COVID-19: Guidance for Special Events

June 22, 2020

The following recommendations aim to support event organizers in their planning efforts and provide guidance to reduce risks associated with the transmission of COVID-19 at events of all sizes. With community transmission of COVID-19 in Ottawa, there is a risk that transmission from both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals may occur in community settings. While measures to attempt to reduce these risks may be implemented, it is important that organizers, staff and participants be aware of the related risks.

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) continues to follow the lead of provincial authorities, who set the guidance and protocols with respect to emergency closure orders and any relaxation of these rules. The Government of Ontario released A Framework for Reopening our Province, which signals a careful stage-by-stage approach to reopening Ontario.

The permissibility of and operational requirements for special events are contingent on Provincial Emergency Orders. Public events and large social gatherings remain a high-risk activity and many activities are currently prohibited in Ontario.

Questions and proposals related to event formats permissible under Provincial Orders, including drive-in and drive-thru events, can be directed to EventCentral@ottawa.ca.

Business tools and information

The City of Ottawa’s Business Reopening Toolkit is a reference guide that touches on:

- Administrative controls
- Workforce health and safety information
- Signage, visible markings, and controls
- Physical distancing, considerations for respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene and mechanisms to aid in physical distancing
- Reducing touch points and increasing cleaning
- Communication plans
- Cloth mask use and PPE

Additional resources

Ottawa Public Health – Information for Workplaces
OPH’s Service Provider Reopening Plan Template and Checklist
Province of Ontario – Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace
  - Tool: COVID-19 workplace safety plan template
Reducing the risks of transmissions during event operations

Screening

Develop a plan to screen staff, volunteers, vendors and patrons prior to arrival on site. This includes during event operations as well as during set-up and tear-down activities.

- Staff, volunteers and vendors are to stay home if they are sick.
- Develop a contingency plan for absenteeism.
- Remind staff to be practicing physical distancing, wearing cloth masks while out in the community and frequent hand washing to decrease the likelihood of being infected.
- Tool: OPH Employee Self-Screening Questionnaire

Ill patrons should not attend the site.

- Direct attendees to the Ontario Government self-assessment tool.
- Consider how the event will manage reimbursement requests for ticketed events.
- Add signage reminding people to self assess and if they have symptoms, they should not attend the event.

Develop a protocol should someone become ill or symptomatic while on site.

Physical distancing

Develop a physical distancing plan so that everyone can maintain at least 2 metres (6-feet) distance from each other.

- Physical distancing includes staff to staff, attendee to staff, and attendee to attendee. Staff include those employed by the festival or event, volunteers and third-party vendors.
- Physical distancing requirements apply to all components of the event space: approaches, entrances, exits, parking and within the site (including back of house operations)
  - Within the site, consider the physical distancing measures for where crowding occurs – where lines are likely to form, spectator areas, at stages, washrooms, food/beverages, etc.
  - Managing flow within the site is central to managing physical distancing
    - Where distancing cannot be maintained at a common interaction point (e.g., check-in, cashier), consider use of a physical barrier (Plexiglas) to protect staff and customers
- Encourage all event participants, volunteers, staff and vendors to wear a 2-3 layer cloth mask if physical distancing may not be possible. Visit Ottawa Public Health’s website for more information on masks.
- Will staff and patrons have access to washrooms while on site? Develop a plan to ensure physical distancing as well as cleaning and disinfection.
- Signage: Physical Distancing
Consider grouping staff with the same co-workers to limit the overall number of contacts they will have.

**Provide public access to hand hygiene stations and supplies**

Develop a plan to facilitate hand hygiene on site for staff, volunteers, vendors and attendees:

- At entrances and exits, within the site, at comfort stations, back of house, etc.
- Keep accessibility in mind for station locations and set-up.
- When sinks are not available, hands-free alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations are recommended.

Encourage frequent and proper handwashing.

- Signage: [How to Handwash](#)
- Signage: [How to Use Alcohol-based Hand Rub](#)

**Reduce touch points and increase cleaning**

Develop a plan for reducing the number of touch points that occur:

- Entrance ticket scanning, bag checks, door handles, token exchanges, handling of merchandise, etc.

If possible, encourage patrons to pay by debit or credit card (tap if possible) and have staff wipe machines and use hand sanitizer immediately before and after each interaction.

- Consider the types of interactions during the event where transactions occur:
  - at ticket booths, food, beverage and merchandise vendors, etc.

Develop a thorough cleaning and disinfection plan for commonly touched surfaces.

- Commonly touched surfaces include washrooms, hand hygiene stations, points of sale terminals, food and beverage areas, waste/recycling receptacle touch points, back of house offices, dressing areas, technical equipment, golf carts.
- Tool: [OPH cleaning and disinfection checklist](#)
- Factsheet: Public Health Ontario [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)

**Review emergency response procedures**

The need for physical distancing creates challenges for existing emergency procedures. Review the plans in place for various scenarios including, but not limited to, medical emergencies, places of refuge and evacuation scenarios. Event organizers may need to re-evaluate the size and capacity of their designated shelters in the case of an emergency, such as an extreme weather event or egress capacity that may prevent physical distancing. Organizers may consider proactively postponing or cancelling where they cannot effectively activate emergency plans without exposing workers and patrons to greater risk of transmission. Emergency egress plans should continue to
reflect that moving patrons away from the most urgent hazard is the first order of business.

Additional resources
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Considerations for Events and Gatherings
Event Safety Alliance – Reopening Guide

Annex A: Drive-in and drive-through events

As part of the Province of Ontario’s Phase 2 reopening, all existing and new drive-in cinemas were permitted to open. Concerts, theatrical productions, performance and artistic events for more than 10 people may also be offered if they are provided in a drive-in or drive-through format that complies with the specific requirements. Regulations pertaining to such venues are outlined in Regulation 263/20 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

Conditions for drive-in and drive-through cinemas and events

1. Each person in attendance, other than the individuals who perform work for the drive-in cinema or the drive-in or drive-through event, must remain within a motor vehicle designed to be closed to the elements except:
   i. Where necessary to purchase admission,
   ii. Where necessary to use a washroom, or
   iii. As may otherwise be required for the purposes of health and safety.
2. The driver of a motor vehicle at the drive-in cinema or the drive-in or drive-through event must ensure that it is positioned at least two metres away from other motor vehicles.
3. Every person who performs work at the drive-in cinema or the drive-in or drive-through event must remain at least two metres apart from motor vehicles and from other individuals, except for the purposes of facilitating the purchase of admission or food or beverages.
4. Any washrooms that are open for use for the individuals in attendance at the drive-in cinema or the drive-in or drive-through event must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.
5. Food and beverages may only be sold to individuals in attendance at the drive-in cinema or the drive-in or drive-through event if they are delivered directly to the person’s motor vehicle.
6. No materials may be exchanged between individuals in attendance at the drive-in cinema or the drive-in or drive-through event, except,
   i. materials exchanged between members of the same motor vehicle,
   ii. materials exchanged between individuals who perform work for the drive-in cinema or the drive-in or drive-through concert, theatrical production, performance or artistic event, and
   iii. such materials as are necessary to facilitate the purchase of admission or food or beverages.
Additional considerations

In addition to the guidance outlined in the main document above, organizers of drive-in cinemas and drive-in and drive-through events should consider the following:

1. Pre-sale of tickets for specific dates/times will minimize traffic congestion and potential driver frustration.
2. Hosting an event in the evening minimizes the potential health risks associated with remaining in a vehicle during the daytime heat and the potential for idling.
3. Duration of the event. Longer events will encourage attendees to leave their vehicle to stretch or use the washroom.
4. Parking stalls should be well marked and large enough to accommodate oversized vehicles.
5. Signage should be well placed and an appropriate font size to be visible from within a vehicle.
6. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited per Section 32 of the Liquor Licence Act.
7. Measures for maintaining physical distancing in washroom queues as well as disinfecting and cleaning.
8. Plans for vehicles with mechanical issues on the event site.
9. Ensure all attendees are informed of event rules before the event begins.
10. Events with over 500 individuals in attendance (including staff and volunteers) require a special event permit per the Special Events on Public and Private Property By-Law.

Resources

Workplace Safety and Prevention Services – Guidance on Health for Outdoor Recreation and Drive-in/Drive-Thru Entertainment