



Applying to Vary From Public Health Orders

Overview of Public Health Risk Assessment – Criteria and Process

Emerging Wisely outlines how to safely re-open the Northwest Territories (NWT) based on an initial public health risk assessment of proposed activities by agencies, businesses and individuals. The current Public Health Orders¹ outline restrictions for gatherings (both indoor and outdoor) which may affect an activity or business operations.

The Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) has the authority to grant exceptions to any part of the Order if risks can be mitigated. This exception requires individuals to seek permission from the Office of the CPHO to vary from some terms of the current Order.

Varying from the Order requires suitable mitigation measures in place to reduce the risk the activity may pose to transmit COVID-19 to others in the proposed gathering or premises operation.

Examples of varying from the public health orders would include:

- Proposing an activity or business to begin operation in an earlier phase of the Emerging Wisely plan.
- Requesting capacity of a facility to be increased beyond the limits of the current phase of Emerging Wisely.

This guidance document outlines the steps involved in seeking to vary from the Order for proposed activities to occur during Phase 2 of Emerging Wisely. Businesses, groups and individuals can make a request to vary from the parts of the public health Orders.

The request-to-vary process is one that may require further clarity from the applicant. The process of assessing risk not only considers the type of activity but also the current context of COVID-19 activity within the community, region or territory.

As such the applicant should be advised that recommendations from the risk assessment may be different from recommendations made previously to the applicant or to other applicants for similar types of activities.

The risk assessment process is both adaptive and iterative to take into consideration the risks involved in the activity at a given time, place and context.

¹ Public Health Order – COVID-19 Relaxing Phase 2 (issued on June 12, 2020)



How do I request to vary my activity from the Public Health Order?

- 1) Complete a [Request to Vary application](#)
 - Be sure to review [Emerging Wisely](#) for recommendations or advice to include in your proposed activity.
- 2) Submit the completed application to ProtectNWT@gov.nt.ca
- 3) The application will be reviewed and assessed.
 - An Environmental Health Officer (EHO) may contact you for more information or to clarify your request. At that time, the EHO may also identify mitigation measures that should be added to your application in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. You will be asked to submit an amended application should additions or changes be required at this stage.
- 4) You will be advised on the CPHO's decision regarding your original or amended application.
 - If your application to vary is approved, an exemption letter will be issued by the CPHO identifying terms and conditions. If your application is denied you will be advised in writing of this outcome.
 - Should you wish to seek a review of the CPHO's decision you can request reconsideration from the Office of the CPHO by submitting your written concerns to ProtectNWT@gov.nt.ca . Include details and justification of why you feel the proposed activity should be allowed.

How is the risk for my proposed activity assessed?

The risk assessment methodology used is modeled off the [Johns Hopkins risk assessment tool](#).²

The following criteria are used to assess the public health risk of an activity:

- 1) **What is the level of contact between people?**
 - **Intensity of contact:** How close are people? How long are people together? What are the specifics of activity?
 - **Volume:** How many people does this activity require? Is there a constant turnover of people or are the groups of people consistent?

² Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. (April 17, 2020). Public health principles for a phased reopening during covid-19: guidance for governors. Retrieved from: https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf



2) What are the specifics of the physical space?

- **Size** (square footage of the space)
- **Lay out**
- **Level of Ventilation/ Air Quality**
- **Proposed use of the space**
- **Temperature** (cold air carries greater risk)
- **Moisture level** (moist air carries greater risk)
- **Co-location** Is it a shared facility? Is it a shared building with shared ventilation? Does it have a shared entrance?

3) What are people doing in the space?

- What is the activity?
- What are the tasks that make up the activity?
 - For example: the tasks involved in playing hockey would include: arriving at the arena, getting dressed, waiting to play, playing hockey and sitting on bench, changing and departing etc.)
- What equipment is required for the activity? Is any of this equipment shared between individuals?

4) Who is participating in the activity?

- What is the age and risk profile of participants?

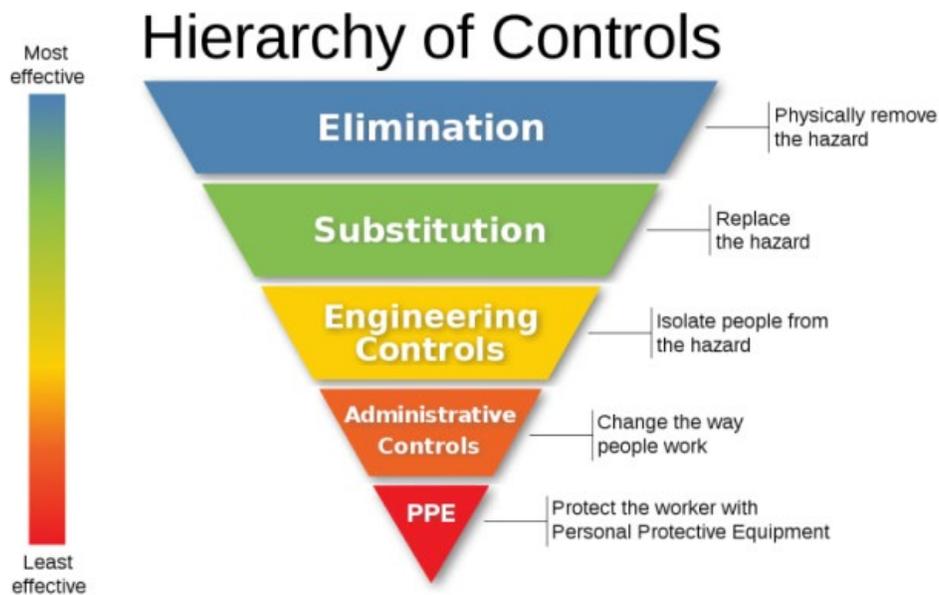
5) What is the current COVID-19 activity in the community, territory and rest of Canada?

Combined, the above information is used to determine the level of risk: Low, Medium or High. Based on the identified risks, mitigation measures can be implemented to reduce the identified risks



How to choose appropriate mitigation measures?

Mitigation measures can be selected to address the risks by using the following hierarchy of controls:



Once the appropriate mitigation measures are applied the level of risk can usually be reduced.

Note: many sports and other organizations with national associations may have developed COVID-19 specific guidance for mitigation measures for an activity. These should be reviewed and incorporated accordingly.

Comments? Questions?

Your feedback is important to us. The Department of Health and Social Services is listening to the concerns and needs of residents, agencies and businesses as we safely navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please send your comments or questions about this Application to Vary guidance document to: environmental_health@gov.nt.ca.