



Protecting Worker Health

Reopening: Guidance for Small and Medium Sports and Entertainment Venues

Guidance Document

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

Overview

Small and medium sports and entertainment venues across the United States (U.S.) have been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most, if not all, were deemed “non-essential” in the U.S. by state and federal governments, resulting in employers halting operations and closing workplaces. Currently, many states are in the process of trying to re-open parts of their economies which includes some non-essential businesses. Sports and entertainment venues, one group of non-essential business, are currently navigating this reopening process. However, these venues are prone to crowding; therefore, they should approach reopening with a heightened level of caution.

Small and medium sports and entertainment venues includes but are not limited to:

- Batting Cages
- Billiard / Pool Halls
- Bowling Alleys
- Golf Courses and Ranges
- Movie Theatres
- Indoor Arcades
- Karaoke Rooms
- Wine Tasting
- Museums
- Local Live Theatres
- Music / Dance halls
- Casinos

The reopening of these venues should be approached on a case-by-case basis, while incorporating local, state, and federal guidelines. As owners and administrators of these venues begin their reopening process, they should address these fundamental questions:

- What measures can we enact to protect the health of employees and patrons?
- What communication is needed to keep everyone informed of the preventative steps being taken?
- What training is needed for employees?
- What limitations may we need to implement for both employees and patrons?
- How do we handle crowd management throughout the venue, including peak times?
- What precautions should we take regarding high-touch interactive surfaces (e.g. bowling, casinos, museums, etc.)?

This document offers practical guidance as small and medium sports and entertainment venues develop their reopening plans including physical distancing, ventilation, enhanced cleaning practices, restrooms, communication, restrooms, personal hygiene, employee wellness and other control measures.

What should an Employer do to protect themselves and their employees?

Employers should continually monitor international (World Health Organization - WHO), national (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - CDC), state, and local guidelines for changes in recommendations, cleaning strategies, and other best management practices. For example, general guidelines regarding best practices for specific industries, worker hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, physical distancing, and employee wellness should be reviewed and addressed. Employers should also consider developing a team of professionals to monitor, assess, and implement new COVID-19 transmission risk mitigation strategies as they become available. In addition to best practices, companies should consider a re-occupancy plan that includes a detailed response plan



describing the actions to be taken if someone becomes ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while at work.

Physical Distancing

- Consider reducing the number of people allowed into venues to 50% (or less).
- Capacity considerations should not only be applied to the venue as a whole, but also to exhibits and viewing areas so as to allow for physical distancing.
- For certain venues, creating one-way traffic flows may be appropriate to mitigate crowding and prohibit clusters of people.
- Physical distancing should be maintained even for smaller groups congregating at an exhibit or smaller event within the space.
- Employees should practice physical distancing (6 feet or more) whenever interacting with patrons, vendors, and other employees.
- Educate employees on cleaning common high-touch surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, faucet handles, light switches, etc.) and unique venue specific high-touch surfaces (e.g. interactive touch screens, vending machines, slot machines, shared equipment, etc.).
- Develop strategies to minimize contact with high-touch surfaces and wash hands/utilize hand sanitizer before and after touching.
- Establish a payment system that discourages the use of cash or checks (e.g. use a pre-payment or app-based system where possible or have service provider take payment information over the phone).
 - Encourage patrons to purchase all tickets and make reservations online.
 - Consider using smart phone apps for food and drink ordering. This can limit congestion around order areas.
- If not possible, then ticket-buying areas should be demarcated to ensure physical distancing and be clearly designated. Consider physical barriers between staff and patrons for in-person transactions.
- To minimize contact between customers, consider using reservation-only methods for areas of the facility used by small groups (tables, bowling lane, pool table, etc.).
- Consider spacing groups by using empty tables, “dark” bowling lanes, closed slot machines, etc.
- The use of guides (e.g. tape; paint) to direct guests in a unilateral movement is recommended.
- Consider barriers or partitions between slot machines, games, etc.
- Signage and barriers should be posted to keep patrons from touching exhibit barriers, signs, information booths, and other frequently touched surfaces.
- Assigned seating should be used where appropriate (e.g. theatres, shows) such that guests are not seated next to one another.
- Limit patrons in karaoke rooms and discourage mingling of groups.
- Stagger screen, show, and event times so that patrons for one event do not arrive at the same times as those for another.
 - Stagger screenings, shows and events to also allow for disinfecting and air circulation in each individual theater space.
- Patrons should be encouraged to not to linger or socialize in the lobby or in parking lot prior to or after shows and events.
- Numbers allowed in restrooms should be limited and lines discouraged or formed with proper distancing. Signage in bathrooms should be posted encouraging handwashing and illustrating proper handwashing technique.



Ventilation

- Get fresh air to the patrons and staff and properly utilize ventilation system. Some ways to do this or seek help:
 - Encourage outdoor seating, and open doors and windows if possible.
 - Maximize fresh air through your ventilation system.
 - Consider installing MERV 13 or MERV 14 air filters in ventilation systems where appropriate.
 - Maintain relative humidity at 40-60%.
 - Ensure restroom is under negative pressure.
 - If you don't know how, ask an HVAC professional and see [ASHRAE](#) updates for more information.
- Consider using portable HEPA filtration units.
- If fans such as pedestal fans or hard mounted fans are used in the venue, 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 hazards](#).

(NOTE: Contact an occupational health and safety professional or ventilation specialist for advice on how to best utilize ventilation systems).

Enhanced Cleaning Practices

- Select appropriate disinfectants – consider effectiveness and safety.
 - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a [list of products](#) that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2.
 - Review product labels and Safety Data Sheets and follow manufacturer specifications.
 - Consider consulting industrial hygiene experts if additional advice is needed.
- Establish a disinfection routine.
 - Ensure disinfection protocols follow product instructions for application and contact time.
 - Use disposable products when possible.
 - If reusable products are used, ensure that these products are maintained, handled, and cleaned as instructed in product instructions.
 - Consider using a checklist or audit system to track when and how cleaning is conducted.
 - Provide employees with infographics depicting new procedures.
- Consider consulting the manufacturer for the proper disinfection of electronic equipment.
- Encourage employees to wash and dry uniforms and face coverings daily on the highest setting allowable for the fabric.
- Any shared equipment (e.g. bowling shoes, cue sticks, microphones etc.) should be kept behind a counter, and disinfected appropriately between uses using a disinfectant mentioned on EPA's List N.
- Food and bar service should follow practices outlined by the FDA and local and state guidance.
 - Refills of popcorn, drinks, and other items should be discontinued, and new containers should always be used.
 - Self-serve beverage machines and condiment stations should be closed when possible, and, when not possible, increased sanitation practices should be employed.
- Any other attractions (e.g., arcades, laser tag) should be reopened with caution, increased disinfection practices, and decreased capacity. For example, reopening of arcades may include limitations on the number or types of games open (e.g., no multi-player games; open only every other game).
 - Frequently touched surfaces should be disinfected between each use. If doing so cannot be ac-



completed, then the owner and manager should consider leaving these areas closed.

Restrooms

- Doors to restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching handles if possible.
 - Place a trash can by the door if the door cannot be opened without touching the handle.
 - 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.
- Place signs indicating that toilet lids (if present) should be closed before flushing.
- Place signs asking employees to wash hands before and after using the restroom.
- Provide paper towels in restrooms and disconnect or tape-off hand air dryers.
- Double efforts to keep bathrooms clean and properly disinfected.
- Signage in bathrooms should be posted encouraging handwashing and illustrating proper handwashing technique.

Personal Hygiene

- Establish a “before- and after-service” hand washing or sanitizing for all staff.
- Provide hand washing stations at the front of the establishment or alternatively, hand sanitizer if not feasible.
 - Automated hand sanitizer dispensers and should be provided throughout the space.
- Provide hand sanitizer to both patron and employee-only work areas.
- Signage should be posted at each hand sanitizer station encouraging proper use and illustrating proper hand sanitizing technique.

- Signage should be posted encouraging patrons and employees to distance themselves when coughing or sneezing and to cover their mouth with a cloth or the inside of their elbow.

Employee Wellness

- Conduct employee temperature screening and wellness checks before each shift.
 - Temperature screening can include manual (use non-contact infrared thermometers) or thermal camera methods.
 - Employees can self-check temperature, while wearing a glove, and disinfect between uses.
- There are a number of examples available for wellness questionnaires (see Resources below).
- If employee is sick or receives any kind of testing (virus or antibody), results should be reported to employer and the timing/decision to go back to work should only occur at a doctor’s discretion.

Other Control Measures

- Although not necessary if hand-washing protocols are rigorously followed, consider providing gloves to staff.
 - If they are worn, they must be changed regularly and are not a substitution for handwashing.
- Depending on local requirements, for those who cannot maintain physical distancing as part of their job, provide or encourage all employees to wear face coverings and gloves and to use hand sanitizer. **(NOTE: Homemade face coverings primarily protect others not yourself).**

NOTE: If an employer chooses to provide an N95 respirator, please fully consider all the potential OSHA requirements.

Training

- Provide instruction and training to employees on how to:



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- Properly put on and remove gloves if used (e.g. food handling, disinfecting).
- Clean and disinfect surfaces according to product specifications.
- Correctly use face coverings and/or respirators.
- Provide Safety Data Sheets for cleaning chemicals and ensure employees are aware of the hazards of use.
- If advice is needed, industrial hygienists have expertise in selecting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and training.

Waste and Laundering

- Single-use items and used disinfection materials can be treated as regular waste, following regular safety guidelines.
- Any reused cloth materials (e.g. face coverings, aprons, uniforms, etc.) should be washed and dried on the highest temperature setting allowable for the fabric.

Communication

- Communicate to patrons what the retail establishment is doing to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
 - Consider using websites, social media, email, or point of electronic sale to communicate to patrons the current protocols and procedures in place as well as any restrictions or requirements for patrons while at the venue (e.g., disinfection routine, health policies for staff, and health & safety measures in place).
- Consider communicating to customers when visiting the venue 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.).
- Communicate that the venue has the right to refuse service to anyone exhibiting symptoms or not following guidelines (e.g., physical distancing).

What should an **Employee do** to protect themselves and patrons?

- Evaluate your health constantly. If you are sick stay home. If you have a temperature stay home. If someone at 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.**
- Wear a mask when out in public and maintain physical distancing.
- At minimum, wash your hands when you arrive at work, after touching your mask, and when you leave work.
- At all times, wear a face covering or something better if you have it. Let your employer know if you have concerns about the PPE that is being provided.
- Carry a towel, if you get the urge to sneeze or cough, cover your nose, mouth and mask, attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough, immediately leave the building or the premises, wash your hands and face thoroughly before going back to work.

What can a **Customer do** to minimize the transmission of COVID-19?

- If you are sick, stay home. If you have a temperature stay home. If someone in your house is sick, stay home. If you have allergies and can't control sneezing, stay home.
- Wear a face covering as you enter and leave the building. Face coverings worn within the venue should be done so responsibly.
- Wash your hands routinely.
- If you or someone in your home are sick or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, re-schedule your service appointment.



- If you get the urge to sneeze or cough, put on your mask, cover your nose, mouth, and mask with a napkin or handkerchief, attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough; immediately leave the building or the premises and wash your hands and face thoroughly before returning.

Resources

- EPA has developed a [list of disinfectants](#) for use against SARS-CoV-2
- ASHRAE has a list of [COVID-19 resources](#) for addressing HVAC challenges in workplaces during the pandemic
- [AIHA's Indoor Environmental Quality Committee developed this guidance documents about reopening after closures due to COVID-19](#)
- [AIHA's Indoor Environmental Quality Committee developed this guidance documents about cleaning buildings before reopening after closures due to COVID-19](#)
- [Center for Disease Control Proper PPE Sequence](#)
- [American Gaming Association](#)
- [National Association of Theatre Owners](#)



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About Occupational Health and Safety Professionals

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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