Climbing Escalade Canada

The CEC COVID-19 Guidance Document: Suggestions, Tools, and Considerations Aimed to Assist Climbing Gyms Mitigate Potential Risks in the era of COVID-19

Version 6.0

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Climbing Escalade Canada (the CEC) has developed a COVID-19 Task Force to assist Canadian climbing gyms in reopening after the government-mandated closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and helpful tools to assist Canadian climbing gym operators in interpreting government guidelines and to provide climbing-specific context to those guidelines. Additionally, this document hopes to assist operators in developing their own specific business strategies to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19 in climbing facilities

This document is to be regarded as **a living guideline**, and does not claim to be complete. Additions, updates, and alterations should be expected and incorporated on an ongoing basis based on the guidelines put forward by the municipal, provincial, and federal health authorities.

CEC encourages Provincial and Territorial organizations to create documents tailored to the needs, regulation, and vocabulary of each region based on this document. The CEC requests that this document be credited as a source and recommends including this document (in its entirety) when submitting a provincial/territorial document to relevant authorities.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

The suggestions and recommendations developed in this document were created by the CEC with pan-Canadian representation from climbing gym owners, taking into account changing national, provincial, and local regulations. These guidelines are meant to be helpful suggestions, and should not supersede the rules, regulations, and standards developed by all levels of Canadian government.

The members of the sub-committee used to develop this document include:

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1.2 CLIMBING ACTIVITIES

The nature of the sport of climbing involves the touching of appropriate equipment and climbing holds within a climbing facility. These principles align with other recreation facilities, fitness gyms, and similar sports such as gymnastics. Current evidence suggests that transmission of COVID-19 occurs primarily through droplet/contact of the virus from person to person, although transmission through shared

surface contact may occur. In this way, current preventative measures recommended by the government and health authorities such as frequent hand washing, covering your cough, and maintaining physical distance may be reasonably adequate to reduce the risks of infection within a climbing gym. Special considerations specific to climbing activities include the necessity for both the partnerships in the sport of climbing, as well as shared climbing holds on climbing routes.

2.0 AREAS OF CONSIDERATION FOR RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management is an integral part of the sport and climbing facility operations. While the risks of COVID-19 are fundamentally different from the inherent risks of climbing, the evaluation of risk, learning techniques to mitigate risk, and making judgments about acceptability of risk are integral to the activity and climbing gym operators are well-versed in accommodating health and safety in their space.

This document will identify four (4) areas of consideration for climbing gym operators to consider when developing their local reopening plans. This is not meant to represent a comprehensive list, and operators are encouraged to adopt suggestions to fit facility requirements. A checklist has been developed to assist gym operators in developing their own policies (Appendix 2).

The following components have been identified as areas of consideration:

1. **Capacity Management and Occupancy Flow**: Managing social interaction in facilities and physical distancing requirements
2. **Hygiene and Cleaning**: Mitigating the transfer of the virus from high-touch surfaces
3. **Group Activities**: Lessons, birthday parties, competition climbing, etc.
4. **Communication and Education**: Staff training, client behaviour
5. **Outbreak and Contact Tracing**: Strategy to alert health authorities as needed, and inform clients should a suspected positive case be identified at the facility

2.1 Capacity Management and Occupancy Flow

Recommendation 1: Develop a Capacity Management Strategy (CMS) that can be easily incorporated into day-to-day activities, while meeting local and provincial distancing requirements.

A strategy to ensure that climbing facilities can maintain appropriate capacity management and occupancy flow should be in place, in order to safely allow for physical distancing.

Measures should be taken to distribute customers sensibly throughout the day and hours of operation while controlling customer movement throughout the facility. The CMS may be developed in stages, allowing for adaptation of changing government regulations.

Included in a facility CMS should be a strategy to best maintain physical distancing requirements to satisfy mandated physical distancing requirements, as well as mitigate the transmission risks to facility employees and clients.

The following are key aspects of consideration:

- Entry and Exit points
- Locker rooms and washroom facilities
- Fitness and Training areas
- Reception and observation areas
- Climbing spaces (bouldering areas, roped climbs, auto-belays)
- Rest and recovery areas

All facility CMSs should include a mechanism by which the strategy can be monitored.

For a list of suggestions that may be taken into consideration please see Appendix 1. The list includes suggestions that may be taken into consideration and adapted to suit local facilities.

2.2 Hygiene and Cleaning

Recommendation 2: Develop appropriate hygiene and cleaning protocols to reduce virus transmission from high-touch or shared elements.

Protocols should take into account the recommendations and requirements of local, provincial, and national health authorities. Facilities are encouraged to communicate new policies to both staff and clients.

Information regarding the risk of transmission of COVID-19 can be found here: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html

For a list of suggestions that may be taken into consideration please see Appendix 1. The list includes suggestions that may be taken into consideration and adapted to suit local facilities.

All strategies should include appropriate staffing and supplies to enact this strategy as well as a system for ensuring and recording that these tasks are completed, when necessary. Strategies may also include additional sanitization measures that will be utilized should a possible case of COVID-19 be identified at the facility. Please see Appendix 1 for further suggestions.

2.3 Group Activities: Lessons, birthday parties, competition climbing

Recommendation 3: Climbing facilities to consider the impact on how group activities services are offered.

Some activities may need to be reconsidered in order to adhere to local public health restrictions. These activities can be modified to meet public health requirements and or restarted once government regulations are lifted. Facilities are asked to consider the policies developed in 2.1 and 2.2.

For a list of suggestions that may be taken into consideration please see Appendix 1. The list includes suggestions that may be taken into consideration and adapted to suit local facilities.

2.4 Communication and Education: Staff training, client behavior

Recommendation 4: Develop a strategy to address all levels of communication and education, including staff, client, and health authorities as needed

The protective measures and policies developed by each facility are to be communicated to both staff and clients to ensure clarity of rules and expectations. Considerations on the frequency of education should be taken into account, as changing government guidelines may alter or lift the rules developed.

Clients entering the facility will be asked to take personal responsibility for individual behaviours to comply with new facility rules. The gym operator will want to ensure the comfort of the client and staff with the new regulations that may be in place.

For a list of suggestions that may be taken into consideration please see Appendix 1. The list includes suggestions that may be taken into consideration and adapted to suit local facilities.

2.5 Contact Tracing and Outbreak Strategy

Recommendation 5: Be aware and follow local reporting requirements should a possible case be identified at the facility and create a strategic plan for outbreak identification.

Gyms should develop a strategy in place to allow for rapid contact tracing if a case or outbreak of COVID 19 in the gym has been identified. Considerations should include:

● Notify local health officials, staff, and customers (if possible) immediately of a possible case while maintaining confidentiality as required
● Rapid ability to identify date and time of infected client facility use
● Rapid ability to contact other facility users who may have been in contact with infected client (if appropriate)
● Designate a person to act as contact person and to track Health Authority recommendations.

3.0 Resources

Climbing Escalade Canada COVID-19 Task Force: http://climbingcanada.ca/en/pandemic-task-force/

Climbing Wall Association COVID-19 Page: https://climbingwallindustry.org/page/Coronavirus
https://www.reopen.climbingwallindustry.org/

International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC): Climbing during COVID-19 Working Group:
https://www.ifsc-climbing.org/index.php/covid-19

Provincial Sport Organizations Websites:
Sport Climbing BC: http://www.sportclimbingbc.ca/
Alberta Climbing Association: https://albertaclimbing.org/
Ontario Climbing Federation: https://www.climbontario.ca/
Fédération Québécoise de la montagne et de l'escalade : https://fqme.qc.ca/

Canada
https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html

Alberta:
Alberta Health Services: https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx
Government of Alberta: https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx
Government of Alberta re-opening plan: https://www.alberta.ca/external/covid19-alberta-relaunch-strategy.pdf

British Columbia:
Government Response to COVID-19: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support
Restart Plan: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan
WorksafeBC Returning to Safe Operation Guide: https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation
BC Centre for Disease Control: http://www.bccdc.ca

New Brunswick:
Government COVID-19 Recovery Plan: https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19/recovery.html
New Brunswick COVID-19 Business Guidance Info:
https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/gateways/for_business/covid19.html
New Brunswick Business Operational Planning Guide:
https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/Promo/covid-19/covid-op-plan-guide.pdf
New Brunswick Chief Medical Officer of Health:
https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh.html

Ontario:
Ontario Government COVID-19 Information: https://covid-19.ontario.ca/
Ontario Reopening Framework: https://www.ontario.ca/page/framework-reopening-our-province
Public Health Ontario COVID-19 Information: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources

Québec:
Public health: msss.gouv.qc.ca/professionnels/maladies-infectieuses/coronavirus-2019-ncov/
Government COVID resource page: quebec.ca/sante/problemes-de-sante/a-z/coronavirus-2019/
CNESST - QC Work health & safety: cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/Pages/accueil.aspx

Saskatchewan:
Saskatchewan Government COVID-19 Information: https://www.saskatchewan.ca
Reopen Saskatchewan Plan: https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/re-open-saskatchewan-plan/re-open-saskatchewan

Appendix 1: Guideline Recommendation Examples

The following table outlines different mechanisms that facilities may adopt for use in their facilities.

Please note that this list is not comprehensive, and facilities are encouraged to develop other strategies outside this list as needed.

2.1 Capacity Management and Occupancy Flow
Recommendation: Develop a Capacity Management Strategy (CMS) that can be easily incorporated into day-to-day activities, while meeting local and provincial distancing requirements.
The following is a list of suggested strategies that can be utilized by climbing facilities to assist in developing a local CMS: Physical Controls: ● Installation of physical barriers in areas such as physical reception/sign-in ● Restriction on number of roped climbs in an area with designated "belay zones" ● Floor markers/barriers to indicate preferred movement patterns ● Removal of observation areas to reduce congregation in common areas Administrative Controls: ● The implementation of a reservation system for clients to designate "timeslots" for gym usage ● Restriction of admission days based on factors appropriate to the facility such as membership type, day of the week, etc. ● Avoid lines through staggered admission or hours of operation ● Restriction of climbers through visual separation of facility areas into zones with limited time usage/capacity ● Rotation between climbing zones based on time ● Bouldering area zone restrictions ● Restricting floor areas around routes and limiting area to one partnership at a time

2.2 Hygiene and Cleaning
Recommendation: Develop appropriate hygiene and cleaning protocols to reduce virus transmission from high-touch or shared elements.
The following is a list of suggested strategies that can be utilized by climbing facilities to reduce virus transmission: • Increased frequency of cleaning high traffic and high touch surfaces such as door knobs, washroom fixtures, pay terminals, and countertops. • Schedule regular cleaning of high touch non-climbing areas • Effective strategy for washing climbing holds prior to routesetting • Adequate supply and appropriate use of PPE for all staff • Measures to eliminate or minimize physical interaction between staff and customers

- • Modifications to operational procedures (such as transactions or rentals) where indirect contact cannot be completely avoided
- • Increased availability of hand washing opportunities
- • Limited use or closure of showers
- • Limited use or closure of Locker rooms or lockers
- • Handwashing stations
- • Provision of disinfectant
- • Designation of employee-only washrooms/facilities

The following are considerations to include in the hygiene/sanitation protocols to address the identification of a potential COVID-19 case at their facilities

- • Temporarily close off areas used by the infected person(s). Cooperate and communicate with local health authorities to address all issues for reopening
- • Mobilize contact tracing protocols (using local reservation or check-in systems etc.) to inform those who have had contact with a person(s) with COVID-19 and advise them to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and follow local health guidance if symptoms develop.

2.3 Group Activities: Lessons, birthday parties, competition climbing

Recommendation: Consider the impact on group activities that commonly occur in the facility.

The following is a list of suggested strategies that can be utilized to alter group activities that occur in the facility, if needed:

- • Alteration of the mechanism of delivery, such as belay lessons.
- • Temporary suspension of large group gatherings to comply with local health regulations

2.4 Communication and Education: Staff training, client behavior

Recommendation: Develop a strategy to address all levels of communication and education, including staff, client, and health authorities as needed.

The following is a list of suggested strategies that can be utilized to develop a local communication and education strategy:

Considerations for client education include:

- • Hand hygiene protocols and requirements
- • The use of liquid vs powdered chalk
- • Wearing of masks
- • Coughing/sneezing conduct
- • Physical distancing requirements
- • Requirements for shared equipment
- • Requirements for rented equipment
- • Introduction of a specific COVID-19 code-of-conduct waiver or integration into the existing waiver
- • Clear messaging through signage and website updates to explain measures being undertaken by the facility to prevent disease spread (e.g. handwashing stations), as well as client behavioural expectations (e.g masks, covering your cough)

Considerations for staff education include:
- Clearly communicated 'Sick Policy' for both Staff and Users
- Effective strategy for washing climbing holds prior to routesetting
- Sanitization checklists
- Training for staff for client education
- Monitoring strategy for frequency of education as needed

3.0 Contact Tracing and Outbreak Strategy

Recommendation 5: Be aware of local reporting requirements should a possible case be identified at their facility. A strategic plan for outbreak identification and compliance should be included in the facility's strategies.

The following is a list of suggested strategies that can be utilized to ensure compliance with local health authorities regarding an outbreak:
- Keep contact information and protocol for possible cases updated, and in an easy to find area at all times
- Ensure a hygiene/sanitization strategy for possible positive cases has been developed

The following are considerations to include in the hygiene/sanitation protocols to address the identification of a potential COVID-19 case at their facilities
- Temporarily close off areas used by the infected person(s). Cooperate and communicate with local health authorities to address all issues for reopening
- Mobilize contact tracing protocols (using local reservation or check-in systems etc.) to inform those who have had contact with a person(s) with COVID-19 and advise them to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and follow local health guidance if symptoms develop.

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Appendix 2: Worksheet

The following worksheet is meant to guide local climbing facilities in the development of a reopening strategy during COVID-19. In filling out this worksheet, facilities should be able to address major areas of concern in the development of a reopening strategy. To use this worksheet, type over the grey text in each box and add in information specific to your local area and facility. Facilities are encouraged to attach the guidance document to their workplans upon completion.

*Please note: This worksheet should be used as a **guide only** – facilities are ultimately responsible for ensuring the completeness of their own local strategy.*

Capacity Management Strategy: Ensure provincial distancing requirements are incorporated

Capacity Flow *(indicate how the facility will address capacity management through customer flow by typing over the grey text in the boxes below)*

Area of Risk	Strategy Needed	Capacity Management Strategy (include strategies for monitoring items)	Hygiene and Cleaning Strategy (include strategies for monitoring items)
Client Admission	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. reservation system, timed entry	
Reception/ check in	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. physical barriers for staff at check in, floor markers to indicate direction of movement	e.g. masks and gloves for staff
Entry/Exit points	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. signage, physical distancing floor markers, etc	e.g. hand sanitizer stations at entrance
Locker Rooms/ washrooms	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. maximum number in use at a time, closure of showers	e.g. cleaning schedule
Fitness/ Training area(s)	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. maximum number in use at a time, closure of some areas	e.g. cleaning schedule

Area of Risk	Strategy Needed	Capacity Management Strategy (include strategies for monitoring items)	Hygiene and Cleaning Strategy (include strategies for monitoring items)
Observation areas	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. maximum number in use at a time, closure of some areas	e.g. cleaning schedule
Climbing area – Bouldering	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. capacity limits per area, limiting the number of problems in an area, maximum number of climbers on the wall at a time Include monitoring strategy	e.g. cleaning strategy for areas and holds
Climbing area – Ropes	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. capacity limits per area, limiting the number of routes in an area, "belay zones" below the climber to encourage physical distancing	e.g. cleaning strategy for areas, fixed equipment, and holds
Climbing area – autobelay	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. capacity limits per area, limiting the number of routes in an area	e.g. cleaning strategy for areas, fixed equipment, and holds
Climbing area - other	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. capacity limits per area	e.g. cleaning strategy for areas, fixed equipment, and holds
Rest/recovery area(s)	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. maximum number in use at a time, closure of some areas	e.g. cleaning schedule
Staff area(s)	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. maximum number of staff in areas at a time, staggered scheduling	e.g. cleaning schedule
Group lesson(s) and area(s)	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. pause on belay lessons, e-learning	e.g. cleaning schedule
Birthday Parties	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. pause on group gatherings, closure of some areas, follow local health authority regulations	e.g. cleaning schedule

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Area of Risk	Strategy Needed	Capacity Management Strategy (include strategies for monitoring items)	Hygiene and Cleaning Strategy (include strategies for monitoring items)
Youth Program(s) (please list all programs)	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. pause on group gatherings, closure of some areas, follow local health authority regulations	e.g. cleaning schedule

Communication Strategy

Area of Risk	Strategy needed	Mitigation strategy
Staff Communication	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. Staff training, bulletins, weekly meetings with updates
Client Communication	☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable	e.g. website updates, signage at entry, client behavior and expectation signage, integration into waivers

Communication monitoring - Indicate how your facility will monitor and update communications

e.g. weekly staff signoff of new information, staff monitoring of client behaviours

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Outbreak Response

Local Health Authority Contact Information:

Include website, phone numbers, etc.

Cleaning strategy – outbreak response:

Specific sanitization strategy due to identification of possible case

Communication strategy – outbreak response:

Specific communication strategy to staff and clients

Contact Tracing strategy:

Indicate how the facility will trace theactivity of possible positive case