

Covid-19

Safety Practices for **Fish Harvesters** in Nova Scotia

The following is a guide to help support the industry and to put in place guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This document was vetted through Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education – Occupational Health and Safety Division and Nova Scotia Public Health prior to completion. Information is changing and updating frequently. We will try to keep this document updated as information is known. Feel free to check out the Provincial website for up to date information. <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>

Understanding Risk of COVID-19 to Fish Harvesters

Due to the nature of work, fish harvesters tend to work in close proximity of each other. This can be pre-season, while fishing is underway or unloading. It is possible to come in contact with countless other individuals at the wharf as well. Fish Harvesters need to understand the risk associated with Covid-19 and the impact it can have on their health and those they can come in contact with.

Depending on the size of the vessel, and duration of their trip, fish harvesters may be in close quarters while on the water working on deck, and in shared spaces such as the wheelhouse, galley and sleeping accommodations. Fish harvester need to look out for each other and try to eliminate the spread of Covid-19 as much as possible.

The Covid-19 virus is spread by contact with an infected person or with a contaminated surface or object. The best ways to protect yourself and others from the virus are:

- Washing your hands frequently
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces often
- Practising safe physical distancing whenever possible

Do you need to call 811 to be assessed for Covid-19 testing?

- Do you have a fever greater than 38 degree Celsius (or signs of a fever)?
- Do you have a new cough or a cough that is getting worse?
- Do you have a sore throat?
- Do you have a runny nose?
- Do you have a headache?

If you answer yes to **two or more** of these symptoms, **please call 811** for further assessment by a nurse.

Assess the hazards

During the Covid-19 pandemic, it's especially important to take steps to stay safe at work. Captains and crew need to work together to assess health and safety risks and reduce them.

- addressing the risk of exposure and how to control it
- assessing how your vessel will be affected if one of your crew is absent
- During a pandemic, you must do a review to identify the potential for exposure. This includes:
 - Reviewing tasks and jobs to determine who is at the greatest risk of exposure and when the exposure is most likely to happen
- looking again at previous hazard assessments to identify areas where the risk of exposure is greatest
- reviewing the hazard assessment, identifying new hazards, and introducing controls as needed
- reviewing and identifying potential crew shortages and how they affect operational and critical safety activities

Eliminating hazards

Whenever possible, hazards should be eliminated. You could do this by eliminating any activity that isn't essential or can be delayed until the threat of viral exposure is reduced or resolved. This may be difficult, but you must do whatever is reasonably practical to reduce the risk.

Engineering controls

Engineering controls either remove a hazard or provide a barrier between the worker and the hazard. Examples of engineering controls to reduce the risk of catching or spread viruses include:

- physical barriers to isolate, such as installing Plexiglas or other form of enclosure
- working deck design, focusing on increased physical separation
- limiting areas where people gather or frequent
- if possible – provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers and/or dedicated hand washing sinks

Familiarization Training with Crew on Covid-19

Captain and crew want to ensure they are doing everything possible to keep everyone safe and healthy on board the vessel. It is important to review this document together and document that you have done this.

All crew with potential occupational exposure should be trained on:

- the hazards associated with exposure, the potential ways of contracting the virus, and control measures to break the chain of infection
- the protocols in place to isolate and report cases or reduce exposure
- awareness of social distancing strategies-keeping a distance of 2 metres
- appropriate control measures, such as cough etiquette (covering the nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing, coughing or sneezing into the bend of the elbow or into a tissue), and hand hygiene (washing hands or using alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available) to prevent transmission
- use and care of personal protective equipment (if necessary)

Suggested Best Practices for Fish Harvesters

General Practices

Federal and Provincial Public Health are recommending the following practices:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use disposable towels to dry your hands
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
- Cough or sneeze into bend of arm and away from other individuals
- Maintain recommended minimum physical distance separation as much as possible
- Avoid direct face-to-face interaction
- Surfaces and items in any work spaces on the vessel that are touched frequently should be disinfected on a regular basis
- Items brought on board the vessel (groceries, supplies, small personal equipment, personal effects) should be disinfected before coming aboard or immediately upon coming aboard.
- Avoid handling each other's personal effects (hats, gloves, clothing, kit bags, etc.)
- Do not share personal items, toothbrushes, washcloths, cigarettes.

- Do not share phones, computers, and electronics unless they have been thoroughly cleaned. Refer to manufacturer recommendations before cleaning these items.
- If possible avoid crew changes (staff turnover) during the fishing season to reduce the risk of infecting the other crew members or the vessel.
- Fish Harvesters entering the province to board a fishing vessel or get supplies must self-isolate for 14 days when they arrive, unless they can self-isolate on the fishing vessel for 14 consecutive days before leaving the vessel. They can't to leave the boat for any reason, including to get supplies. They can dock and have supplies delivered. Please see attached fact sheet.
- Temporary foreign workers can enter the province, but they must self-isolate upon arrival for 14 days. If they can, they should self-isolate onsite where they are planning to work.

At the Wharf

In order to meet health and safety requirements as prescribed by provincial and territorial health authorities, Harbour Authorities can determine which users may enter the harbour. For example, harbours may be restricted to:

- boat owners, fish harvesters, and deck hands
- harbour authority board members
- authorized employees of processing facilities and buyers
- companies providing services to users and the Harbour Authority
- any other person authorized by the harbour authority in the interest of users

Please respect the instructions of your local harbour authority to protect your health and safety, as well as the health and safety of harbour users.

It is recommended that while working on the wharf to make efforts to put in place measures to reduce interaction of people. Social distance practice are recommended as much as possible.

Pre-season

- Tasks required for preparing the vessel for the fishing season and preparing the fishing gear should be carried out according to the suggested general practices.
- Efforts should be made to minimize working in close spaces or interactions between individuals. Options should be considered for carrying out some tasks (ie overhaul and repair to fishing gear, etc.) by individuals in isolated spaces.

During the Fishing Season

- Where every fishing vessel may have different processes, on-deck operations and the normal handling of the catch and fishing gear should be reviewed and examined by all the crew to obtain recommendations to minimize the close interactions of the individuals. All reasonable suggestions should be considered if there is no risk to safety.
- Where possible, and without affecting the ability of the crew to respond to a marine emergency, an option to be considered is to operate with a reduced number of deckhands resulting in fewer individuals in close proximity on deck. The effect will probably reduce the speed of operations on deck and this will need to be considered.
- The Captain and Crew should take into consideration the normal work flow on deck and if there are any opportunities to reduce contact of crew members. If possible look at layout changes, installation of barriers etc. that will reduce risk.

At the Wharf - Offloading

- Upon returning to port and during preparation for a fishing voyage all implemented protocols must be considered and applied in every activity in the process.
- If waiting to off load the catch, remain in isolation as much as possible until the weigh station is ready to receive you. Options are to remain drifting or on anchorage outside the port or mooring to the dock nearby in the port and remaining on the vessel leaving only to fasten and unfasten the lines.
- Follow all protocols that may be in effect for the weigh station provided they do not contravene those in place for the vessel and the crew. This may include the requirement for the vessel's crew to be removing the catch from the fish hold/fish boxes in to the boxes/lifting equipment provided at the weigh station.
- Cleaned and disinfected clothing and gloves should be worn during the offloading process and any surfaces and clothing that was in contact with the offloading equipment or containers must be cleaned and disinfected. If clothing is not suitable for disinfection then ensure it is washed in hot water before use.
- If one crew member is required to be on the wharf during catch off loading, all efforts should be made to keep physical distances and any protocols in place by the weigh station.
- Any direct sales to customers must be carried out with consideration for physical distance protocols.
- If the vessel must enter a port other than its regular home port to either off load catch or seek repairs, all efforts must be made to remain on board the vessel and maintain the vessel's protocols or any that may be in effect at the visiting port.

- If, at any time, the vessel requires supplies (food, fuel, bait, ice, etc.) then all efforts must be made to have delivery of those supplies to the vessel without direct contact with the supplier or delivery service. If supplies need to be retrieved (i.e. groceries, pharmaceuticals, etc.) then only one person may leave the vessel and must maintain the local recommended physical protocols while off the vessel and must immediately wash and sterilize themselves and the retrieved items upon their return.

Travelling to and from the Boat

- When possible, people should only travel in vehicles with people they live with. However, there may be circumstances where they need to carpool with co-workers to get to work. In these situations, two or more essential workers (employees in the fishing industry) can travel in the same vehicle, but should maintain physical distance as much as possible in the vehicle.
- If the only option is to go with a coworker to work, physical distance as best as possible in the vehicle (i.e. sit in the back). Try to limit the number of people in the car and space out as much as possible. Ensure that the person driving is not driving multiple people on a regular basis. This should only be done in rare circumstances.
- Wearing a non-medical mask is another way of covering your mouth and nose to prevent your respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. A mask can reduce the chance that others are coming into contact with your respiratory droplets, in the same way that the recommendation to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, or cough and sneeze into your elbow, not your hand, can reduce that chance.
- It may be beneficial for employees who are carpooling together to have a letter from their employer saying who they are and where they work, just in case anyone questions them travelling together. A sample is attached.

Boarding Restrictions

- The only persons permitted on the vessel are the vessel's captain and crew members.
- If maintenance or a repair is necessary on the vessel and cannot be carried out by the crew then only that one designated repair person is permitted on board and escorted by only one member of the crew (preferably the Captain) while maintaining the minimum physical distance as much as possible. Once that repair person has exited the vessel, all surfaces that were contacted by the person or repair equipment are to be cleaned and sanitized.

Monitoring Health of the Captain and Crew

Before boarding the vessel

- The Captain should stay in close contact with the crew and should check in on their health. The captain should reach out to the crew the night before they are to fish to check if they have any symptoms. This should be done again pre-boarding the vessel.
- Captain and crew are required to ask the following questions before boarding the vessel:
 - Do you have any symptoms of COVID-19?
 - Have you been in contact with anyone over the past 14 days who exhibited symptoms of COVID-19?
 - Have you been in close personal contact with anyone who has entered the province within the past 14 days?
- Individuals who answer yes to any of the questions will not be permitted entry on the vessel and will be advised to go home and self-monitor and self-isolate as per public health recommendations outlined at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>

On board the vessel

- Crew members are responsible to self-monitor their health while onboard the vessel. It is recommended that temperatures be taken twice daily and recorded for monitoring. Crew members should notify the Captain immediately if they start to feel ill with symptoms of COVID-19. Based on condition of the crew member and the presenting signs and symptoms, determine if emergency response is necessary. If available call 811 to be assessed for Covid-19 testing.
 - Whenever possible, the ill crew member should be isolated from the rest of the crew to decrease the person-to-person transmission of the virus until they reach shore.
 - Clean and disinfect common areas frequently that the ill crew member may have come in contact with

Upon reaching shore when a crew member has Covid-19 Symptoms

- All ill crew members who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 will do the following:
 - go immediately home, monitor symptoms and self-isolate.
 - Complete the Covi-19 Self-Assessment tool online <https://811.novascotia.ca/> or phone 811
- Crew members who were in close person-to-person contact with the ill crew member and are experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms may have been potentially exposed to the virus. Crew members in this situation should follow the same practices as outlined as noted above.

On Board Cleaning Practices

Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces. Clean commonly touched surfaces frequently with regular household cleaning products or a diluted bleach solution of 20 ml of bleach to 1 liter of fresh water. Some commonly touched surfaces include door handles and railings, cupboard doors, tables, appliances, electronics, steering systems, engine and hydraulic systems controls, light switches, phones, bunks, washrooms, etc.

Cooking/Eating Area

Implement measures to minimize handling of shared food, dishes and cutlery.

- practice good hand hygiene
- ensure that all food preparation, table and counter surfaces are cleaned frequently
- remove shared food containers such as shared coffee cream dispensers, salt & pepper shakers, etc.)
- do not share food, unwashed eating utensils and beverage containers
- have one designated person involved in food preparation and dispensing food onto plates
- minimize handling of multiple sets of cutlery
- use pre-packaged snacks

Sleeping Accommodations

Physical distancing of 2 meters between bunks on some vessels may be challenging given the layout and size of the vessel. Consider:

- assigning crew their own bunk accommodation
- if unable to assign crew to their own bunk have crew sleep head-to-toe
- do not share linens, pillows and blankets unless they have been previously laundered

Safety Concerns

Workplaces are required to take precautions to ensure the health and safety of their employees. If you're worried about safety in the workplace, you should talk to your captain/immediate supervisor. If the situation isn't resolved, contact Occupational Health and Safety Branch at **1-800-952-2687**.

If you're the captain/owner and want workplace safety advice, call the Safety Branch at **1-800-952-2687**.

Sources of information for this document: Public Health Agency of Canada; Province of Nova Scotia; Institut national de santé du Québec; COVID-19 Active Fishermen's Committee (BC); NL Fish Harvesting Safety Association

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Safety Practices Checklist for **Fish Harvesters** in Nova Scotia

Vessel Name: _____

Date: _____ Port: _____

Deckhand Name	Date of Briefing	Signature

Please check the items that were reviewed with deckhands (check items that are applicable depending on the size of the vessel)

- Understanding Risk of COVID-19 to Fish Harvesters
- Assess the hazards
- Eliminating hazards
- Familiarization Training with Crew on Covid-19
- General Practices for Fish Harvesters
- Best Practices For Fish Harvesters During:
 - At the Wharf
 - Pre-season
 - During the Fishing Season
 - At the Wharf and Offloading
 - Travelling to and from the Boat
- Boarding Restrictions
- Monitoring Health of the Captain and Crew
 - Before boarding the vessel
 - On board the vessel
 - Upon reaching shore when a crew member has Covid-19 Symptoms
- On Board Cleaning Practices
- Cooking/Eating Area
- Sleeping Accommodations
- Safety Concerns

Your Logo/Company Name

Carpooling Authorization Letter

Subject: JOB CONFIRMATION - ESSENTIAL WORKERS IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY

To whom it may concern,

Following the measures of the Government of Canada that have been put in place regarding COVID-19, as well as those of Provincial Government, here is a joint letter for those employed in the Nova Scotia fishing industry (seafood processing, fish harvesting and/or aquaculture) as an essential service worker, as outlined in the Government of Canada's Guidance on Essential Services and Features in Canada during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

By this letter, I (fill in the name of Manager/Owner/Captain) confirm that (fill in the name of Employee) is employed in the fishing industry as essential services worker and requires carpooling to travel directly between home and work for work purposes.

The above named individual is part of a carpool that includes other individuals (please check):

- Same crew of a fishing vessel
- Same household
- Same processing plant

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Manager/Owner/Captain