

TO ALL MINNESOTA VERTICAL ENDEAVORS MEMBERS & CUSTOMERS:

This past Wednesday evening, November 18, 2020, Minnesota Governor, Tim Walz announced Emergency **Executive Order 20-99 Implementing a Four Week Dial Back on Certain Activities to Slow the Spread of COVID-19**. Unfortunately, section 7.c.iii.C states that among the “Places of Public Accommodation” that are “closed to members of the public” are “(g)ymnasiums, fitness centers, recreation centers, indoor sports facilities, indoor climbing facilities . . .”, etc. This Executive Order is effective from Friday, November 20, 2020 at 11:59 pm through at least Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11:59 pm. The impact on Vertical Endeavors climbing facilities is severe and we must close our facilities while the provisions of this order are in force.

As stated in our November Update, Vertical Endeavors has established extensive practices and protocols for the health and safety of our staff, members, and customers. We are following the appropriate guidelines from Federal, State, and industry entities to diminish the risks of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 in our facilities. In some cases, such as our mandatory face mask policy while climbing and exercising, we have exceeded those guidelines.

We have INCREASED CLEANING, disinfecting, and decontamination of our facilities and equipment. The implementation of WELLNESS CHECKS through diagnostic health screening questions at check-in and taking everyone’s temperature upon entry is also a significant viral mitigation procedure. Additionally, the expectation and communication that everyone will take PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY for the health and safety of themselves **and others** while in our facilities by **wearing** an appropriate face mask or covering at all times, **washing** or sanitizing your hands upon entry into the facility, before and after each climb, and whenever they have touched a common surface, object, or piece of equipment, **watching** you social distance even while climbing and exercising, and **waiting** to touch your face (or face covering) until you have washed or sanitized their hands.

We have maintained the required CAPACITY LIMITATIONS in each of our facilities as directed by State Executive Orders and guidelines. Our online reservation system has helped manage our capacity limits and given us the ability to perform contact tracing if necessary. Here are some interesting statistics:

- Vertical Endeavors has experienced 82,695 check-ins since we began to reopen our facilities on June 10 through this past Tuesday, November 17, 2020.
- **We have not had a single reported case that originated in any of our facilities.**
- We have had ZERO staff test positive for COVID-19 since returning to work.
- However, we have received 4 reported cases of COVID-19 from people who were in our facility within 10 days of testing positive. That equates to a VE positivity rate of .000048 in our facilities.

Here are some statistics from the State of Minnesota:

- 237,000 total cases of COVID-19.
- 48 reported outbreaks across all gyms, studios and clubs in the State, resulting in a total of 747 cases associated with fitness facilities and equating to an infection rate of .003 in the entire fitness industry.
- **AGAIN, Vertical Endeavors has had ZERO infections associated with its facilities.**

The conclusion that many experts have arrived at is that fitness centers, health clubs, gyms, and indoor climbing facilities are NOT the problem. THEY ARE THE SOLUTION to maintaining public health. People who are active and exercise build up their immune systems and resilience to disease and infection. Fitness facilities are, in fact, the safest environments people may visit as compared with other forms of retail, entertainment, or any other place of public accommodation, at this time. Our facilities are designed and maintained with high quality air control, ventilation, and filtration. They are spacious with high ceilings that minimizes concentration of aerosols that may transmit any virus. The precautions and protocols that we have instituted make a difference.

We are doing all we can to minimize this closure or to remain open to serve you. If you agree that maintaining access to Vertical Endeavors is critical to your personal health and wellbeing, we invite you to send a very respectful, non-political message to Minnesota officials, expressing your desire to keep your climbing facilities open, as follows:

- Email Governor Walz at Gov.contact@state.mn.us or call 651-201-3400
- Email State Commissioner, Tarek Tomes at tarek.tomes@state.mn.us
- [Tweet](#) Governor Walz @GovTimWalz

Finally, we have just issued notices to all our Minnesota facility staff that they are being laid-off (part-time employees) or furloughed (full-time employees) effective Saturday, November 21, 2020. This is a difficult and heart wrenching reality of this new closure. We value each of them and they are key to what makes VE a unique and special community. Our goal is to be able to open back up our Minnesota facilities as soon as possible. However, this makes an already difficult financial situation dire. There is now a very real possibility that some or all our facilities may not survive.

We have already presented a few ways you could support your local climbing facility and our employees:

1. **Buy someone (or yourself) a Gift Card** for the holidays, a special occasion, or just because. Purchase a Gift Card [online](#) or in person at any of our facilities. Our **Black Friday Sale** on Gift Cards will now begin **early** on Monday, November 23rd, 2020.
2. [Activate](#) your frozen EFT (Monthly) or your prepaid annual Membership. This will show support and be a big financial help now and in the coming months.

If your income is in a good and steady place, consider reactivating your frozen EFT (monthly) membership as a way to support your local climbing facility. Even if you are not climbing right now (or climbing only a few times a month), your support will help ensure that there will be an indoor, roped climbing facility you can come to when the impact of the pandemic has diminished.

3. If you do not have a membership, consider signing up for a [Monthly \(EFT\) Membership](#).

Of course, coming in to climb will now be impossible during the closure. However, we are having a **FLASH SALE** now until we close on Friday evening. Take 20% off the ENTIRE Vertical Endeavors Pro Shop or deals on Nicros products like our new [NicroLite™](#) home wall panels and [homewall handhold packages](#)! Buy your holiday gifts early and support your local climbing facility.

Additionally, we are launching [VIDL Camp: Vertical Initiative for Distance Learning](#). This is a program that we will begin during this closure for school-aged children (ages 8 to 15) as a resource for parents and families navigating COVID-19 related school closures and distance learning. We are going to use our space as a safe place for supervision to help school-aged children complete their distance learning tasks and be able to use their “study breaks” to expend some energy climbing! If you are a parent with school-age children or know someone who is, let them know of this great resource. Get more details [here](#).

We are hopeful that this closure will be short term. Therefore, we are not going to freeze or put annual memberships on hold this time. For those of you whose membership continues to be frozen or on hold, they will remain that way unless you want to unfreeze them to help us through this difficult time. We are asking those who reactivated their membership or recently signed up for a new membership, PLEASE keep your membership ACTIVE! This will help assure that we CAN OPEN when we are allowed.

The leadership of Vertical Endeavors realizes that we are asking a lot. For over 28 years, VE has been committed to leveraging our rich history in the climbing community to make rock climbing accessible, educational, and fun for everyone, new and experience climbers alike. We want to serve our community and even expand in the coming years. This will not happen without your support.

We are so thankful for our community and the support that has already been shown. It has been evident and appreciated. You have been here for us and we want to be here for you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tracy R. Paino
Vice President, Vertical Endeavors