

Regarding the Use of the St. Croix Observatory (SCO) during COVID-19

Given the current status of COVID-19 and the provincial requirements for physical distancing, requirements have been developed for the safe use of our dark-sky observatory by all members wishing to enjoy the night skies.

These precautions are in place to protect both you and those with you at the facility. They will change as the provincial restrictions change.

Required:

1. No more than 10 people may be on site at SCO at any one time.
 - Three people (1 per concrete pad) are 5 metres apart – sufficient to achieve the physical distancing minimum of 2 metres apart
 - Up to 4 additional people may occupy the roll-off observatory.
 - The remaining 3 can utilize any other exterior area of the site as long as they maintain the mandatory 2-metre distancing.
2. Members must announce their intention to go to SCO through the RASC Halifax Centre Discussion List.
 - Include the date of the evening you are planning to attend in the subject line. For example, **Going to SCO, June 20 @ 8 PM**
 - In your email, include the number of other people also going out with you.
 - Check the list to determine how many have said they were going to SCO that evening.
 - If 10 people have already expressed their intention to go, do not go.
3. The Warm Room and Roll-off Observatory may be used.
 - No more than 3 people in the Warm Room at any one time, with masks.
 - No more than 4 people in the Roll-off Observatory at any one time, with masks.
 - If lens fogging is a problem, masks may be temporarily removed from the nose for the duration of the task, provided no one is within 2 metres.
 - The 2-metre physical distancing requirement must be followed.
 - The Thurlow Binoculars with parallelogram mount and all SCO eye pieces cannot be used due to challenges of on-site sanitization.
 - The 16" Dobsonian may be used provided you bring your own eyepieces. Treat the 16" Dobsonian as all other contact surfaces and clean prior to use and after use.
4. Members must bring their own sanitizing equipment to clean all common surfaces they touch with their hands, such as doorknobs, keypads and locks, tables and counters, chair backs, light switches, toilet paper container, toilet seat and toilet crank. Hand sanitizers must contain at least 60% alcohol to be effective.
5. Clean and disinfect common high-touch surfaces after use with the bleach solution or disinfectant wipes.
6. Practice good hand hygiene, cough etiquette and staying home if you are sick. If you feel unwell after visiting SCO, go to 811.novascotia.ca and use the self-assessment questionnaire to find out if you need to call 811. Also notify them of others who were at the site who may have become exposed.
7. Garbage in, garbage out! Please provide your own garbage bag for used cloths and paper towels, used disinfectant materials, facial tissues, food wrappers, napkins, disposable beverage containers, etc.

Recommended:

1. Avoid touching your face. To protect yourself and others, masks should be worn when using the site, especially when in any of the three buildings or there is a required need to come less than 2 metres from someone not in your "family bubble".

2. Plan ahead! Prepare a SCO sanitization kit with all necessary items ahead of time and have it packed ready to go along with your observing gear, to ensure nobody arrives at SCO having forgotten to bring these required items. Your kit should include surface sanitizer, hand sanitizer, face mask, gloves and paper towels. Bleach disinfecting solutions should be made same day as your visit to SCO.
3. Become a member of the RASC Halifax Centre Discussion List if you are not already. If you require assistance to become a member of the List, contact president@halifax.rasc.ca.
4. The following articles may be of benefit to read regarding disinfecting spaces and camera equipment:
 - a. Source: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/covid-19-disinfecting-with-bleach> : The CDC and WHO recommend a solution containing 2% - 10% sodium hypochlorite active ingredient in household bleach (recipes for various percentages of sodium hypochlorite below). **Leave on the surface for at least 5 minutes before wiping off the excess.** You will need gloves and paper towels. **Remember:** Discard the solution by adding more water and pouring it down a sink drain after **24 hours** as it can lose its potency quickly.

Liquid Bleach Type	Amount of Bleach	Amount of Cool Tap Water
2% Sodium Hypochlorite Active Ingredient	15 mL	240 mL
3% Sodium Hypochlorite Active Ingredient	10 mL	240 mL
4% Sodium Hypochlorite Active Ingredient	7.5 mL	240 mL
5% Sodium Hypochlorite Active Ingredient	6 mL	240 mL
6-7% Sodium Hypochlorite Active Ingredient	5 mL	240 mL
8-10% Sodium Hypochlorite Active Ingredient	4.5 mL	240 mL

- b. Source: <https://wordpress.lensrentals.com/blog/2020/03/how-to-disinfect-camera-equipment-and-spaces/>

Nova Scotia – COVID-19 Directives and Information: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>

Includes information such as:

- a. When to Seek Help
- b. News Releases
- c. Alerts and Notices
- d. Support
- e. Staying Healthy / Mental Health and Wellbeing
- f. Outdoor Activities

Workplace COVID-19 Prevention Plan – <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-prevention-plan-checklist.pdf>

Government of Canada – COVID-19 Information:

Hard-surface disinfectants & hand sanitizers (COVID-19): List of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19 – <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>