



September 2020 Interim Recommendations for the Geoduck Fleet During COVID-19:

Every vessel operator should develop a written plan for how they plan to address Covid-19 risks in their fishing operations. The following information is intended to provide geoduck vessel operators guidance and direction in their efforts to develop such a plan. WorkSafe BC has a downloadable [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#) designed to help employers create their own plan. Fish Safe BC has developed [a COVID-19 page on their fishsafebc.com website](#) with a number of downloadable tools and recommendations.

The decision on whether to go fishing is to be made independently by each geoduck vessel crew, vessel owner, and licence holder. The recommendations for geoduck fishery operations detailed in this document were designed based on discussions with the UHA North Coast Area Committee, OGMs, AMR, and packing crews. The recommendations are not meant to pressure vessels and crews to go to work during this unprecedented situation. If vessels and crew decide to go to work as part of the essential services in BC, the following recommendations are meant to minimize the risk to the geoduck dive boat crews, packer crews, on-grounds monitors, and service providers.

Background:

The Provincial and Federal governments have designated the fishing and aquaculture sectors as essential services ([Provincial link](#), [Federal link](#)). The [Province of BC](#) states that essential services are encouraged to stay open. However, they need to follow the orders and guidance provided by the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) to ensure safe operations and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

WorkSafe states that employers should ensure that the following workers do not come to work:

- Anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms must self-isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days from onset of symptoms, until their symptoms are completely resolved.
- Workers who have travelled internationally. In these cases, they must remain away from the workplace for at least 14 days.
- Workers who live in the same household as a confirmed or clinical COVID-19 case who is self-isolating.

WorkSafe further recommends putting physical distancing and other preventative measures in place. If it is necessary for workers to come to work, employers should take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Physical distancing is not always practical on commercial fishing boats. Therefore, the industry needs to take additional steps to mitigate the risk such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), hygiene and additional measures. Additional measures include:

- Educating workers on health and safety measures to prevent transmission of infectious disease.
- Increase workplace cleaning, provision of necessary supplies, and reinforcing personal hygiene messages to workers.
- Utilization of PPE.

Know the Symptoms of COVID-19:

Anyone who suspects they may have COVID-19 can take the online self-assessment tool at <https://bc.thrive.health/>. Main symptoms include fever, cough, sneezing (abnormal), or sore throat. Workers who suspect they may have been exposed to COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms may also call [HealthLinkBC](#) at 8-1-1 to speak with a registered nurse and to determine any necessary next steps.



Geoduck Fleet Recommendations:

The following procedures are based on best practices known at this time. This is a working document and is subject to change as new information becomes available.

1. Pre-Trip Departure:

- Talk to your crew about what they have been doing over the last two weeks. Have they been self-isolating and following PHO guidelines? Do they have other concerns or risks that are unique to them that mean they should not go to sea?
- Educate your crew on COVID-19 and how it is spread. Print the signage from [this Fish Safe link](#) on good hygiene and enhanced surface cleaning. Print this [coronavirus prevention poster](#) from the Province of BC and post it on your vessel. The poster details what COVID-19 is, how it is spread, symptoms and prevention.
 - Wash your hands often
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
 - Stay home when you are sick.
- Ensure your vessel has the appropriate PPE on board. Dive vessels have lots of gloves, but you will want to carry disposable gloves as well. When using gloves, they should be washed as often as hands. Be sure to wash thoroughly and label with name before storing if you will be reusing them.
- Ensure your vessel has the supplies required for proper hygiene on board. The BCCDC web site states Coronaviruses are enveloped viruses, meaning they are one of the easiest types of viruses to kill with the appropriate disinfectant product. The types of disinfectants that can be used include 500 parts per million chlorine solution: 1:100 [e.g. mix 10 ml household bleach (5.25%) with 990 ml water]. Health Canada lists all hard-surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus (solutions, wipes, etc.) at [this link](#).
- High fever is a key symptom of COVID-19 so each vessel should ensure they carry a modern thermometer. Normal body temperature is 37 C (98.6 F).
- Perform a walk-through of your vessel to identify specific conditions or tasks that may increase the risk of exposure of your crew to COVID-19.
- Encourage crew to tell you if they have concerns about exposure to COVID-19. Find out if there are specific tasks that concern them (e.g. tasks that involve interacting with others).

2. Departing for the grounds:

- Provision grub and supplies for multiple days. Vessels should have protocols in place to minimize interaction with shoreside suppliers and minimize requests for grub and supplies from the Packers.
- Fishermen will not be allowed to travel on the packer to the grounds or ride in geoduck trucks to or from the dock. Crews should board their vessels directly and then minimize contact with Packer, On-grounds Monitor, other vessel crews, or shoreside personnel. Isolate your crew and vessel from other contacts.
- Many First Nation communities, are not comfortable with non-essential visitors during the coronavirus pandemic. Provision supplies for several days to minimize the need for shoreside support.

3. Fishing Operations:

- Treat your crew and vessel as a separate unit and limit contact outside your vessel.
- Refer to the *Interim Procedures for Geoduck Validation during COVID-19* from AMR. AMR will be working with the fleet to minimize the exchange of paperwork between the on-grounds monitor (OGM) and the fleet.
- The OGM will not tie up to or board geoduck vessels.
- Post the [Coronavirus Prevention Poster](#) in the cabin.
- Clean and disinfect regularly. Refer to the [Fish Safe enhanced surface cleaning and disinfection](#) sign.
- Maintain physical distancing whenever possible. Do not share the galley table, move quickly if passing close by, use PPE
- Help divers dress from behind to avoid close contact face to face.
- Vessels to anchor on their own in the evening and on days off – no rafting. Do not interact with other vessels.

4. South Coast Dockside Validation:

- Follow the *Interim procedures for Geoduck Validation during COVID-19* from AMR.
- The vessel crew will be solely responsible for offloading the product from the vessel to the dock.
- Follow the guidance of the AMR validator for safe dockside validation procedures.
- All crew should maintain physical distancing from the trucking staff.

5. Dive Vessel / Packer Interaction:

- Refer to the *Interim Procedures for Geoduck Validation during COVID-19* from AMR. Always maintain physical distancing from the OGM.
- Vessels to unload one at a time – no rafting alongside the packer. Stand off Packer until it is your turn to unload.
- Always maintain physical distance with packer crew.
- Unloading geoduck cages: wear dedicated gloves for offload and empty cage loading. Wash or dispose of these gloves after offload and cage sanitization. Vessel offload weights to be relayed to the OGM as per AMR procedures.
- Loading empty cages and liners after unload: maintain PPE (dedicated gloves) and physical distance from packer crew.
- Fuel from Packer: Assign one crew member to fuel your vessel. Always maintain physical distance from packer crew. Sanitize fuel nozzle before and after use. Wear disposable gloves for fueling. Do not use offload gloves.
- Wash, label and store all reusable gloves.

6. **PSP Sampler Protocol:**

- Geoduck samples to be packed in a tote or cooler addressed and sealed with paperwork inside tote.
- If shipping the sample via the packer maintain physical distancing with the packer crew. The Sampler can place tote on deck of the packer. Sampler to sanitize tote with appropriate disinfectant before packer crew handles and stows tote.
- Packer crew maintain physical distance with geoduck truck and/or courier. Geoduck truck / courier to follow their protocol for package shipping during COVID-19.