



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT



**Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District & City of Port Alberni
Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)
Response Plan**

Version 1.0 - March 11, 2020

RECORD OF AMENDMENTS

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DISTRIBUTION LIST

When amendments are made, copies will be circulated to the following groups.

- **Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District Management**
- **City of Port Alberni Management**
- **Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District Board**
- **City of Port Alberni Council**

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BACKGROUND

In January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease in Hubei Province, China to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO stated there is a high risk of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spreading to other countries around the world. On March 11, 2020 the WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) and City of Port Alberni staff have developed this response plan to strengthen preparedness at the local level for COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Response Plan supports the strategy of Island Health while accommodating the circumstances of the ACRD including the City of Port Alberni. Where possible, activities will align with regional, provincial, national and World Health Organization guidelines.

This plan is subject to change and discretion depending on emergent conditions and information.

How COVID-19 spreads

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables or telephones. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. The virus is not known to be airborne (e.g. transmitted through the particles floating in the air) and it is not something that comes in through the skin.

Prevention

The most important thing staff can do to prevent coronavirus and other illnesses is to **wash their hands regularly** and avoid touching their faces.

There are currently no vaccines available to protect you against human coronavirus infection.

In general, the following advice can help reduce the risk of infection or spreading infection to others:

- stay home if you are sick
- when coughing or sneezing:
 - cover your mouth and nose with your arm to reduce the spread of germs
 - dispose of any tissues you have used as soon as possible and wash your hands afterwards
- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care centres if you are sick

Definitions

- **Community Transmission:** Means the occurrence of cases of an illness for which the source of infection is unknown.
- **Essential Services:** Water, Sewer, Fire services, Governance and Communications.

- **Pandemic:** A pandemic is defined as an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people.
- **Self-Isolation:** Means avoiding situations where you could infect other people. This means any situation where you may come in close contact with others (close contact means you are within 1m – 2m (3 - 6 feet) of another person), such as social gatherings, work, school, child care/pre-school centres, university, and other education providers, faith-based gatherings, aged care and health care facilities, prisons, sports gatherings, restaurants and all public gatherings.
- **Self-Monitor:** Means monitoring your health and the health of your children or live-in family members for symptoms such as fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Individuals who are self-monitoring are allowed to attend work and participate in regular activities.

GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

The following guidelines and procedures are established for implementation before or during a COVID-19 pandemic:

- *COVID-19 Guidelines*
- *Office Sanitization Plan*
- *Self-Monitoring and Isolation of Staff Members*
- *Restricting Access to Worksites*
- *Communications Plan*

COVID-19 GUIDELINES

To protect ACRD and City of Port Alberni staff from exposure and to limit the spread of COVID-19, the respective CAO will use the following stages as a guideline to implement the applicable procedures as recommended below.

NOTE: *Procedures from higher stages may be implemented sooner at the discretion of the CAO or designate.*

Stage One

The Chief Provincial Medical Health Officer advises of an occurrence of COVID-19 in the Province of BC:

- Initiating ACRD & City of Port Alberni COVID-19 Response Plan
- Providing Internal and External Communications (per Appendix 1)

Stage Two

The Provincial Chief Medical Health Officer advises of instances of COVID-19 in the local area (ACRD Electoral Areas and City of Port Alberni):

- Those procedures outlined in Stage One
- Office Sanitization Plan
- Implementing means to protect staff while maintaining public access to facilities where staff work (ex. impose proximity limiting measures, install and require use of hand sanitizing stations)

- May restrict Access to Worksites to staff only
- Implementing working from home/telecommuting options
- Initiating an Incident Response Coordination Team of ACRD & City of Port Alberni Representatives and Outside Agencies
- Activate a Level One Emergency Operations Centre and request a task number from Emergency Management BC

Stage Three

Stage Three activation will be at the discretion of the ACRD Board of Directors and the City of Port Alberni Council and will take into consideration:

1. Whether or not a pandemic has been declared
2. Characteristics of community transmission (such as number of cases and location)
3. Multiple occurrences of COVID-19 in the local area

Procedures during Stage Three may include:

- Those procedures outlined in Stage One and Stage Two
- Restricting public access to the local government workspaces (Office, Public Works Yard, Fire Hall, etc.) and public facilities (Echo Centre, Multiplex, public washrooms, drinking fountains, etc.).
- Implementing EOC Hazard-specific plan for COVID-19
- CAO or designate will determine any additional measures necessary to protect staff required to perform Essential Services.

OFFICE SANITIZATION PLAN

During Stages Two and Three, all ACRD and City of Port Alberni office areas must be sanitized using cleaning supplies suitable to reduce the exposure and spread of COVID-19.

List of disinfecting agents and their working concentrations known to be effective against coronaviruses:

Agent and Concentration	Uses
Chlorine: Household bleach – sodium hypochlorite (5.25%) 1:100 (500 ppm solution) 10 ml bleach to 990 ml water	Used for disinfecting general surfaces, e.g., hand railings, grab handles, door knobs, cupboard handles.
Chlorine: Household bleach - sodium hypochlorite (5.25%) 1:50 (1,000ppm solution) 20 ml bleach to 980 ml water	Used for disinfecting surfaces contaminated with bodily fluids and waste like vomit, diarrhea, mucus, or feces (after cleaning with soap and water first). Allow surface to air dry naturally.
Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide 0.5%	Used for disinfecting general surfaces (e.g. counters, hand rails, door knobs).
Quaternary Ammonium Compounds (QUATs)	Used for disinfecting of general surfaces (e.g., floors, walls, furnishings).

Required levels of sanitization:

Stage One

The Chief Provincial Medical Health Officer advises of an occurrence of COVID-19 in the Province of BC:

- N/A

Stage Two:

The Provincial Chief Medical Health Officer advises of instances of COVID-19 in the local area (ACRD Electoral Areas or City of Port Alberni):

- Work stations and areas with public access will be provided with sanitizing materials for use by staff.
- All staff will ensure that their own workstations, including equipment, vehicles, and surfaces are sanitized using an appropriate disinfecting agent on a daily basis.
- Janitorial staff will ensure that common high-touch areas such as door handles, washrooms, and light switches are sanitized using an appropriate disinfecting agent on a daily basis.

Stage Three

Stage Three activation will be at the discretion of Council and will take into consideration:

1. Whether or not a pandemic has been declared
2. Characteristics of community transmission (such as number of cases and location)
3. Multiple occurrences of COVID-19 in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Procedures during Stage Three may include:

- Routine practices as per Stage Two continue.
- All surfaces must be sanitized after each use using an appropriate disinfecting agent.

SELF-MONITORING AND ISOLATION OF STAFF MEMBERS

During the work day, staff will Self-Monitor to determine if they are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19.

Symptoms

- Clinical symptoms of COVID-19 may be mild or severe, and are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold.
- Mild symptoms may include some or all of the following: Low-grade fever, cough, malaise, rhinorrhea, fatigue, sore throat, gastro-intestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea.
- More severe symptoms may include any of the above as well as fever, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing and/or chest pain.

- Those who are infected with COVID-19 may have little to no symptoms. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. This is the longest known infectious period for this disease.

Procedures for symptomatic staff:

- Isolate yourself from others as quickly as possible.
- Immediately call your health care professional, a local public health authority, or 8-1-1.
- Describe your symptoms and travel history. They will provide advice on what you should do.

Your health care professional may ask you to self-isolate. People asked to self-isolate should stay home and be prepared to limit contact with others for 14 days.

RESTRICTING STAFF ACCESS TO WORKSITES

Unless otherwise directed by the Chief Administrative Officer or Management, healthy employees are expected to report for work.

Any employee reporting to work who is exhibiting signs and symptoms that appear to reflect those of COVID-19 will be denied access to the office in order to reduce the exposure to other staff members.

At the discretion of the CAO or designate, non-essential work-related travel may be restricted.

Where applicable, staff will be given the opportunity to work from home at the discretion of the CAO or designate.

More Information about coronavirus and prevention:

- [Public Health Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Outbreak update](#)
- [Public Health Coronavirus infection: Prevention and risks](#)
- [The World Health Organization \(WHO\) information and preventative measures](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control - Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

APPENDIX 1 – COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

1. COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

Communication about prevention of COVID-19 is the responsibility of Island Health and assisted by the ACRD and City of Port Alberni on behalf of its residents.

Open communication is essential to the support and cooperation of the community and in building confidence and eliminating and avoiding misinformation. Centralizing the release of public information relating to the disease as it is happening locally will lessen confusion for the public.

The communication objectives are to:

- Advise what is the ACRD and City of Port Alberni are doing about COVID-19 planning.
- Increase public awareness of the importance of planning, hygiene and awareness so that residents are able to make the necessary decisions to protect themselves.
- Advise any changes to service delivery from the ACRD and City of Port Alberni.
- Develop and communicate consistent, appropriate and accurate messages regarding COVID-19 for external and internal audiences. Ensure that the public and media receive these messages in a timely manner.
- Share information with stakeholders involved in the preparation for and response to a COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ensure effective communications between those leading the ACRD and City of Port Alberni's response.
- Establish the ACRD and City of Port Alberni as an accurate, reliable and trusted source of information.
- Address misunderstandings, correct misinformation, and deal with rumors and stigma.

2. KEY MESSAGES

- The ACRD and City of Port Alberni will follow the advice and guidance of Island Health which has the expertise to assess the level of risk posed by COVID-19.
- The ACRD and City of Port Alberni are preparing for a COVID-19 pandemic. Planning and procedures are open to the community and staff for their information and feedback.
- The ACRD and City of Port Alberni's priority during a COVID-19 pandemic is to maintain Essential Service levels. There may be changes to the delivery of services in order to protect the health and safety of workers, and to focus on providing the most necessary services to the community.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

The ACRD will be responsible for communications regarding services and functions specific to the ACRD, and the City of Port Alberni will be responsible for communications regarding services and functions specific to the City of Port Alberni.

Examples of these functions include, but are not limited to: Echo Centre, Multiplex, municipal & regional planning functions, public works services (water, sewer, storm, road maintenance, etc.), building inspection, bylaw enforcement activities, recreation services, licensing and other statutory functions and staffing levels (shortages and/or absenteeism).

4. TARGET AUDIENCES

Communications planning for COVID-19 response comprises two audience areas – internal and external.

- Internal – ACRD Board of Directors and City of Port Alberni Mayor and Council, ACRD and City of Port Alberni staff, Bamfield, Sproat Lake, and Beaver Creek Volunteer Fire Departments and the emergency management volunteers.
- External – Public (residents, tourists), responding agencies, businesses, media, social media.

5. COMMUNICATIONS - GENERAL

Communications by the ACRD and City of Port Alberni will be directed to the general public and to staff. A spokesperson and a back-up spokesperson for each stage will be identified. All COVID-19 health related information being sent to internal and external audiences will be approved by the CAO or Emergency Operations Centre director, or designate. Ideally, one person will act as the main spokesperson for all media inquiries. However, given the nature of COVID-19, more people may be required to act as spokespeople in the event of time off or illness.

The ACRD and City of Port Alberni will communicate clearly with the public, provide consistent messaging and explain what is being done and what the public can do. At the request of Island Health, ACRD may assume additional responsibilities as part of the Alberni Valley Emergency Plan.

Media attention may be intense and information demands may continue for some time. Sustaining public confidence during this time may be a challenge. Public reaction may be divided between those who will think the ACRD and City of Port Alberni are not doing enough to protect the safety of residents and staff and some who will think the ACRD and City of Port Alberni are over-reacting. Despite public opinion, the goal of the ACRD and City of Port Alberni is to make sure that the community is informed about the ACRD and City of Port Alberni's COVID-19 response plan.

Content of the messages from the ACRD and City of Port Alberni will focus on changes in service delivery within the ACRD and City of Port Alberni. Questions beyond the scope of ACRD and City of Port Alberni responsibility will be referred to Island Health. Information about COVID-19 will be coordinated with Island Health and may be communicated by the ACRD and City of Port Alberni on their behalf. The ACRD and City of Port Alberni will receive regular updates from Island Health during a COVID-19 pandemic.

6. COMMUNICATIONS WITH EMPLOYEES

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District will take the lead role in communicating details with its employees and the City of Port Alberni will take the lead role in communication details with its employees. The ACRD and City of Port Alberni have the responsibility to educate employees concerning preventive measures. Confronted with a COVID-19 pandemic, the ACRD and City of Port Alberni must inform its employees of preventive measures and implement plans to help protect employees against the spread of this disease.

The ACRD and City of Port Alberni will work with the respective health and safety committees by communicating the health and safety precautions to be followed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to educate employees about their responsibility to help protect themselves, their families, and those who become ill.

Employee communications should be by different methods (by face-to-face meetings, email, bulletin boards, newsletter, etc.) and reach all employees.

7. COMMUNICATION PHASES

Over the course of a COVID-19 outbreak, the demand and need for information will vary with the significance of the threat. The content of messages will also change as phases move from one to the next.

The role of communications will evolve throughout all phases from actively trying to raise awareness to responding to requests for information from ACRD and City of Port Alberni residents.

Messages will correspond to the phases of the outbreak which are separate from the Stages identified in the COVID-19 GUIDELINES (See Above). Phases for communications purposes have been identified as:

Phase One (<u>Stage 1</u>)	Awareness Period
Phase Two (<u>Stages 2 & 3</u>)	Local Instances Period
Phase Three	Recovery Period

Phase One: Awareness Period

This phase may be initiated before a pandemic has been officially declared and includes the period of time immediately after.

The ACRD and City of Port Alberni's objectives in the awareness phase will be to deliver COVID-19 information to the public and employees intended to raise awareness of the risks of COVID-19 and the steps residents can take to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Such information may include:

- Hand hygiene – frequent hand washing
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- Respiratory hygiene - cover your cough/sneeze
- When to stay home
- How businesses can prepare
- How the municipality is preparing for COVID-19
- Cleaning and disinfection of work surfaces
- Information related to reducing stigma and where to find official sources of information

Communication channels to be considered will include newspaper and radio advertising, website updates, social media, presentations to the public (residents, business sector, tourism sector) and internal audiences, news conferences/media briefings, news releases and the handling of media inquiries.

The ACRD and City of Port Alberni's *COVID-19 Guidelines* outlines Stage One as an occurrence of COVID-19 within the Province of BC. At this time, they will implement the information strategy that will communicate the following procedures:

- Initiation of the ACRD & City of Port Alberni COVID-19 Response Plan
- Provide Internal and External Communications

Phase Two: Local Instances Period

During this phase the ACRD and City of Port Alberni's objectives will be to assist the public in coping by:

- Continue to communicate the symptoms of COVID-19 to the media and the public.
- Communicate what residents can expect during this phase.
- Communicate the importance of continuing with personal hygiene.

The ACRD and City of Port Alberni *COVID-19 Guidelines* outlines Stage Two as being when the Provincial Chief Medical Health Officer advises of instances of COVID-19 in the local area (ACRD Electoral Areas and City of Port Alberni). At this time, the ACRD and City of Port Alberni may implement and communicate the following plans (in addition to plans identified in Stage One):

- Office Sanitation
- Restricting Access to Worksites
- Working from home where applicable
- Opening of a Level One Emergency Operations Centre

The ACRD and City of Port Alberni *Pandemic COVID-19 Guidelines* outlines Stage Three to be implemented at the discretion of the ACRD Board of Directors and the City of Port Alberni Mayor and Council and will take into consideration:

1. Whether or not a pandemic has been declared
2. Characteristics of community transmission (such as number of cases and location)
3. Occurrences of COVID-19 in the ACRD Electoral Areas and the City of Port Alberni.

During Stage Three, the ACRD and City of Port Alberni will communicate the following procedures (in addition to procedures identified in Stage One and Stage Two):

- Restricting public access to local government workspaces and public facilities.

Phase Three: Recovery Period

During this period, the ACRD and City of Port Alberni will communicate with Island Health to confirm the end of the Community Transmission period, acknowledge the contribution of both internal and external involvement in the process, provide any necessary information to the public on return to normal service levels and when available, information about a possible relapse of the COVID-19. It may also be appropriate to hold a public information meeting for the purposes of providing a situation report to the community and receiving feedback from the public. Psychosocial issues should be addressed to ease the strain on community members who have been adversely impacted by COVID-19.

As well, the recovery period will allow, when appropriate, for a formal evaluation of the communications strategy. Evaluation may include the monitoring of requests for information, website stats, requests from stakeholder groups, and media relations.

8. MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

The City of Port Alberni Communication Manager and the ACRD Protective Services Manager or designates will coordinate media relations activities. In the event of a COVID-19 pandemic, the media will be updated on a regular basis through such avenues as in-person news briefings, email, website updates and/or social media feeds.

The ACRD Protective Services Manager or designate will monitor the local news media and social media to determine and ensure the ACRD and City of Port Alberni's messaging is being heard, that the

information is accurate and timely, ensure there is no missing information, and evaluate communications to assist in the planning for further communications.

9. ACRD CONTACTS:

Protective Services Manager	250-724-1356
Chief Administrative Officer	250-720-2705
ACRD Office	250-720-2700

10. CITY OF PORT ALBERNI CONTACTS:

Communications Manager	250 720-2822
Chief Administrative Officer	250-720-2824
City Hall	250-723-2146