

Purpose

During the COVID-19 pandemic it may be necessary to restrict movement in and out of communities on the winter road network. One way of doing this would be through implementing staffed roadblocks or checkpoints along the winter road.

A roadblock is used to limit the movement of vehicles along a route or close access to certain areas of roads. A checkpoint is used to control the movement. Roadblocks are checkpoints set up to ensure that unauthorized vehicles are not using the subject routes.

Communities will need to decide what level of authorization/screening is required to enter the community through the winter road network and the most effective way to implement these controls.

Communities have extensive experience with operating winter roads and security measures in a good and respectful way; these guidelines are intended to support this knowledge with specific considerations during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also important for communities to continue with the current public health measures that are in place and that have protected communities so far.

Benefits/drawbacks of a Checkpoint

Benefits:

- Provides an extra layer of security
- Allows winter roads to be open while addressing some of the risks of COVID-19 spread

Drawbacks:

- Requires significant financial and human resources to operate
- May cause additional delays to infrastructure projects if suppliers are turned away at these checkpoints
- Will require planning and coordination between communities as well as within the community itself

Checkpoint/Roadblock Placement

Checkpoint/roadblock placement will be essential to determining the infrastructure required, staffing considerations and the resources required to implement and maintain the checkpoint. The placement of these checkpoints will also have an impact on who has jurisdiction at these checkpoints. Communities should determine who has the jurisdiction to turn people away. This may be the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) or Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS), so communities should work with these organizations to resolve any jurisdictional issues before the winter road opens.

Some potential options for where to implement a checkpoint include:

- At entrance to the community or reserve boundary
- Winter road network access point
- Outside community

Locations further outside a community will require additional resources for effective implementation.

General Considerations

When planning for the winter road season this year, each community should consider what infrastructure/capital projects are being planned and how the road should be constructed to support the related needs.

Each community should develop its own plan first about how they will manage their winter road season and what screening and documentation requirements they will have for travelers.

- Will the community be in full lockdown allowing no non-local traffic to stop in the community?
- Will drivers be allowed to enter the community to offload their cargo?
- Will the community allow essential workers through the checkpoint?
- It is recommended that winter road travel focus on the delivery of essential services and supplies during the pandemic; however, will the community still allow visitors from other communities on the winter road? If so, what public health measures will be in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19?
- If drivers are allowed into the community what screening, testing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other precautions are required?
- What are the considerations for traffic that must travel straight through with no contact to the next community on the road network?

Communities should consider how to handle vehicles that are delivering essential supplies, such as housing materials or building equipment **IF** the driver fails the community's requirements.

- Could the vehicle then be instructed to only drop off their shipment and strictly minimize any interactions with the community?
- If the community is not comfortable with that, are they prepared to accept delays or extra costs with re-routing the shipment somehow?

Communications

It will be extremely important that checkpoints and communities on the winter road networks attempt to maintain excellent communication between themselves and all partners, including other community checkpoints, the leadership of other communities along the road, suppliers, and relevant provincial agencies and organizations.

Prior to the opening of the road network discuss with other communities on the winter road the protocols that should be in place along each road network so that each checkpoint can communicate with the others.

Important information includes:

- Cartage company and license #
- Items being delivered
- Destination(s) for goods
- Presence of hazards or any additional necessary information

It is likely that satellite phones will be required at the checkpoints to ensure that communications can be maintained at all times. Higher level information on the road network should be housed in a central location.

Information documented in the central location can be accessed prior to departure and may include:

- Bulletins about protocols and any changes for travelers
- Downloadable forms required or screening questions/documentation for travelers
- Updates on road conditions
- Communication with Tribal Council and Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Signage before at and after checkpoints will be very important to ensure safety and minimize confusion for drivers. Some important aspects for signage include:

- Make sure signage is large and easy to read at a distance
- Ensure all signage is in all relevant languages

Before the road and the checkpoint opens, communities should communicate any relevant procedures and expectations to the suppliers and transport companies who they expect to be working with as well.

Staffing Considerations

Maintaining a 24-hour checkpoint throughout the winter road season will require significant staffing considerations. It is recommended that the community provide individuals for 9 weeks to monitor traffic on the winter road.

- Staffing will most likely need to be community members.
- Need to consider wages and what the wage would need to be to entice someone to work the overnight shifts; see *funding considerations* for more information.
- 2 people will be available for each shift to address any safety concerns.
- Enough staff should also be hired to cover each shift and to provide coverage for absences due to illness or other reasons.

- Scheduling training for the staff on required processes at the checkpoints or on winter roads.

Winter Road Infrastructure

Increased winter road construction will need to be considered in light of the potential complications arising from COVID-19 checkpoints. There is the potential that vehicles will be asked to turn around and return to their departure locations.

Given the challenges already associated with winter road construction it is likely that additional funding will be required. Some of the additional road infrastructure that could be required includes:

- Turnarounds at checkpoints may be required if traffic needs to be turned back.
- Lay-bys and stockpile areas may be required for dropping off materials if drivers are not allowed to enter into the communities.
- Additional clearings may need to be made for checkpoint infrastructure.

Checkpoint Infrastructure

Some of the infrastructure required to operate community checkpoints will require the winter roads to be operational before that infrastructure can be delivered.

- Checkpoint infrastructure will likely come in modular units and will need to be delivered on the winter road.
- Considerations will need to be made for the safety of the individuals staffing the checkpoints.
- Considerations will need to be made for drivers to stop and have a washroom break.
- Considerations will need to be made for potential refueling requirements.

Funding Considerations

Considerable funding will be necessary to support community checkpoints. When considering how much funding needs to be allocated for operating winter roads and any associated checkpoints during COVID-19, communities should be sure to include:

- All staffing costs, including appropriate wages for overnight shifts
- Supplies, including PPE, printing and pens, refrigerator and/or microwave, desk, chair, wastepaper basket, etc.
- Any portable units as well as generator costs, fuel costs, servicing costs
- Portable toilet rental and servicing fees
 - Although community members have used winter roads for many years and checkpoint washrooms have never been a concern, communities may wish to consider getting secondary washroom for travelers and drivers as well as a designated washroom for checkpoint staff to minimize COVID-19 risks.

- Although most winter road travelers would not expect to use the designated washrooms out of respect for community safety and protocols, having two washrooms available would be the most cautious approach.
- Administration and HR costs
- Communication devices, e.g., satellite phones
- Costs of constructing turnarounds and layaway areas on the road

Communities can submit their funding proposals to ISC's Indigenous Community Support Fund <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1585189335380/1585189357198>

If advocacy is required for your proposal, please contact emergency@nan.ca.

Enforcement

Communities should discuss and determine how borders will be patrolled and checkpoints enforced. While communities may have already established perimeter security during the first waves of the pandemic, the construction of winter roads is likely to bring more traffic into the community and an increased likelihood of conflict if somebody is denied passage through a checkpoint.

- Hire additional security staff if needed to support those who are doing the screening.
- Determine who has the jurisdiction to turn people away; communities should communicate their plans to NAPS and/or OPP and see what kind of support either force can provide.
- Develop a plan for if a person is irate, belligerent or violent about being turned away.
- Ensure that a satellite phone is available to call OPP/NAPS for assistance.

Public Health Guidance

Following public health measures and using screening tools will help communities to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading to their communities or checkpoint workers being exposed to the virus. In the following section, some guidance on these public health measures is provided. We encourage communities to also seek input from their health authorities, Tribal Councils, or other partners as they determine what public health measures to put in place for the winter road season.

This section adapts material found in Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority's *Airport Screening Procedure, Questionnaire, and Recommendations*.

Developing Screening Questions for the Community

The screening questionnaire is the community's first line of defense against COVID-19. These questions help to identify who may be at risk of COVID-19. Both the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) and the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA) have released questionnaires for their communities to use. The

Province has also released screening guidance for businesses and other services to use. Communities can consult these for a starting point:

- **SLFNHA:** E-mail Emily Paterson emily.paterson@slfnha.com
- **WAHA:** E-mail Meagan Vanderploeg Meagan.Vanderploeg@waha.ca
- **Ontario:** Access the workplace screening tool online: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/workplace_screening_tool_guidance.pdf

A sample community questionnaire is included in **Appendix A: Sample Screening Questionnaire**. Communities should consider whether to adapt the questionnaire to reflect the local context, such as the COVID situation in the closest urban hub, potential exposure through hospital visits, and any other community concerns.

Privacy Issues

The information collected during the screening process, answers to the screening questions, as well as people's names, contact information, and any other identifying information can be considered personal health information under provincial legislation. This is why SLFNHA has recommended that airport screeners take a confidentiality oath, provide a privacy notice, and only take down names and contact information if somebody screens as a positive COVID-19 risk.

However, communities have self-determination and jurisdiction over their territory. Communities should determine what information they think is needed to keep their communities safe and how that information should be handled. Securely storing information that includes names and any other identifiers is a good practice to have in place to avoid any privacy breaches or other issues.

Procedures for Those Who Screen as a Negative COVID-19 Risk

Most of the people who pass through checkpoints are expected to screen negative. Communities should determine how people at checkpoints will respond. Providing instructions on community requirements for self-monitoring and isolation is usually sufficient.

Procedures for Those Who Screen as a Positive COVID-19 Risk

Work with your nursing station, health clinic, and any other relevant health care providers to determine what will be done if someone screens as a positive COVID-19 risk. This may vary depending on the individual being screened, as well as what health resources are available in the community.

For example:

- *Community members:* A yes will most likely mean a referral for further assessment or testing.
- *Workers who will be residing in the community for some period of time:* A yes may mean a referral for further assessment or testing, or that they are turned away at the checkpoint. This may vary with community direction and the role of the worker. Communities should ensure that these determinations are transparent and clearly communicated to checkpoint staff as well as the visiting workers.
- *Transport drivers:* Communities should determine if a referral for assessment and testing is appropriate in these cases, especially if the driver will not be staying in the community for any length of time. It may increase the risk of exposure within communities while providing no great benefit to the community. It may be more appropriate to allow them to deliver their load with instructions to strictly restrict all interactions with community members or to turn them away. If they are turned away, communities should anticipate that turning away these shipments will lead to additional costs for reshipping these items and affect the timelines of any associated infrastructure projects. A buffer fund for costs like this should be included in any funding applications.
- *Visitors from other communities:* During the pandemic, winter road use should focus on the delivery of essential supplies and services to reduce the risks of having COVID-19 spread between communities; however, communities may still wish to have some degree of inter-community travel. If this is the case, communities should determine if they will turn away travelers from other communities who share the winter road if they screen as a Positive COVID risk, allow them to pass straight through, or refer them for assessment and testing back in their home communities.
- If people who screened as a positive COVID-19 risk will be allowed to travel forward to other destinations or communities further up the winter road, the first checkpoint where they screened positive should communicate this to other communities and checkpoints along the road so appropriate precautions can be taken.

Suggested Screening Procedure

- Someone approaches the checkpoint.
- The screener sanitizes their hands and puts on a mask, goggles or face shield, and gloves before starting the screening process.
- The screener asks the driver to roll down their window and stands as far away as practical (ideally 6 feet) away from the vehicle.
- The screener reads out a privacy notice (if applicable).
- The screener will then ask each question from the community screening questionnaire one at a time.
- If the person screens as **negative**, checkpoint workers should follow the community protocols for people who screen as a negative COVID risk.
 - If the person screens as **positive**, checkpoint workers should follow the established community protocols for people who screen as a positive COVID risk AND if the community has chosen to only collect the personal health information of people who screen positive, write their name,

phone number, and vehicle information as well as the time and date on the screening tool.

- Place the forms in a secured/locked bag or cabinet.
- After screening a client, the screener should sanitize their hands and disinfect any writing tools they used.
- At the end of their shift, checkpoint staff should securely take the questionnaires to the designated person at the band office, health clinic or nursing station.

Temperature Checks

Some communities have instituted temperature checks as part of their airport screening processes. Communities should be cautious about also instituting temperature checks at winter road checkpoints. Infrared thermometers are designed to work at room temperatures. Using them in cold weather may lead to unreliable results. However, these thermometers may be very helpful in other locations in the community if the community pandemic team wishes to consider using them as part of their pandemic response.

As well, asymptomatic transmission is always possible with COVID-19. Someone without a fever may still be able to infect others with COVID-19.

PPE and other Public Health Measures for Checkpoint Workers

Wearing PPE and following public health measures will help keep checkpoint workers safe on their job:

- Checkpoint staff should wear a procedure/surgical mask, goggles or a face shield, and gloves while they are screening.
- Hand sanitizer of at least 70% alcohol should also be provided in the checkpoint station.
- Screeners should try to maintain a distance of about two meters or six feet from the drivers that they are questioning, though this may not always be practical depending on how difficult it is to hear the traveler's answers.
 - As these interactions will be occurring outdoors, where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is lower.
- Checkpoint workers should always self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if they are feeling sick.
- Checkpoint workers should wear face coverings while waiting indoors with other staff and maintain physical distancing (unless they are from the same household).
- Cleaning and disinfecting products should be available at checkpoint stations.

Recording Contacts

Keeping good records will make contact tracing easier should there ever be a potential exposure. Checkpoint staff should try to ensure that the information they are collecting is accurate and complete. If there is more than one person in a vehicle,

they should collect information on each adult passenger, in line with community protocols and procedures. These records should be kept in a secure location for at least a month, such as in a locked cabinet at the band office or nursing station, and then destroyed.

Rapid Testing

If your community has a rapid testing instrument, communities may include that as part of its screening process. We do not recommend that the rapid testing instrument be kept and used at the checkpoint station, due to the potential effects of cold temperatures on the technology and the need for a nurse or another registered healthcare professional to collect the sample for testing. However, communities could consider directing travelers to rapid testing at the health clinic or the nursing station depending on how they screen.

Who is referred for rapid testing should be determined by:

- Rapid testing capacity in the community, especially testing cartridge supply.
- The level of risk for the person involved (example: travel from an area with a high number of COVID cases, symptomatic, in poor health or working with vulnerable people, known exposure to COVID-19 patient).

Appendix A: Sample Screening Questionnaire

Adapted with permission from Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority

Date:

Time:

Name(s):

Vehicle description:

Question	Response
1. Have you been diagnosed/tested positive for COVID-19?	YES
2. Have you had close contact (spent more than 15 minutes less than 2 meters away from someone) in the last 14 days with someone who has been diagnosed/tested positive for COVID-19?	YES
3. Do you have a fever , or have you had one within the last 14 days?	YES
4. Do you have a new cough , worsening chronic cough, shortness of breath , or difficulty breathing ?	YES
5. Do you have one (1) or more of the following symptoms: <input type="checkbox"/> sore throat <input type="checkbox"/> runny nose/sneezing (not related to seasonal allergies or other known causes or conditions) <input type="checkbox"/> nasal congestion (not related to seasonal allergies or other known causes or conditions) <input type="checkbox"/> hoarse (harsh) voice <input type="checkbox"/> difficulty swallowing <input type="checkbox"/> decrease or loss of sense of smell <input type="checkbox"/> shaking/ chills <input type="checkbox"/> headache that is unusual or long lasting <input type="checkbox"/> unexplained fatigue/malaise (tiredness/feeling unwell) <input type="checkbox"/> digestive issues (nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain) <input type="checkbox"/> sudden muscle aches and pains <input type="checkbox"/> pink eye (conjunctivitis) <input type="checkbox"/> extreme tiredness that is unusual (fatigue, lack of energy) <input type="checkbox"/> falling down often <input type="checkbox"/> for young children and infants: sluggishness or lack of appetite <input type="checkbox"/> for Elders: any recent unexplained changes in your health? Unexplained falls? New confusion?	YES
6. In the last 14 days, have you travelled to a community or city that has had a positive COVID-19 case in the last 14 days?	YES
7. Name of community/city: _____	

8. In the last 14 days, have you spent time in a hospital, waiting room, emergency room, long-term care home, subway, train, or bus?	YES
9. In the last 14 days, have you had close contact with anyone with a respiratory illness or other symptoms of COVID-19?	YES