

Orienteering BC *Return-to-Sport* Guidelines



The guidelines for re-opening orienteering activities in BC incorporate all current (July 24, 2020) recommendations and orders issued by the Province of BC and the Provincial Medical Health Officer, aimed at limiting the transmission of the Covid-19 virus during the on-going pandemic. The key recommendations and orders as of July (2020) are:

- Self-isolating if you feel any flu-like symptoms
- Washing hands frequently
- Maintaining strict social distancing practices (2m separation between individuals)
- Avoiding assemblies of 50 or more people
- Sanitizing of all contact surfaces frequently

Background: Orienteering is essentially an individual sport, pursued outdoors. It involves moving quickly through the terrain while navigating from point-to-point with the aid of a map and compass. The points to which the orienteer is navigating are typically marked in the terrain (by flag or tape) in advance, by another person, but in its basic form (such as an informal training run), orienteering requires no person-to-person contact.

At organized orienteering competitions, on the other hand, competitors are timed electronically, and start their course at staggered short time intervals (1-3 minutes separation). These events are open to all comers (although competitors must be current members of an OBC-affiliated club), and even non-championship events will often attract 30-100 participants.

Organizing officials place the check point markers and timing units in the competition terrain in advance of the event, and retrieve and store them after the event is finished.

The start and finish protocols for such events also involve teams of officials who manage the competitor traffic, confirm the identity of each starter and record their finish time. Other officials may be responsible for managing parking, and sometimes providing water, sports drinks and snacks at the finish area for competitors, who are encouraged to compare and discuss their results. The final results are typically posted on the organizing club's website.

Orienteering has inherent risks (bodily injury, exposure, etc.) and therefore OBC-affiliated clubs and their members carry liability insurance, arranged through Orienteering Canada, which provides liability coverage for potential suits arising from participation in orienteering activities. To date, there has never been any suit made against OBC. However, the current insurer has now specifically **excluded** coverage of potential suits arising from contracting Covid19 illness in the course of participating in orienteering events. A similar restriction is being faced by most other Canadian sports organizations at this time. However, during the current State of Emergency in British Columbia, the provincial government has committed to providing all amateur sports organizations in BC with liability insurance coverage against any suits brought against PSOs, their affiliated clubs and their members, that might arise from COVID19 infections acquired during participation in amateur sport activities during the provincial State of Emergency.

Return to Sport Guidelines for Orienteering

1. Orienteering BC, its constituent clubs and its members, will all conduct themselves in a manner that respects the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer, as outlined at the beginning of this document.
2. Each OBC-affiliated club must prepare a detailed Return-to-Sport **Safety Plan**, which should be distributed to the club members, and posted on the club's website. The Safety Plan should be consistent with these OBC *Return-to-Sport* Guidelines, and with the recommendations from Orienteering Canada. Since it is anticipated that the provincial and national sport safety recommendations will change as the COVID19 pandemic unfolds, both the OBC guidelines and the club Safety Plans will need to be revised, as appropriate, to reflect these changes.
3. **Traditional orienteering competitions with the full suite of on-site officials, short start intervals and provision of water and food at event sites will not be sanctioned by OBC until further notice. Group training and instructional sessions are only permitted if they are structured in a manner that clearly follows the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer, as listed above.**
4. To enable orienteers to continue practicing their skills, and to enjoy being out on a map with a planned course, clubs are encouraged to organize *Modified Traditional Events*, as outlined in the Orienteering Canada **Management Plan for COVID-19 Risks** document: (https://docs.google.com/document/d/12K7ToqWk_aJ2cAPHjhoFsGIXr1r1VfiboDH-JYnhHYU/) together with the Orienteering Canada **Risk Mitigation Tool** spreadsheet. *Modified Traditional Events* are considered training events, and not formal competitions. Touchless electronic timing systems (e.g. Sport Ident Air) may be used, but downloading of data from each participant's stick at the Finish must still use touchless protocols, and respect the social distancing requirements.

Clubs may also organize 'Virtual O' orienteering events for their members, either using GPS-based control identification and run-time recording systems (phone apps such as *MapRunF*), or other non-contact control identification methods.

In order to minimize person-to-person contact, Virtual O events should not direct participants to assemble at a Start zone at a specific time. Instead, a free-choice 'start window' (potentially multi-day) shall be implemented for each Virtual O event. Event advertising must also discourage Virtual O event participants from remaining any longer than necessary at the Finish location after completing their run.
5. All Virtual O and *Modified Traditional Events* must be organized by appropriately certified officials, in order to be sanctioned under Orienteering Canada rules, and thereby covered by our sport's liability insurance. Event advertising must also emphasize that **only** club/OBC members can participate, since only members are covered by this insurance.
6. All orienteering activities organized by OBC and its affiliated clubs must adhere to the guidelines distributed by **Orienteering Canada**, as posted at <http://www.orienteering.ca/resources/covid-19/>. Organizers should regularly monitor this website for on-going updates and modifications to the guidelines. Note that the current guidelines are scheduled to be reviewed by **Orienteering Canada** and updated as needed in early September, 2020.

(July 24, 2020)