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Farmers markets

June 15, 2021

UPDATED. Will appear before items that have been updated.

Farmers' markets are considered an essential service under the BC state of emergency and are expected to comply with hygienic practices and physical distancing to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

The advice below is based on current recommendations and may change. Please reference materials and recent updates from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, Ministry of Health and BC Centre for Disease Control.

- **UPDATED.** All vending markets are subject to the [Gathering and Events](#) order (June 15, 2021) described in section J. Episodic Markets.
 - All markets are permitted to sell food and non-food items, services and personal services.
 - All markets are permitted to offer samples.
- [New Province wide restrictions](#) announced November 19, 2020 include:
 - A [Ministerial order](#) issued in November 2020, requires customers to wear a mask in public indoor settings, including farmers' markets. See the [Employers & Businesses](#) page for interpretation of this order, including exemptions.
- [List of essential services](#) and [PHO orders](#)
- [PDF](#) of information on this page for Farmers Markets.

Farmers' markets are essential food and agriculture service providers. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, indoor and outdoor farmers' markets are expected to comply with recommendations and orders from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO). The COVID-19 safety plan must be updated in accordance with current PHO orders and guidance. For example, customer numbers are to be restricted by the size and space within the premises. Under the [Gathering and Events](#) order farmers market owners, managers, vendors and customers have specific responsibilities. Owners must be satisfied that managers are aware of requirements under the market COVID-19 safety plan. Managers must ensure requirements are met, including vendor [health-checks](#) prior to attending the market. Owners, managers and staff must advise persons who cannot safely enter the market to leave. Customers must comply with signs, directions or measures intended to promote physical distancing and to prevent congregation. Consult the PHO order to ensure you are meeting the latest requirements.

Municipalities are involved in interpreting provincial orders, as they issue business licences to farmers' markets; in some cases they are owners of the property where the farmers' markets operate.

Physical Distancing

The following applies to indoor AND outdoor markets:

1. Vendor booths are set-up with a physical barrier or 2 metres distance between booths and positioned to facilitate a one-way movement of customers through the market.
2. Maintain a 2 metre distance or provide a [physical barrier](#) between vendors and customers to prevent transmission of respiratory droplets. Where not practical vendors are required to wear masks.

3. Post signs reminding customers about physical distancing requirements:
 - Through-out the market,
 - Reminding people to avoid congregation
 - In seating areas, arrange picnic tables and charis, and post signs reminding customers,
 - that groups must seat themselves two meters apart from other groups
 - that there is not more than 6 people at a table from one group

The following applies to indoor markets only

1. Calculate the maximum number of people that can be safely accommodated in the market. This should be equivalent to 5 square metres of unencumbered space per person, and this number should be documented in the COVID-19 safety plan.
2. Monitor the number of patrons entering the market and ensure this number does not exceed the number stated in the COVID-19 safety plan.
3. Direct traffic through the market through the use of chalk or tape markings on the ground, ropes, barriers or other markers as required. [Physical distancing poster](#) (PDF).
4. Post signs and create an environment in the market where customers can practice safe physical distancing of 2 metres, keep moving and avoid congregation points.

Health Checks and Masks

Customers:

- Customers must not enter any farmers' market if they feel ill,
- Customers are required to wear masks in all indoor public spaces, including farmers' markets
- Customers are recommended to wear masks in outdoor public spaces

Farmers' market managers and vendors:

Check the WorkSafe site requirements for [Health Checks](#) and [Masks](#). The requirements for farmers markets described in the PHO Gathering and Events order are described below:

- Managers must ensure vendors carry out and pass health checks each day vendors participate at a market.
- If a manager is unsatisfied with the vendors health check they must not permit the vendor to be present at the market.
- Vendors must perform health checks and confirm with managers they have passed the health check, otherwise they must not be present at the market.
- A person must not enter or must leave a market if advised by the owner, manager or staff that they person cannot be safely accommodated, for example, if health check requirements are not met.
- Masks may be required to be worn by the vendor when a two metre physical distance, or physical barrier between vendors and customers, are not possible or practical.
- Masks are required to be worn in all indoor public spaces, including farmers' markets. Vendors are not required to wear a mask when
 - the vendor is unable to wear a mask without assistance from another person,
 - health condition or impairment,
 - the mask is removed temporarily to identify the vendor or communicate with a customer.
 - the vendor is eating or drinking and not involved with a customer.

More information about masking requirements, exemptions to masking requirements, and what to do when a customer refuses to wear a mask, can be found on the [Employers & Businesses](#) page.

This [COVID-19 requirements poster for food premises](#) is a useful reminder for vendors and employees.

Enhanced hygiene

In indoor and outdoor markets:

- Provide hand-washing facilities with running water, soap and paper-towels for hand-washing and drying and/or access to hand sanitizers for vendors and customers.
- Provide hand sanitation supplies in customer areas and post or erect signs reminding customers to regularly wash their hands or use hand sanitizer. [Hand hygiene poster](#)

Handling of products, including food and non-food items:

- Vendors are encouraged to pre-package prepared foods to minimize direct contact by customers
- Prepared foods (i.e. bakery items for e.g., breads, muffins) that are not pre-packaged foods at the time of sale must be protected by a barrier (i.e. sneeze guard) or stored away from customer access. Vendors must package the product at time of sale.
- Customers of farmers' markets must not use their own containers; vendors must dispense all unpackaged prepared foods and takeaway foods.
- Where customers self-dispense foods (unpackaged fresh and pre-packaged prepared foods) and non-food products vendors must
 - provide hand washing or hand sanitizing nearby
 - post signs about hand hygiene and physical distancing measures
 - implement a frequent cleaning and sanitizing of booths and utensils used at the booth

Additional Measures

1. Markets must cancel activities that promote gatherings, such as demonstrations.
2. Markets may play recorded background music or engage live musicians to play background music but must not allow customers to congregate at that location. We do not recommend artists sing near customers (to limit risk of respiratory droplet spread from artists). Markets should not be promoting or advertising music at the market. Background music should not be louder than normal conversation.
3. Market vendors selling ready-to-eat foods may package foods into single use or closed take-away containers or brown bags and post signs advising customers to comply with physical distancing requirements.
4. Markets must implement enhanced frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces within the market.
5. Markets must restrict entry to anyone who is ill; vendors, if they are ill, should not attend and customers who are ill should also be advised to not enter the farmers' market.
6. Farmers' market guidelines can be found on the BCCDC web-site. As with any foods prepared at home for sale at the market, if you are ill, or someone in your household is ill, do not prepare or package foods, including low risk foods.
7. Establish pick-up points in farmers' markets (for e.g., drive-thru pick-up where feasible) for on-line orders.
8. Where feasible create cashless payment systems through on-line orders and point of sale devices in vendor booths.
9. On-line sales of food and non-food items from organized markets are not restricted. However,
 - high risk foods made in an unapproved facility may not be sold on-line
 - non-food items must not be picked up at the market (see item 13)
10. On-line food sale items may be picked up at the farmers' market in a designated area or pick-up

point. Choose an area where congregation with other customers can be avoided. To avoid congregation in the market and in market parking areas alternate preferred options are:

- delivery of on-line items,
- curb-side pick-up,
- pick-up outside of the market, or
- pick-up outside of normal market hours.

11. As they open, information about BC Farmers' Markets Online will be added to <https://bcfarmersmarkettrail.com/>

Other resources

- [Food businesses](#)
- [Food banks](#) and food distribution
- [Food safety for the public](#)

List of updates:

June 15: All markets may sell food and non-food items, provide services and personal services. Samples may be given out. Removed permitted activities accordion. Updated additional measures to remove permits not being issued for samples.

May 26: description of service vs. personal services; removed on-line pick-up requirements for non-food items

May 18: updated order M. to N.; added unencumbered to description

Mar 25: Barrier or 2m for vendor booths, update customer mask use, personal services restricted indoor & outdoor markets, other services in outdoor markets allowed, single use containers permitted.

Mar 22: Outdoor markets may sell non-food items. Indoor markets may sell food and flowers, plants, seeds, and compost. Washroom for hand-washing (toilet not required). 2 m distance between vendor booths.

Feb 19: Masking updates, information on Employers & Business page, poster, non-food item pick-up under G&E section J drive-through events,

Jan 15: Clarification of washroom requirement and physical distancing between booths.

Jan 11: Jan 8th Gathering and Events PHO Order for Episodic Markets (section M): owner, manager, vendor, customer responsibilities, COVID-19 safety plan, calculating and recording safe numbers per 5 square metres, health checks, washroom and hand sanitizer supplies

Dec 11: online non-food items sales must not be picked up at the market

Dec 3: restriction to sale of food items for human consumption under the Gathering and Events order

Dec 2: On-line sales and pick-up at market for non-food items allowable.

November 20: provincial restrictions include wearing of masks in all indoor public areas

September 25: clarify indoor and outdoor farmers markets, other markets under G&E order; spacing of 5m², temporary food permits do not allow sampling; conversation level for background music.

June 29: personal services, live music & musicians, handling of food/non-food items

June 12: introduction and take-away containers (to be closed)

May 28: vending PHO order; non-food item sales; seating; signage requirements

Apr 7: physical distancing; hand-washing; restricted activities

Mar 27: first issue