



NEW ZEALAND ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION

EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:00PM THURSDAY 19TH MARCH 2020

New Zealand Ice Hockey Federation
PO Box 41162
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New Zealand

19th March 2020

The New Zealand Ice Hockey Federation has made the decision to suspend the 2020 New Zealand Ice Hockey League (NZIHL) season until further notice.

The NZIHL is New Zealand's premier ice hockey league with five teams competing around New Zealand annually. The 2020 NZIHL season was scheduled to start with pre-season games in April, with the regular season running between May and July, followed by a play-offs series.

This decision to suspend the 2020 season was not made lightly, however the health and safety of all players, volunteers and fans during the current COVID-19 situation is paramount. The decision was also made based on the financial implications of holding the season, disruptions to travel and accommodation and the Government's instruction to cancel all public gatherings of 500 or more people.

NZIH Federation President Andy Mills said that the decision to suspend the season was a difficult one, however in line with current Government regulations, putting health and safety first and the financial risk of holding the season at this time, it was the right decision, and one that was unanimously backed by the NZIHL Management Committee.

While discussions were held to consider the running of the league with limited spectator attendance or without spectators entirely, Mills added that spectator attendance was crucial to the financial viability of the league and its franchises, and with the current guidelines published by the Government restricting mass gatherings, it could not guarantee the financial success of running the league in 2020.

Planning for the 2021 NZIHL season was already underway prior to the decision to suspend the 2020 season and preparation will continue with the intention to resume regular NZIHL activity in 2021.

The NZIHL will continue to do the very best it can to bring New Zealand's elite ice hockey leagues throughout all age groups back to an ice rink near its members as soon as possible.

In addition, the NZIHL has decided to suspend its U20 Training Camps & National Development Camps, as well as its NZPIHL, NZBIHL and NZMIHL seasons of representative ice hockey for its junior players until further notice, which would have seen the top junior players from its regional clubs travel around the country to compete in their representative ice hockey tournaments. This decision was made in line with the decision to suspend the NZIHL season, with particular consideration on the financial implications of holding these programmes as well as travel and accommodation disruptions that would have likely occurred.

At this time, the NZIHF encourages its members to follow the instructions of their local ice hockey club, as well as guidelines and recommendations provided by the Government and Ministry of Health.

This situation serves as a reminder that the health and safety of ice hockey participants at all levels is a priority. The following are recommendations that should be considered at all times during ice hockey activity:

- Any individual who is currently ill (regardless of the symptoms) should refrain from coming to any trainings, games or events. If in doubt, consult a medical professional and stay home.
- No spitting, spraying of water or similar within the ice rink's facilities (eg: on ice or on benches)
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid contact with sick people, including avoiding close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections
- Players should not share items such as water bottles, towels, clothing, bar soap or other personal items such as razors
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. Practice cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing, wash hands)
- Fist bump with hockey gloves on, instead of shaking hands at the conclusion of games

ENDS

Media Contact:

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*Information sourced from Ministry of Health, Sport NZ, Hockey Canada and the Australian Institute of Sport.