

Oregon Outfitters & Guides Association Updated 5-15-20

Developing a COVID-19 Mitigation Plan for Your Outfitting Business

Rivers, parks, trails and other outdoor venues are beginning to open and outfitters/guides will soon be back in business. With COVID-19 not going away anytime soon, taking responsible measures to protect both customers and employees is an obligation for everyone. It is important to have a plan to deal with the guidelines and restrictions that will remain in place for some time. Some agencies will require it. Your plan should address how you plan to operate and should also address how you will protect your employees.

The following list of considerations and suggestions is not intended to be comprehensive. There are far too many types of guided activities to create a document with any specificity. Even within a given activity, each outfitter/guide business is different.

Reference Documents:

[Governor's Phase I Guidelines](#)

[OHA – Reopening Guidance for Outdoor Recreation](#)

[OSMB - Best Practices Guidelines for Guides](#)

Limiting Your Liability

Limiting liability involves figuring out how to exercise reasonable care. The risk of exposure to or contraction of COVID-19 cannot be eliminated from guided activities and outfitters and guides must make reasonable efforts to minimize that risk. Customers must be made aware of risk and aware of efforts to minimize that risk in order to make an informed decision on whether or not to participate in the activity. When creating your COVID-19 mitigation plan, keep the following priorities in mind:

1. Follow all CDC guidelines, state & local guidelines and permit regulations & requirements.
2. Communicate with others in your industry to establish “best practices”.
3. Do not create a COVID plan and then not follow it. Overly detailed or robust protocols may be difficult to follow over the long-term.
4. Make sure to update your plan as restrictions or guidelines change.
5. Update your Assumption of Risk / Liability Waivers to include COVID-19.

Screening Customers

Inform & warn at time of reservation. This means warning “at-risk” individuals, making your mitigation plan available to customers and giving advanced notice that all customers will be screened.

Establish a screening process that might include a self-assessment questionnaire prior to the trip and a process for screening at check in. Screening at check-in might include the following questions:

1. Have you recently experience any of the following symptoms?
 - a. A fever (100.4°F or higher), or a sense of having a fever?
 - b. A new cough that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - c. New shortness of breath that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - d. A new sore throat that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
2. Have you knowingly come into contact with a person or persons diagnosed or under treatment for suspected COVID-19?
3. Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19?
4. Have you been tested for COVID-19.?
5. Temperature check

Customer Responsibilities

- Make sure that guests understand what is required of them during the trip and that they agree to abide by new policies or procedures.
- Make sure they understand what equipment they may need to provide for themselves such as face-coverings, hand sanitizer or other items.
- Failure to agree to these requirements is grounds to refuse participation in the activity.

Transportation and Vehicles

- Where transportation is required as part of an activity, consider having the customer drive themselves to the activity location and/or have their vehicle shuttled if possible.
- If transportation in vans or buses is required, consider reducing the number of people per vehicle and requiring face-coverings for everyone.
- Develop a vehicle sanitation regimen before and/or after each use.
- Consider providing dedicated drivers with additional (or “best quality”) PPE, hand sanitizer, etc.

Social Distancing During the Activity

From the beginning to the end of the activity, you need to identify the times when social distancing of 6’ or more is difficult or not possible.

- Consider modifying the activity to eliminate or minimize these times.
- Where social distancing is not possible, you might require face-coverings.
- For portions of an activity that might typically require close contact with a guide, consider developing distanced-instruction procedures or pre-trip video instruction.
- Social distancing will be more easily accomplished with small groups traveling together and/or single-family groups.

[OHA – Physical Distancing Guidelines](#)

Food Service

- If your activity involves food service, make sure to modify this to match a “take-out” process.
- Eliminate communal use of all utensils and any “self-serve” aspects of food service, such as condiments and napkin dispensers.
- Develop a methodical cleaning process for sanitizing surfaces and utensils, before, during and after use.
- Those preparing food should wear gloves and face-coverings.
- Consider requiring those preparing food to have an Oregon Food Handlers certification.
- As far as actual food preparation is concerned, OHA is recommending following general food safety practices when preparing food.

[OHA – Food Safety & Food Handlers Cards](#)

Sanitation During the Activity

- Reduce or eliminate where possible communally used equipment and surfaces.
- Develop a plan for sanitizing common areas or equipment on a regular basis.
- Items that are usually shared between guests (helmets, paddles, tents) should be sanitized after each use or issued to one person for the duration of the activity.

PPE Needed for the Activity

- Identify what personal protection equipment is needed at your facility, during your activity, during transportation, disinfecting equipment and providing care to an ill person.
- Determine what PPE you will provide and what you might require customers to provide.

[OHA Face Covering Guidance for Business](#)

Treatment Protocols for Illness During the Activity

Develop protocols and procedures for handling someone who becomes ill during the activity. Your plan should include, but is not limited to:

- Identifying signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- How to isolate that person from the rest of the group (this may include requiring that person to wear a face-covering and dedicating utensils or certain equipment just for that person)
- Develop directives for when a person is evacuated
- Develop protocols for who cares for that person for the remainder of the activity or until that person is evacuated
- Determine if evaluation and care can be provided at recommended distances or by a member of the ill person's household.
- Identify what additional PPE may be required to handle the situation
- Know the proper disposal method of disposal for PPE used to treat an ill person

Disinfecting Gear

Develop processes for insuring that all equipment is properly cleaned and sanitized after each activity and/or between uses. Follow CDC guidelines and/or manufacturer guidelines.

[Northwest River Supplies Guide for Cleaning Gear](#)
[CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)

Training Staff

Adequate training is critical to the success of your COVID-19 mitigation plan. Not following your plan, or having employees that don't know how to follow the plan, increases risks for customers and employees alike and may increase your liability.

- Train on COVID-19 transmission and symptom recognition.
- Train on proper use of and disposal of PPE
- Train awareness of social distancing
- Train on all new protocols and procedures in your mitigation plan.
- Keep employees up-to-date on changes to your plan

Documentation

Most outfitters and guides have more than adequate records of customers and guides on any given activity on any given day. Your documentation should be good enough to allow for quick and accurate contact tracing should the need arise.

Protecting Your Employees

- Be aware of and identify how the virus might spread in your facility or among employees.
- Promote working from home when possible
- Dedicate certain times or occasions when the work place is sanitized and make sure you have adequate cleaning/disinfecting supplies and chemicals.
- Reorganize your facility to help maximize social distancing and to reduce the amount of shared resources.
- Control employee interaction with customers by limiting entry to your facility, posting signs and perhaps requiring employees and customers to wear face-coverings
- If and when possible, have employees regularly tested
- Screen employees as you would customers. Rescreen regularly and/or prior to every activity.
- Encourage/educate employees to act responsibly when not at work. Employees with a cavalier attitude toward social distancing and self-protection may be an unacceptable risk to your business.

[OHA – General Guidance for Employers](#)
[OSHA – COVID-19 Resource Page](#)
[CDC Guidance for Small Business & Employees](#)