



## **Recommendations for the Geoduck Fleet During COVID-19: Updated January 2022 (Omicron)**

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. WorkSafeBC has a downloadable [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#) designed to help employers create their own plan. This six-step process is also available via the WorkSafeBC COVID-19 Safety Plan App.

Fish Safe BC has developed [a COVID-19 page on their fishsafebc.com website](#) with several downloadable tools and recommendations. One of the best resources is the [Guidelines and Protocols for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the BC Commercial Wild Fish Harvest Industry](#). This document has been reviewed by WorkSafeBC and the Province. There are also links to signage and a number of fishing association protocols including the UHA.

**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 UHA Area Committees, 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 BCCDC link](#), [Federal link](#)). 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.

These UHA recommendations are focussed on rules and guidelines such as education, limiting contact between dive vessels, limiting contact with packer crews, the on-grounds monitor, increased cleaning and disinfecting, and good hand washing practices. Physical distancing or working from home options are not applicable to smaller dive boats. These guidelines also rely on proper use of PPE when practical.

**WorkSafe states that employers should ensure that the following workers do not come to work until after the recommended quarantine / delay:**

- Anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms.
- Workers who have travelled internationally.
- Workers who live in the same household as a confirmed or clinical COVID-19 case who is self-isolating.

The UHA has developed a Geoduck Vessel Crew Pre-Trip Questionnaire (available at [geoduck.org/covid-safety-links](https://geoduck.org/covid-safety-links)) designed to ensure crew are healthy before leaving the dock.

**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, or sore throat. Workers who suspect they may have been exposed to COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms may also call [HealthLinkBC](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca) 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:**

- Complete the Geoduck Vessel Crew Pre-Trip Questionnaire or your own company's pre-trip paperwork.
- 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. You will need masks for interacting with the packer, shoreside fuel stops, grocery trips, and isolating any crew that becomes ill and needs to be evacuated.
- 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].
- 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 with your crew to identify specific conditions or tasks that may increase the risk of exposure of your crew to COVID-19.

### **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.
- Coastal communities are making every effort to stay safe. Provision supplies for several days to minimize the need for shoreside support. When you do go ashore be respectful of local COVID guidelines.

### **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.
- 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.

### **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 and wear PPE during the offload.

## 5. Dive Vessel / Packer Interaction:

- Refer to the [Interim Procedures for Geoduck Validation during COVID-19 from AMR](#) and the [On-grounds Geoduck Monitor COVID-19 Action Plan](#).
- Always maintain physical distancing from the OGM.
- Always maintain physical distance with the packer crew.
- Divers/tenders are not allowed to travel to/from the grounds on the packer.
- Unloading cages of geoduck: wear dedicated gloves for offload and empty cage loading. Vessel offload weights to be relayed to the OGM as per AMR procedures with OGM in packer galley or on OGM skiff.
- Dive vessel crew are not permitted in packer galley.
- Log sheets to be left in designated location as instructed by OGM.
- Loading empty cages and liners after unload: maintain PPE (dedicated gloves) and physical distance from packer crew. Use the same gloves as offload. Wash or dispose of these gloves after offload and cage sanitization.
- 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 product 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.
- If shipping sample via shoreside or on-water courier/transport other than packer, wear mask and maintain physical distance when possible. Sanitize tote as per method with packer. Follow protocol of courier/transport.
- Packer crew maintain physical distance with geoduck truck and/or courier. Geoduck truck / courier to follow their protocol for package shipping during COVID-19.