

WASHINGTON INDOOR CLIMBING COALITION

November 18th, 2020

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of the State of Washington
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Cc: Nick Streuli - Executive Director, External Affairs
Jon Snyder - Senior Policy Advisor, Outdoor Recreation & Economic Development

Dear Governor Inslee,

On behalf of the Washington Indoor Climbing Coalition, all 23 climbing gyms and over 180,000 climbers in the state of Washington, we stand with you in your response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that you have had to make difficult decisions and thank you for your leadership. Public safety is crucial during this crisis.

The indoor climbing industry has been an advocate for safe and cautious operations during this crisis. When the pandemic first erupted most climbing gyms across the state had already been closed for the week prior to the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order. We take this pandemic seriously. During the reopening phases of our economy, climbing gyms have been operating under the fitness reopening guidelines, however climbing gyms are inherently different from fitness facilities. **We request that climbing gyms operate under separate guidelines from fitness and be considered for reopening.**

Climbing gyms are committed to operating in a manner that supports your efforts. Climbing is inherently a socially distant sport that operates in very large open tall and well ventilated warehouses doing an activity that is non-cardio where participants are physically distant and 100% masked. We support keeping the community local; we operate as membership based businesses requiring reservations so that capacity is low and we can facilitate contact tracing. Lastly, climbers use chalk; chalk is magnesium carbonate and is proven to reduce infectious SARS-CoV2 particles by 99%. We have studies and support from both researchers and health professionals stating that the environment climbing gyms operate in have characteristics that reduce the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

Like many businesses across our state, the indoor climbing industry is collapsing. We are a \$30 million industry supporting 1000 employees with 180,000 Washington citizens as our customers. We have been operating at a loss for 8 months continuously and while closed we are operating at less than 15% of our normal revenue and staff. Many of our facilities are still employing key staff that will help them reopen (with little to no revenue). However, unlike many businesses that are currently closed, we feel we can be part of the medical and economic solution with industry specific guidelines and a limited reopening.

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Again, we want to be part of the solution. We are confident that we can provide a plan that safely operates within our community, allowing employees to get paid, our businesses to survive, and the community to be active.

Please find enclosed our proposal for indoor climbing operations during the pandemic.

Thank you for your leadership during this time of crisis.

Respectfully yours,

The Washington Indoor Climbing Coalition

Tod Bloxham | Owner

Edgeworks Climbing
Stone Gardens
Seattle | Bellevue | Tacoma

Michele Lang | Owner

Insight Climbing
Bremerton | Bainbridge

Michael Lary | Owner

Guruhans Kroesen | Owner
Source Climbing Center
Vancouver

Laura Villarreal | Director of Operations

Bouldering Project
Seattle

Rich Johnston | Owner

Vertical World
Seattle | Lynnwood | Redmond

Stewart Hoover | Owner

ThanhVan Tran | Owner
Riverfront Rock Gym
Wenatchee

Brian Doyle | Owner

Climb Tacoma
Tacoma

Daniel Coltrane | Ops Manager

Summit Everett
Everett

Mike Boyer | Owner

Cirque Climbing
Lacey

Nathan Joyner | General Manager

High Steppe Climbing
Yakima

Andrew Hou | Owner

Uplift Climbing
Shoreline

Timon Behan | Owner

Wild Walls Climbing
Spokane

Adam Healy | Owner

Bloc Yard Bouldering
Spokane

Brandon Workman | Owner

Riverstone Climbing
Burlington

Pat Howard | Owner

The Rock Shop
Richland - Tri-Cities

David Sacher | Owner

Vital Climbing
Bellingham

Gloria Man | Owner

Danial Man | Owner
Half Moon Bouldering
Seattle

Jeremy Park | General Manager

Momentum Climbing
Seattle



SAFE RETURN to CLIMBING

POLICY BRIEF

Proposal for Indoor Recreation
Indoor Climbing Guidelines

POLICY BRIEF

WASHINGTON INDOOR CLIMBING COALITION

Proposal for Indoor Recreation - Indoor Climbing Guidelines

Executive Summary:

Indoor climbing facilities and activities are different from general fitness gyms due to the nature of the activity. These facilities are large, typically stand-alone buildings with tall walls, large footprints, and excellent ventilation. Climbing itself is a non-cardio sport that allows for continuous masking and physical distancing in these large, open spaces. The current fitness requirements that climbing facilities are operating under are inherently different in activity and infrastructure from fitness facilities. **Due to the combination of 100% required masking, physical distancing, ample space, and excellent ventilation, the Washington Indoor Climbing Coalition requests to be classified as a low-risk COVID-19 activity that is regulated separate from the current fitness guidelines.**

Washington State's 23 climbing gyms (encompassing \$30M in annual revenue, 1,000 employees and 180,000 WA citizens) are currently closed and have been operating at a monthly loss since March, currently at 15% of normal revenue and staffing.

Indoor Climbing Industry Differentiators:

- **NOT FITNESS:** Climbing gyms are a type of gym, however they are NOT fitness clubs. Climbing facilities are inherently different in activity and infrastructure from fitness facilities.
- **MASKS REQUIRED:** Climbing is not a cardio sport and can be done with a mask on at all times.
- **SOCIALLY DISTANT:** Climbing is inherently a socially-distanced sport with participants being 6'-60' feet apart.
- **LARGE OPEN FACILITIES:** Climbing gyms operate in large, tall, open well ventilated facilities. Climbing gyms' primary activity occurs at max heights between 16'-60' feet off the ground.
- **MAGNESIUM CARBONATE:** Climbers use chalk on their hands, deactivating 99% of COVID contact.
- **RISK MANAGEMENT:** Climbing gyms are risk management businesses. We regularly and consistently enforce policies to mitigate risks to climbers and staff.
- **LOCAL CUSTOMERS:** Climbing gyms are local membership based.
- **CONTACT TRACING:** Climbing gyms utilize reservations, check-in/out procedures, and excellent contact-tracing.

Suggested Policy Options:

Adjust guidelines based on the ability to require masks, limit capacity through members only, and keep capacity at <25%.

Stand Alone Climbing Gym	Phase 1.5	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Capacity	25% Capacity	25% Capacity	50% Capacity	75% Capacity
Customers	Members Only	Members + Guests	Members + Guests	Members + Guests
Contact Tracing	Required	Required	Required	Required
Masks	Required	Required	Required	Required < 6'
Instruction Ratio	CLOSED	See Below	See Below	No Limit
Lockers/Showers	CLOSED	CLOSED	Limited	Open
Fitness Equipment	CLOSED	300 sq ft / person	200 sq ft / person	100 sq ft / person

Instruction Phase 2: For instructor led classes, 5 students per instructor, minimum of 600 square feet. Add'l students allowed for each additional 300 square, maximum of 10 students per one instructor.

Instruction Phase 3: For instructor led classes, 10 students per instructor, minimum of 800 square feet. Add'l students allowed for each additional 200 square, maximum of 20 students per one instructor.

Policy Recommendation:

- Change the guidance from Fitness Facilities to Indoor Recreation - Indoor Climbing Guidelines.
- Mandate the Indoor Climbing Industry continue to uphold universal masking at all times indoors.
- Require strict capacity, activity and participant limitations per the suggested policy options.

Sources:

University of Colorado: Liquid Chalk Proven in CU Labs to Kill Coronavirus - July 28, 2020

<https://news.cuanschutz.edu/news-stories/liquid-chalk-proven-in-cu-lab-to-kill-coronavirus-potentially-helping-gyms-to-safely-reopen>

De Montfort University: Research shows climbing chalk is unlikely to transmit coronavirus - September 3, 2020

<https://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/news/2020/september/research-shows-climbing-chalk-is-unlikely-to-transmit-coronavirus.aspx>

University of California, Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology: Professor Kilpatrick Statement

https://drive.google.com/file/d/11gJjlia9I9kxQgLMtqPxn4lrEQsIA_Vy/view?usp=sharing

Washington Indoor Climbing Coalition Consultant:

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Contacts:

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Washington Indoor Climbing Coalition Members:

Bloc Yard Bouldering | Spokane

Bouldering Project | Seattle

Cirque Climbing | Lacey

Climb Tacoma | Tacoma

Edgeworks Climbing | Tacoma

Half Moon Climbing | Seattle

High Steppe Climbing | Yakima

Insight Climbing | Bainbridge, Bremerton

Momentum Climbing | Seattle

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Summit Everett | Everett

Uplift Climbing | Shoreline

Vertical World | Seattle, Redmond, Lynwood

Vital Climbing | Bellingham

Wild Walls | Spokane

HEALTH + SAFETY of INDOOR CLIMBING

Indoor climbing is different from fitness in that it operates in large open stand alone buildings with tall distant walls, is a non-cardio, socially-distanced sport, and can be done while wearing a mask.



NOT FITNESS

Climbing gyms are a type of gym, however they are NOT fitness clubs. Climbing facilities are inherently different in activity and infrastructure from fitness facilities.

MASKS REQUIRED

Climbing is not a cardio sport and can be done with a mask on at all times.

SOCIALLY DISTANT

Climbing is inherently a socially-distanced sport with participants being 6'-60' feet apart.

LARGE OPEN FACILITIES

Climbing gyms operate in large, tall, open facilities. Climbing gyms' primary activity occurs at max heights between 16'-60' feet off the ground.

MAGNESIUM CARBONATE

Climbers use chalk on their hands, deactivating 99% of COVID contact.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Climbing gyms are risk management businesses, enforcing policies to mitigate risks to climbers.

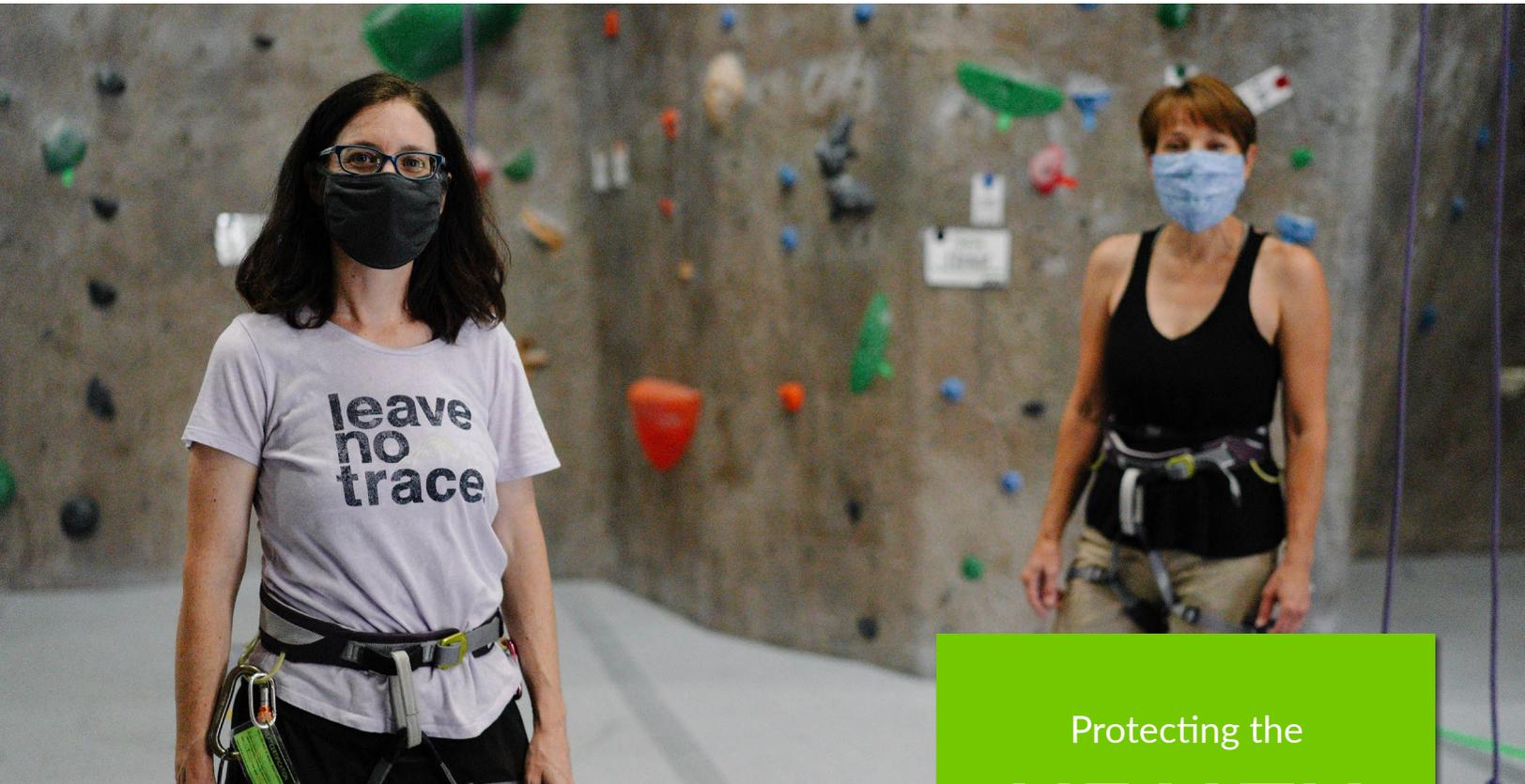
LOCAL CUSTOMERS

Climbing gyms are local membership based.

CONTACT TRACING

Climbing gyms utilize reservations and check-in/out procedures, providing excellent contact-tracing.

ALL CLIMBERS must adhere to a strict set of COVID protection guidelines.



SAFE RETURN TO CLIMBING

Climbers in Washington State already adhere to stricter COVID protection guidelines than other guests of indoor fitness and training facilities.

Protecting the
**HEALTH
+ SAFETY**
of our communities is our
#1 PRIORITY

PHASED APPROACH:	PHASE 1.5	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
CAPACITY:	25%	25%	50%	75%
CUSTOMERS:	Members Only	Members + Guests	Members + Guests	Members + Guests
CONTACT TRACING:	Required	Required	Required	Required
FACE MASKS:	Required	Required	Required	Not Required
INSTRUCTION RATIO:	Closed	See Guidelines	See Guidelines	No Limit
LOCKERS/SHOWERS:	Closed	Closed	Limited	Open
FITNESS EQUIPMENT:	Closed	300 sq ft/person	200 sq ft/person	100 sq ft/person



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