

Churchill Northern Studies Centre COVID Management Plan

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Background

The Churchill Northern Studies Centre is located outside the town of Churchill, Manitoba. An important part of the community for more than 40 years, the CNSC is a non-profit research support and educational facility in support of our mandate “to understand and sustain the north”. We provide accommodations, meals, equipment rentals, and logistical support to scientific and social researchers working on a diverse range of topics of interest in the north. We also facilitate learning programs throughout the year for non-credit learning vacations, university credit courses, and youth programming. We host conferences focused on northern issues and offer day tours of our LEED Silver facility, local ecology, and the historic Rocket Range.

At 27,000 square feet overall, the CNSC boasts an impressive amount of space for a remote research centre. During normal years, guest capacity is 96 people in 24 four-person bedrooms, although all rooms are currently set for half capacity except designated single-family rooms. Bathroom facilities are single-gender shared washrooms, and showers are provided in private stalls in a central block.

As a purpose-built LEED Silver designated research facility, the CNSC is equipped with a superb ventilation system. Every public room has a CO2 sensor which will trigger increased fresh air flow when the room is occupied, and ventilation levels are therefore always geared to the number of occupants in the room. As a facility designed for well over a hundred concurrent users, there is more than ample space available in the cafeteria and classrooms to run smaller trips while maintaining 2m spacing among all guests. Meals are usually served cafeteria-style, but can be modified as needed depending on current public health guidelines.

As an essential research facility, the CNSC plans to continue to provide services to support essential research activities. Below is a draft plan for how we plan to address COVID-related concerns at different levels on the Pandemic Response System, while still maintaining our core services, as well as general considerations in place at all levels. These are suggested guidelines and will be modified as needed when new or updated public health orders are issued and are not intended to replace or supplant guidance from Public Health or local health authorities.

We have indicated the levels at which we expect to have non-essential guests in the building as well. All guests including researchers will receive detailed instructions before arrival at the CNSC on these proposed guidelines. Key guidance for these plans has been taken from the “Guidelines for Boarding Schools (K-12) and University/College Residences in Manitoba” (June 2020), as well as other public health guidelines available from the Manitoba Government.

General considerations

Entry/exit protocol

- Upon first arrival to the CNSC, all guests are brought to the main entrance. Guests are greeted by a staff member, asked the standard screening questions regarding symptoms of COVID-19, potential COVID-19 exposure, and travel, and then signed in as a guest into the contact tracing log.
- Upon subsequent entry into the building, all guests and staff must sanitize but are required to self-screen. A full welcome screening will happen upon return to the CNSC if guests have spent any overnight time in the field.

Guests who require self-isolation upon arrival

- The CNSC does not encourage the use of the facility by researchers traveling from outside Manitoba (or other travel restrictions requiring a period of isolation as outlined at any given time). When such travel is necessary, the researchers will be expected to conduct their self-isolation time in Winnipeg or other designated location before boarding travel to Churchill.

Procedures to deal with ill staff, researchers or guests, or who require quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19 or isolation due to becoming ill with symptoms of COVID-19

- Any staff, researcher, or guest requiring isolation due to illness or self-isolation due to COVID-19 exposure will be housed in one of our staff rooms which include a private bathroom. The Executive Director (or designate) will communicate with local health officials to provide further guidance as necessary, and should the individual require medical care.
- The guest must remain in their room except to seek medical care. When leaving their room to seek medical care, a medical mask will be provided for their use. If unavailable, a non-medical mask may be worn. Transport to the testing site will be provided by CNSC staff wearing appropriate PPE, including a medical mask and face shield. The individual requiring testing must sit as far from the driver as possible, and after the process is complete the vehicle must be sanitized before use by another individual or group.
- Meals and any other necessities will be delivered to the door of anyone in isolation/self-isolation. Plates from meals will be placed in a washtub of disinfecting solution before they are picked up by staff. A distance of 2 meters must be maintained between staff and ill guests except in case of emergency.
- Anybody experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 is encouraged to seek testing. If a test is negative, isolation can end 48 hours after symptoms end, although isolation may end after 24 hours for the purposes of field work or departure from the CNSC. If they choose not to get tested or testing is unavailable, they must isolate for 14 days. Isolation will end after 14 days unless symptoms are still ongoing.

Isolation of other team members in the event of illness in the team

- Depending on the public health guidelines in force at the time, team members of a symptomatic individual may also need to self-isolate. In this case, procedures will be followed matching those above. In the event there are inadequate numbers of staff rooms to house all the self-isolating

individuals, the washroom block and corridor closest to their rooms will be assigned for their exclusive use, and each individual will have a designated shower and toilet stall. Masks must be worn at all times when individuals are outside private rooms, even when accessing washroom facilities. No other building areas outside the designated washroom and access corridor may be used.

Necessity for use of services in the town of Churchill

- As much as is possible, all researchers will be requested to minimize their use of services in Churchill. CNSC staff will assist in acquiring items where so requested by researchers.

Procedure to track visitors

- All visitors to the CNSC must sign in upon arrival, providing their date and time of visit, person(s) visited, and a contact phone number. This information is collected for all visitors, including visitors to the gift shop.

Dedicated staff member to coordinate and communicate with public health

- The Executive Director will coordinate and communicate with public health officials. In the event that the ED is unavailable, the Field Station Coordinator will be the designated staff member for public health communication.

Use of daily screening tool

- All staff, researchers and guests are required to use the COVID-19 screening tool provided by Shared Health daily. Instruction on its use and how to communicate symptoms to the CNSC staff will be provided to everyone during their welcome to the site.

Public health messaging

- Public health messaging will be displayed prominently throughout the facility, including signage outlining physical distancing guidelines.

Risk and COVID-19 education

- All guests will be provided with a COVID-19 risk information form and be required to acknowledge the COVID-19 risk mitigation safety plan in force during their stay.

Hand hygiene stations

- Hand hygiene stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizer are present at the public entrance and researcher entrance of the building, as well as throughout the facility. Everyone entering the building is required to clean hands upon entrance, and encouraged to clean hands at frequent intervals throughout the day.

Communal kitchen areas

- Communal kitchen areas (microwave, hot water tap, coffee maker, and tea station) are available for use. Enhanced cleaning procedures will be in place, and sanitizing wipes will be left in these

areas to allow cleaning between users. Physical distancing guidelines will remain in place, and staff will ensure that this does not become a congested gathering place.

Linen cleaning

- All guests are instructed to strip beds before departure. Rooms will be left unoccupied and blocked off for a period of at least 24 hours before housekeeping accesses the room to collect linen and clean.
- Any guests requiring access to laundry facilities must coordinate with the Field Station Coordinator about designated access times.

PPE for staff and guests

- PPE will be provided to all staff as necessary. This will include reusable cloth masks for regular use, and access to disposable gloves and masks as needed. Guests and researchers are expected to bring their own PPE but will be supplied by the CNSC on a cost-recovery basis in the event their PPE is insufficient in quantity for the length of their stay.
- Use of non-medical masks is required in public areas at all times.

Travel in vehicles with staff

- The CNSC will take guidance from the most current public health protocols regarding vehicle use. Basic considerations for shared vehicle usage include mandatory masking, spacing as much as possible within the confines of the vehicle, and maintaining vehicle capacity at 50% or lower of maximum capacity.

Green

All activities as normal: food service, accommodations, field support services, laboratory support and rentals, and vehicle rentals are allocated at 100% capacity. Educational and tourism operations (overnight and day programming) are also present onsite.

Yellow

Research activities: Research activities are permitted. Research teams may conduct their activities without masking when outdoors but must wear masks when interacting with other research teams or CNSC staff and in all public areas of the CNSC, including laboratory space. Researchers must space at 2 m whenever possible. Vehicle rentals will be assigned to single teams and will be sanitized before use by another team.

Educational tourism and credit courses: Educational tourism activities and credit courses will continue when possible, in consultation with public health and following all public health guidelines. Vehicles will be assigned to individual groups and will be sanitized before use by another group. Masks will be worn as directed by public health guidelines.

Accommodation: Rooms may be shared by members of the same tour, course, or research team, but not across groups or teams. Room capacity will remain at 100% unless directed otherwise by public

health orders. Whenever booking numbers allow, rooms will be kept below capacity. Recreation areas (pool room, gym, AV lounge, aurora viewing dome) are open at 50% of normal capacity (limit to be posted on door).

Meals: Meals are served cafeteria-style, with 2 m spacing maintained between persons in line. Food service is done by staff, and there are no shared serving utensils. Tables will be assigned in the cafeteria for use by tours/groups/research teams, with minimum 2 m spacing between tables. Standard sanitization will take place after meal times.

Cleaning: Cleaning protocols are enhanced. Housekeeping is on staff on all days when the building is occupied, with common touch point and washrooms cleaned multiple times daily.

Orange

Research: Research activities are permitted. Research teams may conduct their activities without masking when outdoors but must wear masks when interacting with other research teams or CNSC staff and in all public areas of the CNSC, including laboratory space. Researchers must space at 2 m whenever possible. Vehicle rentals will be assigned to single teams and will be sanitized before use by another team.

Educational tourism and credit courses: Educational tourism and credit courses *may* continue at 50% of normal capacity provided cohorting can be adequately maintained, with decisions made after direct consultation with public health. Each tour or course will be evaluated on an individual basis to ensure that it can meet the public health guidelines.

Accommodations: Accommodations are maintained at 50% of normal capacity or below. Room sharing may be allowed between members of the same team or group, provided they are within the same cohort. Recreation areas (pool room, gym, AV lounge, aurora viewing dome) are open for use by single cohorts only, and will be kept at 25% of maximum capacity (limit to be posted on door).

Meals: Meals are served at the table by CNSC staff. All guests are assigned seating, which is kept at a minimum 2m distance from other guests. All cleanup and bussing is done by staff. Meal service time will be assigned to groups, where they will be assigned separated seating areas. The dining area will be sanitized between seatings and after meals.

Cleaning: Cleaning protocols are enhanced. Housekeeping is on staff on all days when the building is occupied, with common touch point and washrooms cleaned multiple times daily.

Red

Research: Only essential research activities are permitted; any activities that can be delayed until the region is no longer in Red should be delayed. Researchers must submit COVID-19 safety plans to the CNSC in advance of arrival. CNSC staff will work offsite whenever possible. Researchers are expected to distance and mask at all times unless doing so would pose a safety concern. Research bookings and access requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the head of Science and the Executive Director.

Educational tourism and credit courses: no tourism or courses will run in the Red zone.

Accommodations: Accommodations are maintained at 25% of normal capacity or below, with room sharing only available for members of existing household groups. Though washrooms are communal, the residents will be assigned their designated sink, toilet, and shower for personal use. All recreational areas are closed.

Meals: Meals are served in a no-contact fashion by CNSC staff, or researchers may choose to store no-prep food supplies for their own meals. Researchers are required to eat in their rooms.

Cleaning: Cleaning protocols are enhanced. Housekeeping is on staff on all days when the building is occupied, with common touch point and washrooms cleaned multiple times daily.