

COVID19 Protocols for Fisheries Interactions with Coastal Communities

Coastal communities are deeply concerned with the COVID-19 pandemic as they do not have the infrastructure to deal with this global pandemic. Fishermen are likewise concerned. This is a series of protocols to help reduce the risk for both coastal communities and fishermen. For specific information about health and safety protocols please refer to recommendations from the CDC and other approved health authorities.

To produce safe, healthy seafood for Canada and other markets, we need to be respectful of community concerns as well as organize ourselves so we can work in a safe and responsible manner when unloading, buying supplies, fueling up and other activities we need to carry out to be able to fish.

It will take the social permission of coastal communities and First Nations for fishermen to be able to work, and the only way to achieve this is by respecting and understanding their concerns and acting appropriately.

This is a draft list of protocols; it will be updated with new information as the situation unfolds. We hope this will provide concrete direction for what actions are needed to keep communities and fishermen safe during this crisis.

Pre-Season

1. Skippers need to be confident that their vessel is virus-free before they leave port. If crews are coming from other areas of the province or country, they will need to **self-isolate for 14 days prior to any work starting** as a group on the boat or working on gear.
2. Skippers need to familiarize with how the virus is spread and how to protect against it spreading. Crew will need to continue hand washing with soap on the boat, and to be extra-vigilant in this.
3. Ensure vessel has adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE). **Note that PPE does not replace the need for physical distancing, hand washing, etc.**
4. Once available, it will be very important for each vessel to have a supply of the **Home Test for COVID-19**. This is our only ask of government that we cannot control, the others are all actions we can undertake ourselves.
5. When practicing emergency drills, do not share immersion suits or other safety/protective equipment.

Cleaning / Disinfecting Solution

6. A solution of 1/3 of a cup of bleach to 1 gallon of fresh water is a CDC approved to kill the virus.
Note: this solution is only effective for up to 24 hours, after which point a new batch must be mixed.

On the Grounds

7. Fishermen should not stop in isolated communities for social visits. Fishing vessels should only come to port when they need to unload or re-supply. If possible, vessels should anchor out if there is a wait to unload.

8. The following process (which was implemented in the prawn fishery following an e-coli contamination incident around 2000) is recommended: ***Vessels must wash down all surfaces that fish come into contact with each day at the end of the day and more often if needed. Crew first washes all surfaces with salt water and soap, then rinse with salt water. After this, cleaning solution should be used to wash all surfaces, without rinsing at this step. Cleaning solution should then be left on overnight or until work recommences. Prior to starting work again, all surfaces should be rinsed with salt water.**

At the Dock

9. **Harbor Authorities are asked to, whenever possible, keep washroom facilities open.** In many communities there will be a number of vessels with fishermen living onboard for weeks or months at a time. Washrooms should be supplied with disinfectants so people can wash the facilities prior and following use then it should be possible to keep the washrooms open. This will probably also require extra cleaning from wharf staff as well, but is crucial to ensure the harvest of seafood in Canada. Lack of access to wharf washrooms could lead unsanitary conditions and potentially for seafood going to market causing human health issues, like noro-virus, etc. from fecal contamination. This poses the risk that ports/marinas may remove the commercial fishing activity currently taking place.
10. **Fishermen will have to be mindful of keeping customers physically distant while conducting dockside sales.** Communities will not tolerate poor control on the wharf leading to possible virus safety concerns. Tape should be placed every 6 feet on the dock to keep customers physically separated. When selling product online, fishermen should space their customers out by time, ensuring pickups occur at least 15-30 minutes apart and maintain a physical distance of 6 feet when processing payment.

Unloading

11. When a vessel is unloading the crew should do the work on vessel themselves, so that no one needs to come from the shore crew on to the boat. **Crew should wear gloves while unloading.** Hands must be washed prior to putting gloves on. The gloves will need to be disinfected after the unload.
12. When unloading the shore crew should only handle the product once it is on the wharf. Ensure to maintain distance if unloading by hand on a floating unloading wharf.
13. After unloading, the deck will need to be scrubbed down as well as all surfaces that may have come into contact with equipment from shore or people from shore. Use cleaning solution as referenced above.

Getting Supplies - Stay on the Boat

14. When getting supplies, ***minimize contact***. Have goods and services delivered and, if not possible, 1 or 2 people from crew do the shopping and laundry. **The rest of the crew should stay on the boat. Disposable gloves and face masks/coverings** should be used when off the boat and then disposed of after all chores are done on shore. Wash hands before putting on gloves and masks. Clothes worn in town should be placed in a garbage bag for 3 days. (If clothes have come into contact with the Virus, 3 days of bagged storage is advised as sufficient for decontamination). All door handles, light switches and other routinely touched surfaces should be cleaned after someone returns to the vessel. **Remember you need to protect the crew from disease as well as the community.**

15. VHF and cellphone communications will be key components in maintaining orderly and smoothly running systems for all of the necessary functions for fishing vessels to unload, fuel up, grub and water up and all other needs of the vessel and crew and harbours to maintain fisheries and fishing vessels.
16. Use VHF radios and cell phones (if there is service). Generally, channel 6 is for VHF in most coastal communities to communicate with other vessels and wharfingers and locals.
17. Use your VHF to organize line-ups to use facilities and do chores, such as at fuel stations, ice plants, net floats, laundry, etc. Have a pad of paper and a pen handy to make a list of what order vessels and fishermen are in prior to using facilities.
18. Use VHF radios prior to when people want to leave a vessel tied outside of someone else so they can cross over to a dock. This way the person/s on the vessel being crossed can stay inside their boat while people are crossing. When tying up a vessel to a dock, politely ask anyone on the dock NOT to help, and do it yourself.
19. If a vessel ties beside you, stay in your vessel until they are done tying up and finished on deck.
20. When going up a dock go single file and at least 6 feet apart.
21. Whenever possible, call in your food orders to the grocery stores and have them delivered to the wharf.

Onboard Health Issues

22. A daily log of the crew members' temperatures should be maintained using an infra-red temperature gauge.
23. Non-COVID19 Accidents: anyone with a serious injury will need to be dealt with using Coast Guard assistance or local health care. Even if it is a non-COVID19 situation and no one is sick with COVID19 or exhibiting any symptoms, see the BC CDC COVID19 self-assessment tool online to make sure the vessel and crew are clear, prior to going into port.
24. Sicknesses: if a crew member needs medical assistance contact the Coast Guard and get instructions for where to proceed for medical services.
25. Suspected COVID19: If someone has symptoms of COVID19 (using the CDC-self assessment tool) on a vessel, contact the Coast Guard for instructions for where to get help or the best course of action to get help. Do not assume that proceeding to a hospital or care center in a small isolated community is the answer. People will need advanced medical assistance that can only be offered in larger centers and may need to be medevaced off the boat and taken directly to a larger medical facility.

Food Fishing

26. First Nations must be consulted about any potential for increased commercial fishing activity in their territories resulting from changes in the industry due to the COVID19 pandemic.
27. Food security for coastal communities is of utmost importance. Some communities do not have the capacity to catch all the food fish they need. Where needed and welcomed by the community, we encourage fishermen to talk to First Nation communities to see if they can offer capacity to harvest the necessary food fish.