

# **Victoria Flying Club Interim COVID-19 Operations Policy**

(dated 16 May 2020)

## **Overview:**

A recent study in Science (Vol 368, Issue 6491, 8 May 2020) found that 62% of COVID-19 infections were passed by people who, to all outward appearances, looked perfectly healthy. This same study also found that only 6% of COVID-19 infections could be attributed to environmental contamination, such as picking up the virus from a handrail or door knob. Most of the carriers were pre-symptomatic, but some were asymptomatic; indicating that without testing they would never know they had ever contracted the virus. This pattern is reflected in a similar study published in Nature Medicine, which estimated that 44% of secondary infections were spread by someone in the “pre-symptomatic” phase of the disease. Worst of all, this phase is when a patient is at their most contagious.

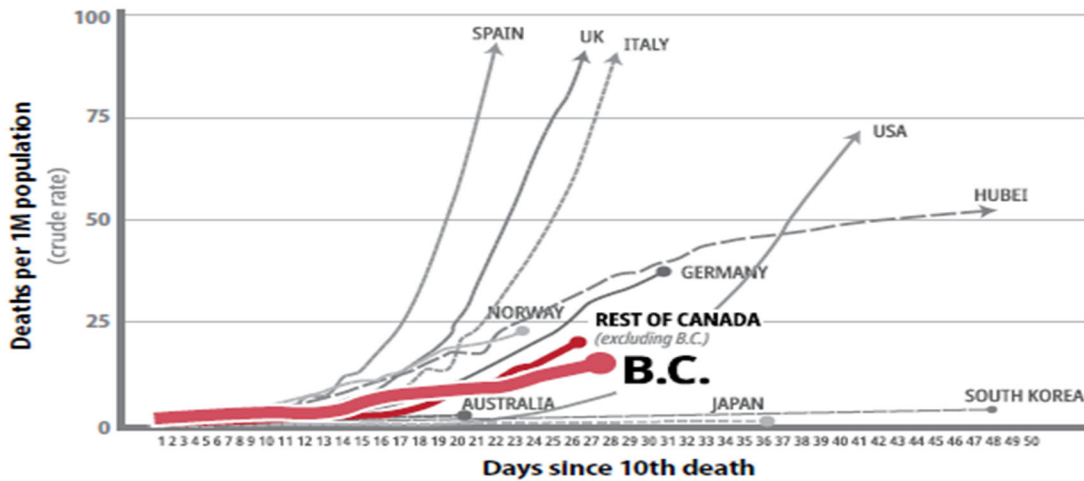
The danger of enclosed spaces was most vividly illustrated in a March report by Japan’s public broadcaster, NHK. Researchers modelled the movement of micro droplets in an enclosed space no larger than a classroom, and found that a single cough could leave the room swimming in drops even 20 minutes later. “If you open the window and refresh the air in the room, the micro droplets are carried away by the circulation,” it advises. Japan, South Korea and other Asian countries that practice widespread public masking have proved far more successful at battling COVID-19.

## **Risk Analysis:**

The graph provided in Figure 2 should provide staff, students and members of the Victoria Flying Club (VFC) with an appreciation of the relative risk of exposure to COVID-19 in British Columbia (BC) compared with the rest of Canada and other countries world-wide.

The available facts not only identify BC as having established a highly successful mitigation strategy, but that the situation on Vancouver Island is particularly exceptional with only 126 known incidents of COVID-19 infections to date (as of 16 May 2020). As an island, with established restrictions by outside visitors (by land, sea and air) from the mainland, other provinces/territories, as well as other countries, these facts should further reinforce confidence that the risk of COVID-19 infection at the VFC should be minimal.

Figure 2 – Comparative Analysis of Infection

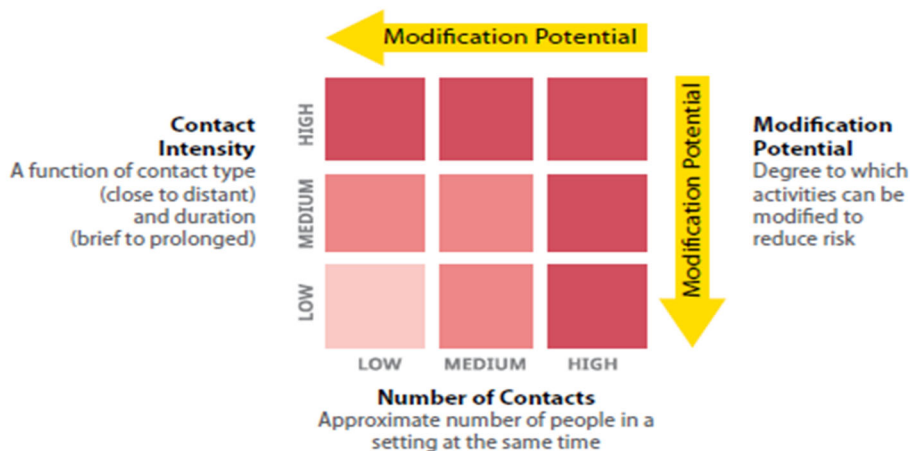


**Theoretical Approach to Mitigating Transmission:**

In reference to the risk matrix at Figure 2, the **Medium** and **High** categories are also subject to potential modification or controls which can help the VFC move to the **Low** risk category by taking a combination of actions:

- Physical distancing measures – measures to reduce the density (intensity and number of contacts) of people at the VFC;
- Engineering controls – physical barriers (e.g. plexiglass barriers; one-way systems for customer flow; physical space between seating);
- Administrative controls – rules and guidelines to reduce the likelihood of transmission at the VFC (e.g. stay away if sick; hours of operation); and
- PPE – use of non-medical masks as well as gloves.

Figure 2 – Theoretical Risk Matrix



## **VFC's Practical Approach to Mitigating Transmission:**

The key suggestions established by British Columbia's informed authorities in their recent publication, *BC COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy*, as well as other reports and updates, form the primary basis for the VFC's functional approach to minimizing risk of COVID-19 transmission in conducting its operations, including the trial introduction of limited dual flight training. These practical mitigation procedures are divided into the following two categories:

1. **Awareness**: By raising awareness, the VFC seeks to encourage staff, students and members of the VFC (as well as clientele of the Dakota Café) to take the prescribed personal precautions (e.g. hand washing, social distancing, etc.) and to avoid entering the VFC if they may be infected with COVID-19. The risk of being infected could be determined as a result of their own personal symptoms that appear to relate to the disease (e.g. heavy cough, fever, sore throat, etc.), or if they have been in contact with someone who recently (within the previous 14 days) arrived locally from another province or country, who was tested positively to be infected with COVID-19, or who displayed known symptoms of COVID-19. Such awareness includes the known and published vulnerabilities of segments of our community who may have an elevated health risk if exposed to COVID-19, namely those with underlying cardiovascular, respiratory and/or other auto-immune health issues that, when combined with age, may put them at increased danger.
  
2. **Precautionary Measures**: In addition to awareness, the VFC will implement necessary precautions to further mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 through the application of the following measures:
  - Use of temporary physical barriers (to triage Dakota Café customers from VFC staff, students and members);
  - Use of written directives regarding denial of access to the VFC if at elevated risk of exposure and/or symptomatic of COVID-19 (cough, fever, sore throat, fatigue, etc.);
  - Physical measures to reduce congregation of people in common areas for staff, students, members and Dakota Café clientele, as well as clear indicators of the flow of people traffic and required separation distances;
  - Control measures for the use of washrooms;
  - Provision of masks and non-latex gloves for Flight Instructors (free of charge) and students (at cost) engaged in ground/flight training, as well as the requirement to "mask up" whilst in close proximity (pre-flight briefing, simulator, cockpit and/or post-flight debriefing);

- Provision of hand sanitizers throughout the VFC;
- Provision of plastic screening and physical separation measures between staff/dispatchers and students/VFC clientele, including the restriction of staff members congregating in the staff/dispatch area;
- Application of scheduling control measures to modulate the interval of flight training and aircraft rentals so as to minimize physical contact;
- Application of additional control measures to sequence the daily training cycles of Flight Instructors and students;
- Furtherance of established decontamination measures on VFC premises, aircraft and rental equipment as implemented by Line Crew and other staff members;
- The provision of masks and non-latex gloves to all staff (free of charge) to Charter Pilots conducting fire patrols; and
- Ongoing recording of all staff, students and VFC members comings and goings into the VFC, so as to provide an accurate record for provincial authorities as required if a COVID-19 outbreak is linked to anyone who came into the VFC.

#### **Interim Way Forward:**

Based on the known facts, guidance from the informed authorities, and the recent inclinations towards a lessening of prescribed restrictive measures for British Columbia, the VFC will undertake a two-week trial period that allows for limited flight training as follows:

- The VFC will maintain its current COVID-19 hours of operation that accommodates a single shift, namely 09:00-17:00 PDT daily, seven days/week, with limited provision for self-dispatching after hours;
- During the initial two-week trial period, emphasis will be placed on adherence to COVID-19 awareness and VFC procedures so as to minimize the public health threat. Such emphasis will be addressed through the implementation of a system, based on this policy, which includes a respectful prioritization of clients under the authority of the CFI as follows:
  - Addressing currency and competency of Flight Instructors so as to increase the pool of available and current Flight Instructors;
  - Providing refresher/currency check-outs to overdue licensed pilots/recreational fliers;
  - Fulfilling extant VFC commitments to SD61 students;
  - Preparing students who we're already within a few flights of undertaking their forthcoming flight test and/or completing a rating qualification;

- Providing due consideration to Flight Instructors within a few flight recommended examinations from achieving their higher instructional rating;
- Addressing training objectives of established VFC students;
- Accommodating the desires/objectives of new VFC students, albeit on a lower priority basis; and
- Deferring the reinstatement of ground school until after the interim two-week trial period.

### **Go Forward Position:**

This two-week trial period has been developed within the duality of the precautionary restraints as well as the Phase 2 lessening of restrictions within BC as prescribed by provincial informed authorities. Based on the results of this trial period, the lessons “learned” during the experience, as well as additional potential guidance from our informed authorities, will guide the way forward. As such, future consideration will most certainly be given to amending VFC’s COVID-19 policies, procedures and operations to allow for expanded operations while respecting the broader health and safety requirements.

### **Summary:**

Within a framework of informed awareness, practical application of precautionary measures, and an environment of continuous learning/adaptation to approved best practices, the VFC seeks to continue moving forward through the evolving challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic towards an efficient, effective and safe new approach to its multifaceted operations. A key component of this strategy will be a resilient and adaptive approach to new recommendations, guidelines and restrictions by informed authorities, as well as a progressive and responsive approach to concerns, recommendations and observations that are brought forward to the VFC management team and the Board of Directors.