

Question & Answers: Staying Safe at the Lake

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Should I be going to the cottage?

Heed the recommendations and the Emergency Orders of the Premier and the Province – they apply everywhere in Ontario, including cottage country. During this time when non-essential travel is being discouraged, consider whether you can delay plans to travel to the cottage. Each weekend trip provides an opportunity to spread the virus from one location to another. Remember, provincial emergency orders [remain in effect until May 19](#), which continue to restrict public access to many beaches, boat launches, provincial parks and other outdoor recreational amenities.

Once travel to the cottage is no longer restricted, follow the advice of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the federal government and treat travel across the province with the same respect as travel from away: purchase your supplies and groceries ahead of time, do not stop on the way and go directly to the cottage, and when you are there, plan to isolate (no visits, no trips into town) for the first 14 days.

What should I do before I leave?

Before any travel to the cottage, be sure to plan ahead: visit the website of the local municipality to learn about any changes to essential services, check out the local retailers and pharmacies to plan how to stock up safely, and if you have water access only, connect online with your marina to find out when you can safely plan to use your boat. Follow safe practices while at the marina (see the separate [Guide to responsible social distancing for all boaters](#) from Boating Ontario). Retail space in rural stores can be limited so planning to order online or by phone for curbside pick-up may be the safest way to get groceries.

Who can I invite to join me at the cottage?

Travel and stay with only your household members. Rather than inviting and hosting guests to the cottage, plan instead to make the cottage available to families or friends sequentially and do a thorough clean in between each set of visitors. Do not plan to be there! If you are over 70, remember that you should be self-isolating to protect yourself. If you are under 70, don't act as a vector for the virus. Protect yourself and all your loved ones.

Connect virtually to your seasonal networks: This is the year to make sure you have phone and internet access at the cottage. Connect online with your [Lake or Cottage Association](#) and phone your friends. Make sure you maintain at least 2 metres distance from your neighbours, even while you are catching up.

What should I bring to the cottage?

Bring hand sanitizer, face coverings, cleaning supplies for high touch surfaces with you. Although you may feel more relaxed at the cottage, this is not the time to let down your guard against COVID 19.

I need to test my water – what do I do?

You may still be able to pick up a water sample bottle and submit your drinking water for testing from your [local health unit](#). Your local authorities will still also be receiving applications for sewage systems and will still respond to sewage systems which are failing and constitute a health hazard. Please contact them directly to get the latest details.

I need some work done at the cottage, what should I do?

Don't put local service providers at risk: if you need in-person services to open your cottage, this would be a reason to delay your re-entry, unless you can make arrangements to do this remotely and without physical contact.

What if I get sick while I'm at the cottage?

Learn the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and self-monitor for them. Make sure you have a thermometer with you. Know which [local public health agency](#) serves your cottage community and where to call for an appointment for testing. Isolate yourself immediately and get tested as soon as possible. Those with a positive result may be advised to self-isolate in their primary residence where they can receive deliveries of essential supplies.

If you need medical attention make sure your primary caregiver is your first point of contact and if that person is not at your waterfront community you need to have a plan to get yourself there.

How can I go into town safely?

Connect with neighbours to consolidate trips to the shops to minimize the amount of contact and the number of people coming into contact with one another. Going in to town should only be for essential needs like groceries, medications or supplies only. Wear a face covering to protect others. Carry and use your sanitizer before entering any establishments. Sanitize after touching any surfaces. This is not the time to go for an ice cream cone.

What can I do safely while I'm at the cottage?

Do not take risks – the water is cold. Observe fire bans. This is not the time for a solo canoe trip into the back country. Protect local First Responders by avoiding risky activities and moderate your use of alcohol and other substances.

As you plan to open your cottage, here's a great [list of safety tips](#) for waterfront property owners developed by FOCA.

You may need to postpone or cancel your annual events. This is not the year to host the family reunion or participate in a spring opener. Unless they can be held virtually, these events will have to wait.

We all look forward to our time at the lake – let's make sure we all do our part to make it safe – for everyone!