

EOTC and Outdoor Education at Alert Level 2

Alert Level 2: What does it mean for EOTC and Outdoor Education

Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) and Outdoor Education (OE) are hugely valuable components of an authentic rich curriculum. It's great that schools are able to offer students and staff opportunities to reconnect with each other, have rich learning experiences, and enjoy the benefits of being in nature now that the country is at Alert Level 2.

As staff and students reconnect with each other and schools settle into new routines at Alert Level 2, learning outside the classroom and school gates is possible. Units of work or programmes that involve time away from school or in the outdoors can continue if managed appropriately.

Your school already has a plan for managing Health and Safety, and in particular, the public health requirements for Alert Level 2. The guidance below helps highlight how these requirements relate to EOTC and OE.

The key controls for schools and all workplaces are:

- ensure people with COVID-19 symptoms or feel generally unwell stay away from school
- maintain physical distancing (in schools this means children, young people, and staff maintaining a physical distance so that they are not breathing on or touching each other)
- enable good hygiene practices
- keep track of people that enter your school

Key considerations for EOTC and OE

Those unwell stay home

- School staff are to observe students before leaving on EOTC events, checking for symptoms and asking those presenting as unwell to go home. Have a robust plan in place for all those involved if a student reports they are feeling unwell during an event.

Physical Distancing

- Students and staff should maintain a physical distance so that they are not breathing on or touching each other. Where practicable 1 metre can be used as a guide. There are situations where physical distancing is not possible, such as some team activities. In these situations, extra emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activities and regular cleaning of equipment is very important.
- Physical distancing from members of the public should be maintained at 2m. Some examples where maintaining physical distance is difficult but must be appropriately managed are:
 - narrow public walking tracks
 - exiting a bus in the city

- entrance ways to public buildings such as libraries and museums
- mountain biking, when gathering at trail heads or sections of a trail.

Good hygiene practices

- Coughing into their elbow,
- Trying to avoid touching their faces
- Hand washing and drying
- Regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces (e.g. minivan door handle)
- Exercise caution with common touch points (e.g. gates or doors) and wash or sanitise hands after touching these surfaces. Ensure these touch points are regularly cleaned or consider if they can be minimised (e.g. door latched open).

Contact Tracing

- Contact tracing registers must be in place that identify which students attend EOTC or OE events, and when and who they have contact with during the day. This includes any changes during the activity. The register needs to record others the staff are in contact with, as well as recording any volunteers involved or any staff working for an external provider (e.g. the librarian or guide at the museum). Include transport details in your contact tracing information.

Equipment

- Playgrounds (including in public parks) can be used, with an emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after use.
- Shared supplies and equipment are able to be used if students and staff are undertaking regular hand washing and staying away if sick. Where practical, equipment should be regularly cleaned.
- You should avoid sharing mouth guards, blindfolds, whistles, hats, any guards or protective covers over the face or nose.
- Where you provide school helmets for activities (such as climbing, mountain biking or kayaking), helmets should not be swapped between students during the activity. Helmets should be treated with a non-contact spray sanitiser (particularly the touch points like the buckles and shell of the helmet) between groups. Students should wash and dry their hands or use hand sanitiser before and after using helmets. SteriGENE is a highly effective non-toxic and non-corrosive disinfectant that can be used on helmets.
- If you provide any school clothing (such as waterproof jackets or thermals) these should only be used by the student they are allocated to during the activity and, washed and dried between activities.
- Equipment such as life jackets, wetsuits and kayak paddles should not be swapped between students during the activity and should be disinfected between groups.
- You should wash and dry your hands or use hand sanitiser before and after using playground equipment or equipment/gear.
- When cleaning the equipment between groups is not practical, e.g. ropes, hand holds on climbing walls, particular emphasis should be placed on washing and drying your hands or using hand sanitiser before and after the activity.
- Changing rooms can be used but encourage spacing in them. Sanitise and wash hands on entry and exit. Activities
- Higher risk activities or new skills that require you to have physical contact with students should be carefully considered (e.g. the support required when teaching rolling at kayak or activities that require spotting). Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Are there other ways to achieve a similar outcome?
 - Can I wait until later in the year?

Volunteers

- Volunteers can be used at Alert Level 2 to support EOTC or OE activities as long as they are meeting all the public health requirements and are recorded in your Contact tracing register (make sure you have up to date contact information for them).

Transport

- Keep a record of each vehicle used and the students and staff that travelled in it, to enable contact tracing.
- Have hand sanitiser available for each student to use as they board the vehicle.
- Vehicles and surfaces will need to be sanitised after each journey.

Along with your usual risk management approach for EOTC or OE activities you will need to consider:

- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#) (which may be similar to other illnesses in the early stages)
- The importance of protecting those vulnerable to respiratory illness. Do you know who on your staff, in your volunteers and in your student population may be at greater risk?
- Whether, in the event someone was to become ill, you have the facilities to be able to respond, including the ability to isolate that person while you seek advice from a medical professional.
- Whether you have access to appropriate personal protective equipment and the ability to clean hard surfaces if someone were to become ill with infections such as flu, gastro bug, or COVID-19.

Working with External Providers

Work closely with the provider (PCBU) to agree to your health and safety plan for the event.

Together, you should consider and discuss:

- Symptoms of COVID-19 (which may be similar to other illnesses in the early stages)
- How to protect those students, staff or volunteers that may be at greater risk to respiratory illness? Include individual plans for those vulnerable to serious illness with COVID-19.
- The management of a situation in the event someone was to become ill. Do you have the facilities to be able to respond, including the ability to isolate that person while you seek advice from a medical professional?
- Do you have appropriate personal protective equipment and the ability to clean hard surfaces if someone were to become ill with flu, gastro bug, or COVID-19?
- Physical distancing requirements
- Good hygiene practices (e.g. will they provide hand sanitiser in common spaces?). Soap, water and the ability to dry hands must be provided in bathrooms.
- Any catering considerations. Clarify with your provider their systems for food handling and deliveries (you will need to be reassured they have processes in place to meet public health requirements and are approved to provide those services at Alert Level 2). If you or the provider will be preparing food on site you must check the [MPI guidance on re-opening food](#)

[businesses](#) and ensure your school, the provider and any suppliers meet all health and safety requirements before the event.

It is vital that all students and staff understand how crucial it is to:

- Practice physical distancing with people they don't know
- Frequently wash and dry hands
- Cough into their elbow
- Not touch their face
- Notify a staff member at the first sign of feeling unwell
- Adhere to general cleaning processes and cleaning duties following provider protocols.
- Adhere to protocols for food preparation, food handling, kitchen dining room/cleaning and dining protocols set by caterers or the provider.

Use Form 6 (EOTC External Provider Agreement form) from the [EOTC Tool Kit](#) to guide and record your discussions with the provider.

Links

Ministry of Education:

[COVID-19 Information and advice for students, whānau, and the education sector](#)
[School Bulletin Special Editions 2020](#)

[COVID-19 update \(7 May\)](#) Look for section called Guidance to support schools at Alert Level 2, this contains a link to “Managing health and safety in schools at alert level 2” (the first highlighted sentence).

Good hygiene practices will continue to be a priority at Alert Level 2 as the best way to minimise potential spread of COVID-19. The [COVID-19.govt.nz](#) and [Ministry of Health](#) websites are a good source of information including:

- [Hand washing](#)
- [Cough and sneeze etiquette](#)
- [Cleaning surfaces](#)

Mountain Safety Council:

Outdoor Recreation Checker <https://www.covid19outdoors.nz/> Check the advice for activities in your region at Level 2.

Department of Conservation:

[DOC's response to COVID-19](#)

Sport NZ:

[Information for the Sport, Recreation and Play sector](#)

FAQs

Can I take my Outdoor Education class tramping on public conservation (DOC) land?

Yes, at Level 2 you will be able to go hiking, mountain biking, four-wheel driving, and boating. Hunting is also allowed on public conservation land at Alert Level 2. You can also check trap lines if your school is involved in pest control.

It will be vital you travel safely and look after yourself and others when outdoors. This includes:

- ensuring contact tracing
- keeping 2 metre physical distancing from members of the public
- not leaving home if unwell
- hand washing, and
- coughing into your elbow.

Students and staff should maintain the same physical distancing with each other as they do at school, so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, where practicable using 1 metre as a guide. If physical distancing is not practical, then the emphasis should be placed on good hygiene practices.

DOC visitor facilities will reopen at Level 2. This includes visitor centres, huts, campgrounds and toilets, with special guidelines for use.

It is important visitors take responsibility for their own COVID-19 hygiene and cleaning requirements:

- be prepared to undertake additional cleaning when using huts, toilets, and campsites
- you will need to carry your own cleaning and protective equipment to safely use shared facilities (including toilets)
- leave facilities clean and fit for use by others

This is even more important over winter when the DOC standard cleaning and maintenance work is carried out less frequently than at peak times of the year.

Bookable accommodation is capped to 10 people and there should be no more than 10 people at any of the larger non-bookable huts. At all huts appropriate physical distancing is required – bring a tent.

Should our school permit overnight experiences e.g., multi or overnight camps at managed facilities (i.e. External providers such as Hillary Outdoors), tenting at public conservation land?

Overnight camps offered by outdoor providers are able to go ahead. You need to work closely with the provider to ensure all of the health and safety requirements are agreed upon, including how they are meeting the required public health measures.

Longer and overnight tramping is permitted, although these should still be easy trips within your groups ability and to places you've been before. Bookable accommodation is capped to 10 people and there should be no more than 10 people at any of the larger non-bookable huts. Tents are allowed. At all huts appropriate physical distancing is required.

DOC have further advice on specific public health measures to take and the availability of their facilities.

Can we go tenting?

Yes, you can use tents. However, due to the close proximity to others in a tent for an extended period of time (overnight) there should only be one person per tent at Alert Level 2. Tents should be well cleaned between uses or a withholding period could be considered to allow any virus particles on these surfaces to die, e.g. 5 days between uses.

Is there a maximum number of students that can go on a trip or stay at an external provider's facilities?

No, when the group is from the same school, the physical distancing, good hygiene and contact tracing guidelines for schools apply at the external provider's location. I.e. for physical distancing, students and staff should maintain the same physical distancing with each other as they do at school, so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, where practicable using 1 metre as a guide. If physical distancing is not practical, then the emphasis should be placed on good hygiene practices.

Is it OK to travel to complete assessments for our senior OE students?

Yes, travel between regions and around New Zealand is allowed at Level 2. Ensure you are following transport recommendations, including sanitising hands as you get into and out of vehicles. Contact tracing requirements must be met, you need to know who is in each vehicle and avoid students swapping between vehicles.

Is there a maximum trip length?

No, there is no recommended length of time for trips, that is a school decision.

Can there be interclass mixing? An example is a student who can't attend one trip but can attend another.

Yes, students can mix between classes for a trip. Contact tracing requirements must be met by ensuring records are kept of all students attending any trip, just as you would normally do.

Are we able to transport students in minivans to conduct EOTC and OE?

Yes, minivans can be used at Level 2. Ensure you are following transport recommendations, including sanitising hands as you get into and out of vehicles. High touch points should be cleaned regularly (e.g. the door handles, and steering wheel if swapping drivers). Seats should be sanitised between groups where possible.

Can groups of more than 10 travel together in a minivan?

Yes, as long as the legal seating requirements of the vehicle are adhered to.

What are the physical distancing requirements when our class is out of the school grounds?

Physical distancing of 2 metres should be in place from members of the public (to align with public health measures outside the school grounds). Students and staff should maintain the same physical distancing with each other, as they do at school, so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, where practicable using 1 metre as a guide. If physical distancing is not practical, then the emphasis should be placed on good hygiene practices.

Can the students be in physical contact with each other for activities such as caving?

Yes, in these situations extra emphasis on hand washing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activity, along with other good hygiene practices is very important.

Are there specific procedures we should now follow for a potential illness on camp?

You should follow the requirements set by your school for infectious illnesses.

If you are working with an external provider, you will need to agree to these procedures as part of your agreed health and safety plan for the event.

Can I get an external provider to provide activities at school?

Yes, external providers will be able to go on site. You will need to work closely with the provider to ensure all of the health and safety requirements are agreed between the school and the provider. Everyone will need to ensure they are recorded as being on site (through the timetable and/or visitor register) and following appropriate hygiene and other health and safety measures required by the school, including that any shared equipment will need to be regularly cleaned.

How do bunkrooms at external provider work?

Where possible students should be encouraged to keep 1 metre physical distance, the emphasis should be on good hygiene, including hand washing or sanitising hands before entering the bunkroom and leaving the room if you need to cough or sneeze (or using your elbow). Records should be kept of which bunkroom each student was in.

Can I use shared accommodation such as backpacker hostels?

These organisations will have public health guidelines they have to meet to operate. As with working with any external provider, you will need to work closely with the provider to ensure all of the health and safety requirements are discussed and agreed to by the school and the provider. Consider carefully the ability to maintain 2 metres physical distancing from members of the public that are also using the facility.