self-isolate must follow those instructions
 - » anyone who has arrived from outside of Canada, must self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms
- Inform patrons when they reserve event ticket(s) of your policies restricting people exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and people who have come into contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 from the event. Patrons should be advised that they will not be allowed access to the facility if they develop symptoms before the event. Communicate your policy and venue protocols to patrons prior to the event. Consider adjusting your cancellation and refund/exchange policy to allow for patrons to cancel without penalty should they develop symptoms.
- Provide adequate messaging on event policies and procedures at the venue or event, and through website, social medial channels, ticket purchasing sites, emails and push notifications, mobile apps, and signage.
- Include COVID-19 education where possible, including safety meetings and daily toolbox talks (where applicable).
- Identify workers who may effectively be able to work remotely or from home and limit onsite work to essential roles and responsibilities.
- Where possible, stagger work schedules and breaks to reduce overcrowding.
- Establish small working groups (or cohorts) that work together routinely and exclusively to reduce the risk of broader transmission. Examples may include small groups or teams that require closer contact for tour buses, loading, assembling, striking, rehearsing, etc.
- Consider alternatives to large gatherings, e.g., live streaming, pre-recorded shows, small acoustic concerts, solo performances, or virtual reality and other digital experiences.
- Where possible, hold events outdoors instead of indoors.
- Limit or cancel activities where distances or other appropriate controls cannot be implemented such as patrons standing by the stage, moshing and crowd surfing, photo opportunities, autographs, backstage access, etc.

- Buskers and other street performance events that attract crowds outside of a venue's controlled area should be avoided due to the difficulty of maintaining appropriate distancing and managing the size of the gathering.
- Assign designated restrooms to sections of theatres or venue to control patron movement.

Venues

- Workers should ensure that organizations, groups, or individuals that participate in events in a public venue comply with the venue's rules and precautions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Adjust public accessible spaces to support physical distancing among workers and patrons. This could include:
 - » Control and stagger entry into, and exit from, the venue. Organize patron egress from back to front or nearest the exits leaving first by row or section.
 - » Extend the time between door opening and performance start time.
 - » Increase the amount of time available for intermission to allow patrons to navigate high traffic areas such as ingress, egress, hallways, concessions, and washroom areas, or reduce the length of time for a show or event to eliminate the need for intermission.
 - » Open the lobby at the same time as house to allow patrons to move directly to seats or load venue by row or entry door.
 - » Establish different points of entry and exit from high traffic areas.
 - » Manage the flow of people by implementing one-way walkways or marking off designated walking areas.
 - » Identify areas, such as lobbies or washrooms, where crowding is common, and using workers, or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas.
- Create delineated and designated areas if patrons are required to wait in line. Use floor markings, lines or cones to show proper physical distance when lining up for box office, security screening, entry, washrooms, retail, concession, etc.
- Establish and communicate handwashing and sanitizing guidance for workers and patrons.
- Provide adequate hand washing and hand sanitizing facilities and ensure these are stocked with supplies. Provide at entrances and other well-marked and illuminated locations throughout the venue. These stations should allow no-touch activation if possible.
- Ensure that seating allows for a physical distance of 2 metres between people who are not in the same party. Depending on the size of seats, this may mean leaving alternating rows empty, and leaving one or more seats empty between parties. This may be done through a combination of blocking off unavailable rows, and signage and communication to patrons reminding them to leave the appropriate number of seats between parties.
- Ensure a minimum distance of at least 2 metres between performers and audience seating areas.
- Increase the availability of waste receptacles near washrooms and at venue egress points to reduce the accumulation of litter.
- If there are other productions or existing tenants sharing the complex, establish joint protocols to facilitate the recommended physical distancing, hand washing, and enhanced cleaning of common areas.
- Discontinue use of sharable worker lockers.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- Establish cleaning and disinfecting protocols that address high-contact surfaces throughout the venue. Consider the following areas in your cleaning protocols:
 - » Front of house and public areas (lobby, hallways, dining and food service areas)
 - > Door handles, push plates, elevator buttons
 - > Washrooms
 - > Handrails and banisters for stairs, ramps, and escalators
 - > Reception desks and ticket counters
 - > Point of sale terminals, and other keypads
 - > Tables and chairs, including arm and head rests
 - > Beverage stations, water fountains, vending and ice machines
 - > Trash receptacle touch points
 - » Back of house offices, dressing areas, green rooms, production areas
 - > Shared office spaces
 - > Door handles, push plates, doorways, railings
 - > Light switches
 - > Cabinet handles
 - > Telephones, computers, other keypads, mouse
 - > Microphones and music stands
 - > Backstage and technical equipment
 - > Trash receptacle touch points
 - > Back of house kitchen and food preparation areas
- Ensure that arm rests within the theatres are cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Ensure dressing rooms and trailers are cleaned and disinfected before being assigned to a new performer.
- Ensure all outside gear entering a venue is cleaned and sanitized upon arrival at workplace.

Delivering and receiving goods

- Establish pick up and drop off areas for courier drivers and ensure that physical distancing is maintained throughout the delivery and drop-off.
- Request contactless delivery to maintain physical distancing requirement (e.g., delivery person leaves packages in a pre-arranged location). This option may be limited if signing or proof of receipt is required.

Performers, including actors, dancers, and musicians

- Consider alternative methods for performances that require close contact between performers. This may include intimate or fight scenes that require close contact over extended periods. Discuss protocols with appropriate personnel for workers who have scenes that require closeness or intimacy, and schedule those scenes strategically. Performers have the right to refuse close contact with others, such hugging, kissing, and stunts requiring close contact.

- Playing instruments or singing may result in greater dispersion of droplets from each worker due to higher intensity breathing in addition to participant movement. Position workers to maximize physical distancing. Where possible, perform these activities outdoors.
- Reduce the number of workers in large gathering areas such as backstage and waiting areas. Establish and post occupancy limits. Limit access to essential personnel only.
- Mark areas on stages to ensure each worker is assigned a designated area in which they can move about to maintain physical distancing with other workers.
- Where feasible, workers should put on and adjust their own headphones, in-ear monitor, and microphone to ensure physical distancing is maintained.
- Wherever possible, instruction and practice sessions should be conducted remotely, via video conference or other means.

Casting and auditions

- Travellers to B.C. from outside of Canada may not be permitted to enter the province, and if they do, they are required under order by the provincial health officer to self-isolate for 14 days.
- Cast remotely wherever possible by using virtual meetings or other means.
- Cast members of the same household in activities where physical distancing cannot be maintained and where appropriate.
- Eliminate open calls and assign arrival times. Do not allow individuals to enter facility until scheduled time.

Costumes, wardrobe, hair and makeup services

- Refer to WorkSafeBC guidance for motion picture and television production for additional protocols for costumes, wardrobe, hair and makeup services.
- Restrict dressing rooms to single occupancy, unless provided to members of the same household. Use larger rooms where physical distancing can be maintained or barriers can be installed (arrange for at least 2 metres between work stations).
- Where physical distancing cannot be maintained and other control measures such as barriers cannot be used, masks should be worn to reduce the risk of transmission. Ensure that masks are selected and cared for appropriately and that workers are using masks correctly. If the type of mask used does not offer adequate protection to the wearer, clients should also be encouraged to wear masks to protect workers.

Production and back of house

- Develop strategies to limit the number of workers required during load-in, run, and strike. Restrict back-of-house workers to essential personnel only.
- Stagger technical set up time, rehearsal or sound check time so they do not overlap.
- Post occupancy limits in enclosed spaces such as control/sound booths, change or dressing rooms, green rooms, tents and orchestra pits.
- Reduce the number of workers allowed, to conform with physical distancing guidelines or if not possible, consider barriers such as plexiglass or mute shields between musicians where possible.

Tools, equipment, props, and instruments

- Where possible, equipment should be assigned and kept with a specific department or working group. For example, each department (carpentry props, lighting, sound, etc.) should have their own gear including hand tools, portable power tools, carts, cases, tape, etc.

- Assign personal visual and audio equipment such as microphones, radios, headsets, etc. to individual workers for their exclusive use. These can be stored in labeled, sealed bins or bags.
- Minimize the sharing of tools, equipment, props, instruments, musical scores and all other items. Establish protocols for cleaning/disinfecting shared items before they are used by another person. Workers should wash or sanitize their hands before and after using shared items.
- Ensure shared items and high-contact areas of the work area are included in cleaning and disinfecting protocols for the workplace. For electronics, follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfecting.
- Consider using wipeable covers for electronics, touchscreens and keypads.
- Clean and sanitize production equipment and cargo when loaded at the warehouse and unloaded at the venue.

Construction

- Refer to WorkSafeBC guidance for construction for protocols pertaining to load in, set-up, run, and strike.

Transportation of workers and charter buses

- Restrict access onto charter or tour buses to authorized personnel only.
- Seat workers in such a way that a physical distance of 2 metres is maintained wherever possible except between members of the same household or working group or cohort. Consider using larger vehicles or multiple vehicles to give people more space. If it is not possible to ensure 2 metres of distance between workers in a vehicle through these measures, consider other control measures, such as the use of masks.
- Implement a process that allows for physical distancing when loading and unloading buses or other vehicles.
- Ensure high contact surfaces within vehicles are routinely cleaned and disinfected. These include seats, seatbelts, headrests, door handles, steering wheels, and hand holds. For charter buses this includes couches, beds, washrooms, tables, etc.

Patrons and front of house

- Ensure any workers that are expected to manage line-ups of patrons are trained in COVID-19 protocols. Ensure that they have support and strategies for dealing with patrons who may be unwilling or who are unable to understand the approach to managing volumes.
- Provide audience instruction prior to the show to emphasize changes and new expectations around audience behaviour, regular egress, emergency egress and washroom use.

Valet parking

- Workers should wash or sanitize hands between each vehicle. Ensure handwashing stations or sanitizing supplies are available close to the valet area.
- Workers should consider wearing masks while in the vehicle for the comfort and security of the vehicle owner.
- Disinfect any touched surfaces in vehicle upon entering and exiting the vehicle including the steering wheel, door handle, and vehicle controls. Ensure a waste receptacle is available upon exiting the vehicle so that cleaning supplies can be discarded.
- Reconfigure queuing area for egress or designate valet waiting. Patrons should be called when their vehicle is ready.

Box office

- Provide physical barriers such as glass partitions or plexiglass at point of sale stations, and open ticket windows such as will call and box office.
- Provide online ticket options.
- Install guest-operated card readers where possible.
- Encourage patrons to pick up tickets in advance of performance date. Establish will-call pickup time slots to control peak traffic.

Security screening

- For services where physical distancing cannot be maintained and other control measures such as barriers cannot be used (for example workers conducting a pat-down), masks should be worn to reduce the risk of transmission. Masks may not protect the wearer from the virus, but they can reduce the spread of the wearer's respiratory droplets to others. For that reason, patrons should be encouraged to wear masks in these situations to protect workers. Workers should also wear masks to protect patrons. Refer to WorkSafeBC guidance on selecting and using masks.
- Review the screening area configuration to allow greater distance between patron and worker. If secondary inspection is required, provide a location for patron to remove the contents of their bag. Ensure no worker contact with the patron or belongings.
- Eliminate workers from conducting secondary hand scanning and require patrons to empty pockets, purses, bags, etc.
- Ensure hand washing or sanitizing stations are accessible by workers.

Ticket scanning and building entry

- Implement assigned entry locations to reduce crowds at the main doors.
- Adopt touchless ticket scanning; patron retains the ticket or electronic device during scanning.
- Relocate scanning locations away from the doorway to increase distancing.

Ushering

- Limit patron movement to designated seating area only.
- Eliminate usher contact with patrons and provide self-service seating and program pickup (if any).
- Increase floor marking and aisle signage to allow patrons to find their seats more easily.

Concession, counter, and bar service

- On June 10, the office of the provincial health officer issued a revised order for Food Service Establishments and Liquor Services. This order provides a number of requirements for these establishments, including how occupancy limits must be calculated, table and seating configurations, the use and configuration of barriers, collecting and maintaining contact information from patrons, and the application of the 50-person maximum order on events.
- Refer to WorkSafeBC guidance for restaurants, cafes, and pubs for additional protocols for food services.
- Establish and post occupancy limits for concession, food courts and seating areas.
- Ensure adequate handwashing or sanitizing or stations are located close to food and beverage services. Post signage around effective hand hygiene practices.
- Ensure appropriate physical distancing is maintained in food service and eating areas. Consider the configuration of tables and seating to ensure distancing is maintained.

- Create delineated and designated eating areas. Use lines or cones to show proper physical distance when lining up for food or beverages.
- Mark one-way entry in and one-way exit out of eating areas.
- Provide mobile ordering or pre-ordering intermission refreshments.
- Provide barriers, such as plexiglass, at point of sale or where the physical distancing requirement cannot be maintained between workers. Ensure that barriers are included in the cleaning and disinfecting protocols.
- Redesign cashier layout or point of sale terminals to provide greater physical distancing between workers. Point of sale terminals should be assigned to one worker where possible, and they should be sanitized between each user and before and after each shift.
- Install self-service ordering and pay stations.

Retail vendors

- Refer to WorkSafeBC guidance for retail for additional protocols for retail vendors.
- Provide contactless ordering. Items for sale can be posted on a website or event app that allows for mobile ordering and on-site pickup.
- Mark merchandise sales lines on floor, with barricade, or rope and stanchion.

Recording studios and office environments

- Refer to WorkSafeBC guidance for office for protocols pertaining to office spaces.
- Encourage use of appointments and stagger appointment times to limit customer interaction.
- Provide adequate time to clean and sanitize equipment and high-touch surfaces (i.e., mic stands, door knobs).
- Encourage bringing clean personal equipment (such as headphones) to the appointment.
- Post occupancy limits for the studio based on space available and physical distancing.
- Have vocal performances conducted in an isolated room whenever possible.

Related links

See the following links for additional information, guidance, or resources that may assist you in the development of your plan.

- [Actsafes Safety Association](#)
- [Event Safety Alliance Canada](#)
- [Creative BC](#)

For more information

The information on this page is based on current recommendations and may change. For the latest guidance, please see the health information from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control and the latest news from the government of British Columbia.

If you have a question or concern

Workers and employers with questions or concerns about workplace exposure to COVID-19 can call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland (toll-free within B.C. at 1.888.621.SAFE). You'll be able to speak to a prevention officer to get answers to your questions, and if required, a prevention officer will be assigned to assess the health and safety risk at your workplace.

Translated resources

Our key COVID-19 related resources are also available in Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), French, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.