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Reopening: Guidance for the **Outdoor Recreation** Industry (Campgrounds, Parks, and Pools)

Guidance Document

[aiha.org](https://www.aiha.org)

Overview

Many outdoor recreational activities were suspended due to stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders across the U.S. In certain areas, some recreational areas, such as golf courses and tennis courts, have reopened, while others are operating with restrictions or remain closed. Others have expanded their services and operate as a distribution center for free food or offer childcare services for essential workers. Many are using app-based technologies so that visitors can reserve access times in advance to limit crowding. It is important that operators follow state regulations and guidelines for safe reopening of their operations as these requirements and recommendations vary from state to state. The Centers for Disease Control and the White House published "[Opening Up America Again Guidelines](#)" that provide guidance to states on phasing in reopening based on data on the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, deaths, testing and contact tracing capacity and other factors. Reopening of recreational facilities is in the 3rd and final phase in those guidelines.

With stay-at-home restrictions beginning to lift, recreational areas such as campgrounds, park spaces, and community pools are faced with difficult questions that must be addressed before reopening, such as:

- How can we protect our employees and visitors from contracting COVID-19 while using our recreational facilities?
- How do we assure our employees and visitors that we are doing all we can to protect them from this disease?
- How can we manage crowding and group events that take place at our facilities?
- How can we minimize the risk of disease transmission if those who are ill or have had contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19 visit our facilities?

- What do we do if a visitor is sick or not following guidelines?
- What employee training and public communication is needed to keep everyone informed of the preventative steps being taken?

This document offers practical guidance for facility owners and managers to implement measures to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19. It addresses the key questions above and provides tips for employees and visitors.

What should an Employer or Manager do to protect themselves, their employees, and their visitors?

Employers and managers should continually monitor international (World Health Organization (WHO)), federal (U.S. CDC), state, and local guidelines for changes in recommendations, cleaning strategies, and other best management practices. Management should establish a team including key workplace stakeholders to develop an operational SARS CoV-2 infection prevention program. The program should be based on a risk assessment that considers potential exposures to staff and visitors by evaluating job functions and interactions among staff and between staff and visitors.

In addition, employers or managers should consider the following strategies for reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission in regards to physical distancing, face coverings, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices, personal hygiene, restrooms and locker rooms, communication, training, ventilation, equipment rental, employee wellness, and waste/laundry practices.

Due to the wide variety of establishments and sizes, it may not be possible for establishments to implement all of the following. However, trying to tackle the problem from multiple angles can help reduce health risks.



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Campgrounds

- Wash hands before and after eating, opening enclosures around trash facilities and lids, and using communal water pumps or campground services.
- Picnic tables do not need to be cleaned and disinfected before use. Consider packing in a table covering to use at your campsite.
- At campsites, particularly in dispersed campgrounds, be mindful of your neighbors and maintain distance between groups.
- Keep to smaller group sizes and maintain distance from other groups on hiking trails. When passing other groups, maintain as much distance as possible and avoid verbal greetings.
- Be mindful of leave-no-trace practices. Pack out any additional cleaning supplies or disinfecting wipes that you bring along on your trip.

Parks

- Be mindful of maintaining distancing, particularly on playgrounds. Have a plan for leaving if it gets crowded.
- Check local regulations to confirm whether aspects of the park are open for use (tennis courts, playground, restrooms).
- Do not spray disinfectant on outdoor playgrounds — it is not an efficient use of supplies and is not proven to reduce risk of COVID-19 to the public.

Pools

This guidance is specific to outdoor community pools, such as those found in residential neighborhoods or in apartment buildings or community centers.

- Saunas, hot tubs, and steam baths should be shut down or limited to one guest or family unit at a time and cleaned and disinfected in between users.
- Staff should monitor physical distancing requirements in large whirlpools or swimming pools in outdoor or well-ventilated spaces. If distancing

cannot be maintained, these areas should be closed.

- Space out deck chairs or mark a designated area for each household in attendance to encourage distancing. Use signage or additional methods to communicate that chairs should not be moved closer together.
- Set up a system so that furniture (for example, lounge chairs) that needs to be cleaned and disinfected is kept separate from already cleaned and disinfected furniture.
- Continue water disinfection procedures as normal. Additional water disinfection to combat SARS-CoV-2 is not recommended.
 - According to the [CDC](#), there is no evidence for COVID-19 transmission through water in pools. Additionally, the use of normal disinfectants commonly used for pools (e.g., chlorine) should be sufficient to inactivate the virus.
- Consult with an engineer, or pool specialist, to decide which EPA approved disinfectant is best for your facility.

General Guidance

This general guidance applies to outdoor recreational facilities, including parks, campgrounds, and pools.

Physical Distancing

Limit the number of visitors in any given location to maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet. Follow local, state, and federal requirements regarding the number of people who can congregate. Note that distancing requirements are for non-family members and that members of the same household can be together. Be prepared to cancel or postpone large gatherings and events.

- Consider staggered or rotating shifts to avoid congestion at start and end times.



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- Use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and other communication methods (signage, email, text, website) to educate staff and visitors/members on the distancing guidelines and procedures.
- Consider an online and an app-based system so patrons can reserve a time slot for use of the facility. Be sure to capture the party size of the reservation to manage the number of visitors. Reservations may also be used for common areas, such as restrooms, shower facilities, and group areas to avoid lines.
- Mark paths and require one-way foot traffic where applicable. In areas with two-way foot traffic, consider installing centerline barriers so that pedestrians adhere to the traffic pattern.
- Use physical barriers and/or plexiglass partitions to create distancing or segregate areas for group activities.
- Encourage visitors and employees to bring food with them if they anticipate needing food during their day.
- Discourage the sharing of food, utensils, and general items between groups.
- Young children should be supervised.
- Encourage all pets to be leashed as their actions can result in an unintended breach of physical distancing.
- Water fountains should be closed, and visitors and employees encouraged to bring their own water.
- If vendors are allowed to be at your facility, provide additional space between vendors (minimum 10 feet) to ensure that vendor staff can maintain appropriate physical distancing.

Face Coverings

- Provide employees with face coverings and encourage their use depending on local requirements and for those who cannot maintain physical dis-

tancing as part of the job (NOTE: Homemade face coverings primarily protect others not yourself).

- Encourage visitors/members to wear face coverings.
 - CDC recommends all people 2 years of age and older wear a cloth face covering in public settings and when around people who don't live in the same household, especially when other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

Cleaning/Disinfecting and Personal Hygiene Practices

- Ask employees to consider the following if they commute to work using public transportation:
 - Use other forms of transportation.
 - Change their commute time to less busy times.
 - Wash their hands as soon as possible after their trip.
- Provide appropriate supplies to support healthy personal hygiene practices (e.g., face coverings, disposable gloves, and access to soap and clean water with drying materials, or alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least [60% alcohol](#)).
- Different [EPA registered chemicals](#) should not be mixed together. The combination could be **toxic by inhalation**.
 - Review product labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) and follow manufacturer specifications for cleaning and surface contact duration.
 - Consider consulting an Industrial Hygiene expert if additional advice is needed. AIHA has a consulting list of qualified Industrial Hygienists.
- Cleaning supplies should be provided and continuously stocked for use by employees.
 - Consider using a checklist or audit system to track when and how cleaning is conducted.
 - Do not use a wet rag approach (use disposable products instead).



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- Establish a cleaning and disinfection routine for staff, focusing on frequently touched items, customer areas, and high-traffic areas. See the [AIHA cleaning and disinfection guidance](#) for more detail.
- Ensure that disinfection protocols follow product instructions for application and contact time.
 - Consider using a checklist or audit system to track how often cleaning is conducted.
- If a staff member becomes sick, close off the area where they were working and do not use it until it has been cleaned and disinfected.
 - Wait as long as possible (at least 24 hours, if feasible) before cleaning and disinfecting the area.
- Perform a normal cleaning routine of outdoor areas. Do not disinfect sidewalks or roads.
 - Spread of SARS CoV-2 from these surfaces is very low and disinfection is not effective.
- Encourage staff and visitors/members to frequently wash or sanitize their hands.
- If hand washing facilities are not available at locations of high interaction, provide portable hand washing stations so that visitors and staff can wash their hands before and after interacting. Provide hand sanitizer if hand-washing stations are not feasible.
- Place a trash can by the door if the door cannot be opened without touching the handle.
- For single restrooms, provide signage and materials (paper towels and trash cans) for individuals to use without touching the handles, and consider providing a key so disinfection measures can be better controlled.
 - If a key is used, it too should be disinfected after each use.
- Place signs above toilet lids (if present) to indicate that they should be closed before flushing.
- Place signs asking customers and employees to wash their hands before and after using the restroom.
- Provide paper towels and air dryers in restrooms.
 - The WHO and CDC currently state that hands can be dried using a paper towel or hand dryer.
 - The use of touch or push hand dryers is discouraged due to possible surface contamination. If hand dryers are used, consider touchless devices.
 - Businesses and employers should work with HVAC professionals to ensure that bathrooms are well ventilated.
- Only allow shower and locker room use if there are stall partitions, or place signage to maintain proper physical distancing. If partitions or proper distancing are not possible, these facilities should remain closed.
 - Shoes should be worn in locker rooms and showers.

Restrooms, Showers, and Locker Rooms

- Consider implementing a reservation system for use to limit crowding during peak times.
- Consider marking 6-foot increments on the floor so customers waiting for restrooms and showers can maintain appropriate distancing.
- If restrooms and showers are indoors, ensure they are under negative pressure. Open windows, if possible, to maximize fresh air. Consider using a window exhaust fan.
- Doors to multi-stall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching handles if possible.

- Double efforts to keep bathrooms, showers, and locker rooms clean and properly disinfected frequently.
- If using portable toilets, add mobile hand washing stations and trash cans nearby.

Communication

- Communicate to visitors what the facility is doing to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., disinfec-



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- tion routine, health policies for staff, and health & safety measures in place).
- Consider communicating to visitors when attendance to the facility may not be a good option (e.g. taking care of someone who is COVID-19 positive, exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, being in a high-risk category, etc.).
 - Use signage to communicate any new protocols to visitors to encourage compliance (e.g., staying home if sick, wearing a face covering, maintaining physical distancing, coughing or sneezing away from others). Post large signs, send electronic notifications, and post to social media rather than handing out flyers.
 - Communicate that the facility has the right to refuse service to anyone exhibiting symptoms or not following guidelines (e.g., physical distancing). Platforms for communication could include websites, reservation processes, posted flyers, and outdoor signage.

Training

- Provide instruction and training to employees on how to:
 - Handle their work clothing properly at home if laundry service is not provided.
 - Properly put on and remove a face covering and/or gloves.
 - Clean and disinfect surfaces according to product specifications.
 - Correctly use face coverings and/or respirators. If employer chooses to provide an N95 respirator, consider all the potential OSHA requirements. [The CDC has recommended sequences for donning and doffing PPE.](#)
 - Identify signs and symptoms of heat stress.
- Provide Safety Data Sheets for cleaning chemicals and ensure employees are aware of the hazards of use.

- Consider consulting an industrial hygienist if you have questions about selecting personal protective equipment (PPE) and training.

Air Quality and Ventilation

- For facilities with mechanical ventilation systems, adjust heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to maximize outside air and improve air filtration (MERV 13) where possible. If you don't know how, ask an HVAC professional and see [ASHRAE](#) updates for more information.
- For buildings with natural ventilation, open doors and windows, and consider use of window exhaust fans.
- If fans such as pedestal fans or hard mounted fans are used in the facility, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one person directly at another individual. If fans are disabled or removed, employers should remain aware of, and take steps to prevent, [heat stress hazards](#).

Equipment Rental

- Ensure that physical distancing between staff and customers, and between any customers who are waiting, can be maintained during the rental process.
- Implement non-traditional payment processing to minimize physical contact between employees and customers.
 - Consider an app-based system.
 - Consider processes that allow customers to order and pay ahead (by app or phone) and coordinate contactless pick-up once on site.
 - Encourage credit card use over cash. If possible, eliminate the need for the customer to provide their signature following payment to reduce contact with a tablet or pen.
 - For customers paying with cash or a credit card, ask them to place their payment on a receipt tray or on the counter rather than exchange by hand to avoid any direct hand-to-hand contact.



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- For operations that are located indoors, consider setting up an alternative outdoor rental station.
- Clean and disinfect rental equipment such as kayaks, paddle boards, canoes, chairs, umbrellas, kickboards, etc. following use.
- Encourage staff to wash or sanitize their hands, hourly if possible, and/or between interactions with customers.

Employee Wellness

- Communicate to staff the importance of being vigilant for symptoms and staying in touch with their employer or manager if or when they start to feel sick.
- Conduct employee temperature screening and wellness checks before and after each shift.
 - Temperature screening can include manual (use non-contact infrared thermometers) or thermal camera methods.
 - Employees can self-check their temperature. They should wear a glove if using a shared thermometer or disinfect the thermometer between uses.
- At minimum, follow CDC guidelines and exposure protocol for Critical Infrastructure Workers.
- Follow CDC interim guidance for businesses and employers [responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#).
- Persons who have a fever of 100.0F (38.0C) or above, or other signs of illness should go home or seek medical attention.
- Have a plan if someone is sick.
- If an employee is sick or receives any kind of testing (virus or antibody), results should be reported to the employer and the timing/decision to go back to work should only be with a doctor's approval.
- Be mindful of [heat hazards](#), particularly for employees working outdoors while wearing face coverings and/or gloves.

Waste and Laundering

- Single-use items and used disinfection materials can be treated as regular waste, following regular safety guidelines.
- Any reusable cloth materials can be washed with detergent and dried on the highest temperature setting for the fabric.
- Ensure all commercial laundry services are aware of the potential for COVID-19 exposure before laundering.

Other Control Measures

- Plan for staff absences by developing flexible attendance and sick-leave policies, plan for alternative coverage, and monitor and track COVID-19-related staff absences.

What should an Employee do to protect themselves and visitors?

- Evaluate your health constantly. If you are sick, stay home. If you have an elevated temperature, stay home. If someone at your home is sick, stay home. If you have allergies and sneezing, stay home. **NOTE: Employer HR Policies, HIPAA guidelines, and other laws should be followed at all times.**
- Wash your hands when you arrive at work, after contact with a visitor, after touching your face or face covering, after touching garbage, and when you leave work.
- At all times, wear a face covering or something better if you have it. This is most important at times when physical distancing is difficult, such as when working around group gatherings, or where multiple people tend to visit (e.g., restrooms and showers).
- Let your employer know if you have concerns about the PPE that may be provided to you and make sure that you are properly instructed on how to use it.



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- Carry a tissue; if you get the urge to sneeze or cough, cover your nose, mouth, and face-covering, attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough, immediately leave the area if you are in the presence of others, wash your hands and face thoroughly before going back to work, and replace your face covering.
- Wash your hands before and after you leave the facility, if possible, and frequently throughout the day. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water is not accessible.
- If you get the urge to sneeze or cough, keep your face covering on, cover your nose, mouth, and face covering with a napkin or handkerchief, attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough, immediately leave the area if you are in the presence of others, wash your hands and face thoroughly before returning, and replace your face covering.

What can a Visitor do to minimize the transmission of Covid-19?

- If you are sick, stay home. If you have an elevated temperature, stay home. If someone in your house is sick, stay home. If you have allergies and can't control sneezing, stay home.
- To reduce crowding, ensure the members of your group stay within a small area.
- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other visitors and employees to the extent possible.
- Limit the places traveled when recreating.
- Limit the public items you touch when out.
- Ensure that your pets are leashed as their actions can result in an unintended breach of physical distancing.
- As you enter and leave the building, wear a face covering or something better if you have it. Consider also wearing your face covering outdoors, particularly in areas where physical distancing of 6 feet cannot be maintained.

Resources

- Numerous [wellness questionnaire examples](#) are available online.
- The CDC has developed [cleaning and disinfection recommendations for commercial facilities](#).
- The EPA has developed a [list of disinfectants](#) for use against SARS-CoV-2.
- ASHRAE has a list of COVID resources for [commercial buildings](#).
- Cardno ChemRisk has compiled and developed [guidance on COVID-19 mitigation strategies for summer camps and campgrounds](#).

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Occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals (also known as industrial hygienists) practice

the science of anticipating, recognizing, evaluating, and controlling workplace conditions that may cause workers' injury or illness. Through a continuous improvement cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting, OHS professionals make sure workplaces are healthy and safe.

Get additional resources at AIHA's [Coronavirus Outbreak Resource Center](#).

Find a qualified industrial hygiene and OEHS professionals near you in our [Consultants Listing](#).

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These guidance documents were primarily developed for those smaller business that don't have readily available occupational health and safety resources, and designed to help business owners, employers, employees and consumers implement science-backed procedures for limiting the spread of the coronavirus. They are subject to any local, state, or federal directives, laws, or orders about operating a business and should only be used if they do not conflict with any such orders.

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