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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release  
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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Emergency Management BC

### **Stay safe by staying home over the long weekend**

VICTORIA – Over the Easter long weekend, British Columbians are asked to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding all non-essential travel, staying home and finding virtual ways to connect and celebrate with family and friends.

Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s provincial health officer (PHO), has indicated that the next few weeks are critical in managing this pandemic, so it's more important than ever to continue to follow public health guidelines and practise physical distancing to prevent further spread. Though the long weekend is normally a time when people go out for recreation, celebration and connection, the provincial health officer is urging British Columbians to stay home to help flatten the curve.

Here is some important information and tips that can help British Columbians ensure that everyone can enjoy the long weekend, while following the public safety guidelines set by the provincial health officer.

### **Follow public health orders and guidelines**

British Columbians are asked to continue to maintain physical distancing, as well as take these other important measures to limit the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay home for at least 10 days if you have any symptoms of illness. After 10 days, if your temperature is normal and you feel better, you can return to your routine activities. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to self-isolate for more than 10 days.
- Stay at least two metres (over six feet) away from other people outside your household.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your face.
- British Columbians who are returning from abroad need to prepare a self-isolation plan before returning to the country to keep our communities safe. Guidance for those returning from international destinations is available here:  
[http://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Factsheet\\_Returning\\_Travelers.pdf](http://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Factsheet_Returning_Travelers.pdf)
- Anyone who has friends or family members who are coming home from abroad are encouraged to help them understand the new rules related to COVID-19. Guidance for families of those returning home is available here:  
[https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Factsheet\\_Returning\\_Family.pdf](https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Factsheet_Returning_Family.pdf)
- More information for returning travellers is available here:  
[www.gov.bc.ca/returningtravellers](http://www.gov.bc.ca/returningtravellers)

### **Safely mark holidays and religious observances**

At this time, the PHO is reminding everyone to continue practising physical distancing, avoid large gatherings and stay away from others if ill. That includes religious and other celebratory gatherings that typically take place during this long weekend for Easter, Passover and Vaisakhi.

Many faith-based organizations are finding ways to virtually connect to continue to observe occasions in a safe way. Or, look for creative and innovative ways to safely observe the holiday by attending virtual services or using FaceTime, Zoom or Skype to stay in touch with other members of your community.

Guidelines for faith-based gatherings are available here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-faith-based-organizations.pdf>

### **Avoid non-essential travel and recreation**

The transportation network is essential for maintaining the critical supply chain for food, goods and medicine, and ensuring people have access to essential goods and services. There are currently no plans to shut down any of B.C.'s public roads, but now is not the time to travel for tourism or recreation. By temporarily avoiding non-essential travel, British Columbians can do their part to protect vulnerable people in communities from COVID-19.

Things to keep in mind over this long weekend include:

#### **Don't visit vacation properties**

- This is not the time to travel to secondary homes or vacation properties in other communities. It's not only important to stay home and maintain physical distancing, but access to resources and health care may be more challenging in smaller communities if someone should become ill or if there's a community outbreak. By staying home, British Columbians can take pressure off the already strained resources in these smaller areas.

#### **BC Parks are closed**

- Finding ways to maintain safe distances has been an ongoing challenge in some of B.C.'s more popular parks and recreation sites. This is why BC Parks has announced an immediate closure of all provincial parks. Also closed are all federal parks, as well as campgrounds and amenities run by B.C.'s Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. Parks will reopen as soon as the provincial health officer indicates it's safe to do so.

#### **Keep search and rescue volunteers safe**

- With the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a higher risk for B.C.'s 2,500 search-and-rescue volunteers, as there is a risk of virus transmission during a call to help those who have been lost, stranded or injured in B.C.'s outdoors. With more people staying home, search and rescue calls have dropped by 50%. However, British Columbians are asked to do their part and not to venture into the wilderness at this time.

#### **Things you can do close to home**

##### **Virtual visits**

- Instead of visiting families and friends in person, look for creative and innovative ways to safely connect with friends and family, such as virtual coffee dates and using FaceTime, Zoom or Skype to stay in touch.

### **Safe recreation**

- Getting outside for fresh air and exercise is important – so long as family can keep a safe distance of at least two metres from others outside their household.
- Some parks and beaches have closed because they're too busy. There are many other quieter outdoor spaces to enjoy, so long as everyone can keep a safe physical distance.
- Being outdoors, walking pets and physical activities, such as going for a bike ride are all safe, so long as a safe physical distance is maintained.

### **Help elderly or vulnerable neighbours**

- The PHO is encouraging people to be kind and support each other as much as possible.
- Elderly or vulnerable people may need assistance collecting groceries or prescriptions.
- Need help? Call 211, a B.C. service that matches seniors with volunteers during the pandemic.

### **Spring clean but keep donations for now**

- With everyone staying at home, it's a great time to do some spring cleaning.
- However, with the current physical distancing orders in place, most charities are not currently picking up goods from their donation bins right now.
- For now, hold onto your donations. Please don't leave them around the donation bins.

### **Protect your home from floods and wildfire**

- British Columbians should make sure they are prepared for all emergencies, and this time at home is a good opportunity to reduce flood and wildfire risks.
- Take time to clean gutters, maintain perimeter drains, clear storm drains of debris, ensure waterspouts are away from residences, and complete some simple landscaping to manage run-off.
- Make sure to thin and trim trees, shrubs and other vegetation, and remove dead brush and other flammable material from the property. Also, make sure to use fire-resistant building and landscaping materials.

### **Learn More:**

For the latest medical updates, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing, visit:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/>

Or follow @CDCofBC on Twitter

For additional mental health supports during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020MMHA0009-000655>

For provincial health officer orders, notices and guidance, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance](http://www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance)

For non-health related information, including financial, child care and education supports, travel, transportation and essential service information, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/Covid-19](http://www.gov.bc.ca/Covid-19)

Or call 1 888 COVID19 (1 888 268-4319) between 7:30 a.m. and 8 p.m., seven days a week

Any change to provincial park access or services will be posted to the BC Parks website:

<http://bcparks.ca>

For status updates on RSTBC campgrounds, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/camping-hiking/sites-trails>

FireSmart homeowner's manual was developed to help reduce the risk of personal property damage due to wildfires. It is available online here: [www.gov.bc.ca/firesmart](http://www.gov.bc.ca/firesmart)

For information on how you can prepare your home for a flood, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/preparedbc/know-your-hazards/floods>

**Contact:**

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