

Guidance for Winter Activities in the Community

It is important to encourage residents in our communities to get outdoors this winter to be active and social in safe ways with COVID-19 restrictions limiting opportunities to gather indoors in order to maintain physical, mental and social well-being.

This guidance is intended to support municipalities and community groups with planning winter activities for the public in community spaces while adhering to public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is to be used with other public health guidelines and measures. Please review the regulation currently in effect - [O. Reg. 364/20](#) (for **Green-Prevent**, **Yellow-Protect**, and **Orange-Restrict**), [O. Reg. 263/20](#) (for **Red-Control**), and [O. Reg. 82/20](#) (for Grey – Shutdown/Lockdown), to ensure measures in place adhere to the level of restriction Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG) region is currently under*.



While under the Enhanced Provincewide Shutdown restrictions, please also refer to the [Enhancing Public Health and Workplace Safety Measures in the Provincewide Shutdown](#) resource for further details.

Visit wdgpublichealth.ca for ongoing updates and links to additional resources. WDGPH is unable to review individual policies and protocols. These are not legal documents.

General Requirements

Face Coverings	Face coverings are required to be worn by members of the public and municipal staff in indoor public places and outdoors when physical distancing of at least 2-metres cannot be maintained.
Safety Plans	Facilities must ensure a safety plan is prepared, posted in a location where individuals working at that location can access it and shall be made available to any person for review upon request. O. Reg. 642/20 .
Capacity Limits	Facilities must adhere to capacity limits of current colour zone (see chart below). *However, all gathering limits are also restricted to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres from every other person, outside of household contacts, within the space.

*Note the [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe](#) is paused during the provincewide shutdown

Gathering Limits for Recreation Settings*

	PREVENT (Standard Measures)	PROTECT (Strengthened Measures)	RESTRICT (Intermediate Measures)	CONTROL (Stringent Measures)	LOCKDOWN (Maximum Measures)
Public park or field	25 people or less				5 people or less
Indoor facility (e.g. arena)	50 people or less			10 people or less	Closed
Outdoor facility (e.g., outdoor skating rink – see below for additional guidance for outdoor rinks)	100 people or less			25 people or less	5 people or less

Recommendations for Winter Activity Planning in the Community

Goal: Make access easier for people to get active outdoors



Designate specific community spaces for outdoor activity that will provide suitable space to keep physical distance



Offer opportunities to rent winter activity equipment through lending libraries ([cleaned and disinfected](#) between each use)



Make planned activities free or low-cost for everyone to encourage participation
(Use of contactless or online payment methods)



Create a central spot for people to access information about community winter activities (E.g., page on municipal website listing all activities; Check out the City of Hamilton's ["Winter in Hamilton"](#))



Promote activity spaces and planned events within the community through different mediums and channels

Goal: Design spaces that are inviting for people to get active outdoors

Incorporate design strategies to block wind

- Strategically place mounds of cleared snow to block wind in open areas; configure spaces within existing tree lines to block wind in open areas



Maximize exposure to sunshine through space orientation and design

- Helps to maximize daylight hour exposure and provide warmth for users



Use colour and various mediums to liven up the activity space

- Create inviting spaces to get active using colourful signage, structures, and equipment (e.g., canopies or umbrellas, deck chairs or hay bales as natural bench seating, outdoor art installations)



Create visual interest with strategic use of creative lighting

- Lit up spaces are great for creating visual interest and helpful for safety and can be used in several locations (e.g., parks, trails, streets)



Provide infrastructure that supports the desired participation in activities

- Regularly clearing snow from transportation routes (roads, sidewalks, trails); providing covered areas for shelter and warmth; accessible public washrooms



Goal: Use a mixture of existing spaces and create new opportunities



Existing recreation spaces provide vital infrastructure for use in winter

- Outdoor courts, arenas, soccer fields, baseball diamonds, toboggan hills



Consider how other spaces within the community can be used creatively to promote opportunities for outdoor activity

- For example, consult with local golf courses about opportunities to use their field spaces for community use (walking or snowshoe loops, disc golf courses)
- Open field areas can be turned into public skating rinks, snow fort or snowman building areas, etc.



Trails are a great existing structure that can be promoted for winter use if maintained on a regular basis (e.g., snow clearing)

- Trails can be made even more accessible for winter activity by using lights, signage, markers to help maintain physical distancing while using



Move activities that would normally take place indoors → outside

- Outdoor movie events where households can sit together and space out from others on blankets or hay bale benches set up to ensure distancing

Goal: Include the key public health principles for preventing COVID-19

COVID-19 Screening and Alert App

- Post signage in activity area about the importance to [screen for COVID-19 symptoms](#) and to stay home if ill or experiencing any of those symptoms. Include instructions on [how to download the COVID-19 Alert App](#)



Physical Distancing

- Set up activity area strategically to make it easier for people to maintain at least 2-metres distance between each other (e.g., arrange furniture/equipment, prompts on the ground to mark distance for spots to stand, stakes in the ground to mark walking traffic routes or using lighting to guide people)
- Have signs posted (e.g., entrance points) in spaces to indicate crowd size capacity limits allowed at one time



Wearing a Face Covering

- Although face coverings are not required outdoors, if the space does not allow for people to maintain physical distance from one another of at least 2-metres, it is recommended that they wear a face covering (read [Face Coverings FAQs](#) for more information)
- Volunteers or staff helping to operate these activity spaces should wear a face covering (suggested to bring 2-3 face coverings with them to be able to change into a new face covering if it gets wet)
- For outdoor events, face coverings must be worn in those indoor areas of the establishment that are accessible to the public (e.g., entrances, hallways, washrooms, etc.)



Hand Hygiene and Cleaning

- Have alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol) available at all entrances and exits as per the [Section 22 Class Order](#)
- Common surfaces or objects that several people may touch should be [cleaned and disinfected](#) regularly to avoid spread of COVID-19 (e.g., gate handles, equipment, railings)
- Limit the use of, or close drinking fountains
- Ensure any [rented equipment is cleaned and disinfected](#) between each use



Other Guidance Documents

- For specific COVID-19 guidance on [Sport & Recreation](#)
- For specific COVID-19 guidance on [Public Washrooms](#)
- For specific COVID-19 guidance on [Special Events & Gatherings](#)

- For specific COVID-19 guidance on [Mobile Food Vendors](#)
- For COVID-19 Poster [STOP Before Entering](#)
- [Risk Mitigation Tool for Gatherings & Events](#) (Government of Canada)

Guidance for Outdoor Skating Rinks

If the outdoor rink is unsupervised and open for public use:

- Take a similar approach to what precautions would be done for a playground
- Post signage regarding physical distancing (at least 2 metres), maximum capacity limit for the number of people that can use the rink at one time (based on the size of the rink while allowing for 2 metres physical distancing), importance of self-screening for symptoms, hand hygiene, and advising participants to use the space at their own risk and use responsibly.
- Maximum capacity would depend on the size of the rink and limited to the number of people that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres in the rink space at any one time.
- Any person who enters or uses the ice rink must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres from every other person using the ice rink (excluding members of the same household).
- If you provide washrooms/changerooms, you must ensure cleaning requirements under [Regulation 364/20](#) are followed. Refer to [COVID-19 Guidance for Public Washrooms](#) for more information. *Note:* If WDG region moves to **RED-Control** zone or **Lockdown**, any locker rooms, change rooms, showers and clubhouses will be **closed**, except to the extent they provide access to a washroom or a portion of the amenity that is used to provide first aid.
- A municipality may choose to impose more stringent limits on the number of people who use the outdoor rink. Your municipality may choose to cap it at 25 people as a precautionary measure. It would be at your discretion and may be a strategy to control numbers.

If the outdoor rink is being booked or reserved for one group:

- Maximum capacity would be 25 people or less (as it would be considered an organized social gathering) for all colour zones **EXCEPT** “Lockdown”, it becomes a maximum of 5 people
 - Allowing for a minimum of 2 metres of physical distancing, taking into account the fact that people are skating and cannot always remain 2 metres apart.

If the outdoor rink is used by a team for a team sport:

- Team sport requirements would apply to this situation corresponding to the current [zone colour](#) in which WDG Public Health is in at the time of use.

- During the [Provincewide Shutdown](#), team sports, or other sports or games where people may come within two metres of each other, are not practiced or played within the amenity

Considerations:

- How will municipalities operate outdoor rink spaces?
 - If you are involved with booking space and/or monitoring its use, you may also have to consider all other requirements for businesses or organizations under [O. Reg 364/20](#), [O. Reg 263/20](#) or [O. Reg 82/20](#) (depending on the current stage/zone of restriction) including: a [Safety Plan](#), [recording name and contact information of every member](#) of the public using an affiliated indoor space (e.g., washroom or change room)

Other helpful resources on outdoor rink guidance:

- [COVID-19 Guidance for Outdoor Ice Surfaces/Rinks and Outdoor Skating Trails](#) (Simcoe-Muskoka District Health Unit)
- [COVID-19 Guidance for Outdoor Ice Rinks](#) (Toronto Public Health)



References

[Winter Design Guidelines: Transforming Edmonton into a Great Winter City.](#)
(2016). City of Edmonton.

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