

Phase Two Guidance  
Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Movie Theaters

During Phase 2, the public and businesses will be required to adopt behaviors and rigorous safeguards to reduce risk for all. **This guidance is intended for movie theaters only, which will be allowed to re-open in in Phase Two with capacity limitations, strong safeguards and physical distancing. The following measures must be implemented to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst employees, patrons, and the community.** For additional information, visit [coronavirus.dc.gov/](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/)

Please note that any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or was recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, must not work in or visit an entertainment, sports, or theater venue due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

**Phase 2 General Information for Movie Theaters**

- Movie theaters may open to the public to the extent that the mitigation measures in this guidance document are in place.
- Social distancing of 6 feet among staff and between patron groups must be maintained, and all staff and patrons must wear face masks or coverings.
- Protocols must be in place to mitigate gathering of patrons in common areas.
- **Attendance is limited to 25 patrons or 25% of capacity as specified in their Certificate of Occupancy, whichever is fewer.**
- **The following must be strictly followed:**
  - Persons attending in groups are limited to 6 individuals.
  - There must be at least 2 open seats or an aisle to the left and right of any attendees or groups of attendees.
  - There must be at least 6 feet between groups.
  - For theaters with less than 6 feet between vertical rows, every other row shall be open for seating.
  - Seating reservations and assignments are recommended.

**Employees and Patrons Must Practice Everyday Prevention Measures**

- **Stay at home if you are sick** or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **Practice social distancing.** Keep at least 6 feet of distance between you and other people who are not in your household. This includes employee areas such as break rooms.
- All persons (staff and patrons) must wear a face covering or facemask while in the business, including during the movie.
  - Masks are most effective if they fit snugly to the face and have 2-3 layers of tightly woven fabric.
  - Masks are not required for children 2 and under.
  - For more information about mask wearing see Masks and Cloth Face Coverings for the General Public at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)
- If the movie theater offers food service, face coverings or masks may be removed **for the limited purpose and limited time period necessary** to consume food or beverages. No food and beverages shall be consumed in any area that does not provide sufficient space to maintain social distancing between groups.
- Outdoor movie screenings are safer than traditional indoor movie screenings. Members of the

public should consider attending outdoor movie screenings where possible and weather permitting.

- Employees who handle food must wear disposable gloves to minimize bare hand contact with any food products.
- Avoid shaking hands and physical contact with people who don't live with you. Instead wave and verbally greet people.
- Perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
  - Key times to perform hand hygiene include:
    - Upon arriving at work
    - Before eating or drinking
    - Before and after preparing or distributing food,
    - After using the toilet,
    - Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings,
    - Before and after work shifts and work breaks,
    - After handling another person's belongings, and
    - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - For more information about going out in public see *Deciding to Go Out* at the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html).

## **Employer Considerations to Encourage Employee and Patron Safety**

### **Employee Considerations**

- Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace.
- Employers must conduct a thorough assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards that could increase risks for COVID-19 transmission.
- Arrange workstations, common areas, break rooms and other areas of the facility to ensure at least 6 feet between people.
- Employers must provide staff with cloth face coverings and appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., masks, gloves) per their job responsibilities. Gloves must be worn as indicated per routine job responsibilities.
- Employees must avoid using other employee's phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment.
- Employers must stagger staff shifts, start times, and break times as much as possible to ensure social distancing between staff can be maintained.
- Implement leave policies that are flexible and non-punitive, and that allow sick employees to stay home. Leave policies are recommended to account for the following:
  - Employees who report COVID-19 symptoms
  - Employees who were tested for COVID-19 and test results are pending
  - Employees who tested positive for COVID-19
  - Employees who are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19
  - Employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members
- Keep abreast of current law, which has amended both the DC Family and Medical Leave Act and the DC Sick and Safe Leave Law and created whole new categories of leave, like Declared Emergency Leave.
- Learn about and inform your employees about COVID-related leave provided through new federal law, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and all applicable District law relating to sick leave.
- Educate employees about COVID-19. Refer to <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/> for more information.

## Operational Considerations

- Outdoor movie screenings are safer than traditional indoor movie screenings. Consider offering outdoor screenings where possible.
- Signage must be posted at the entrance stating that nobody with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 is permitted to enter the movie theater.
- Limit and stagger screening times to reduce overcrowding between screenings and to prevent lines at ticketing booths.
- Avoid use of paper tickets.
- Display signage throughout the theater reinforcing social distancing, mask wearing, and hand hygiene policies.
- Employers must communicate COVID-19 policies to staff and patrons (e.g., on movie theater website, social media sites, prominent signage at entrance and throughout the theater, on-screen announcements).
- Theater management must provide adequate supplies to allow for frequent hand hygiene (e.g., soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol) for use by staff and patrons.
- Ensure that hand sanitizer is readily accessible throughout the movie theater (e.g., at entrances, lobbies, ticket booths, in auditoriums, employee work stations, break areas, food service areas).
- Consider providing disposable facemasks to patrons if they need one, supplies permitting.
- **If food is prepared and sold, staff must serve patrons (no self-service is permitted), and must adhere to guidance specific to restaurants and food establishments.**
- Consider options for patrons to place food orders ahead of time such as mobile ordering to minimize time spent in line and physical contact with employees.
- Eliminate shared food service items (e.g., condiment dispensers, popcorn butter dispensers, straw, utensil or napkin dispensers, salt and pepper shakers) in favor of single use items or touchless dispensers. Shared fountain drink stations must also be eliminated.
- For information regarding operation of on-site food and beverage service, please see *Guidance for Restaurants* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)

## Avoid Close Contact and Reduce Touchpoints

- Minimize face-to-face passing. If possible, have a separate entrance and exit for the movie theater to allow one-way flow of patrons.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors and sidewalks and signage, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart in queuing areas, both inside and outside the movie theater.
- Protective barriers (plexiglass or similar) must be installed in all areas where there is patron interaction that cannot occur with 6 feet of social distancing, such as ticket booths and cashiers.
- Implement virtual and contactless payments as much as possible (e.g., ticket sales, food payments) and minimize cash transactions. Options include online payments, and pay-by-phone.
- Use visual cues to help prevent congregating in lobby areas.
- Reconfigure or mark seating arrangements in movie theaters to delineate physically distant seating.
- Prohibit activities that require patrons to cluster.
- Monitor areas prone to congregation (e.g., common areas, restrooms, concession areas, employee breakrooms) to ensure face mask and social distancing requirements are met.
- Limit number of employees in a breakroom at any given time.
- Any items handed out to patrons must be single use or cleaned and disinfected between each patron use (e.g., 3D glasses, assisted audio devices).

## Screening and Monitoring for Symptoms

- Businesses must perform screening (e.g., symptom questionnaires) of employees daily, prior to entering the business, over the phone or in person.

- For **Screening Tool Guidance**, visit [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)
- Facilities must place signage at the business entrance to inform staff and clients of screening procedures.
- Employees who report symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19 must not enter the business.
- If an employee or patron develops any symptoms of COVID-19 while in the building, there must be a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify their supervisor, and leave the building.
- **Business must maintain a daily record of individuals who work at and have visited the business for at least 30 days** to assist with contact tracing. Information collected must include name, date and time of visit, phone number, and email (if available) for each screening room. This information must be provided within 24 hours if requested by DC Health if a case of COVID-19 occurs at your establishment, in order to assist with contact tracing.

### Cleaning and Disinfection/Sanitation

- Businesses must have a comprehensive plan for cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces (e.g., countertops, door handles, faucets, work stations, computers, cash registers, handrails) routinely through the day.
- Cleaning procedures throughout the movie theater must be developed in advance of opening and shared with employees. Management must properly train staff on cleaning procedures and monitor cleaning schedules to ensure compliance.
- Restrooms must be cleaned and disinfected frequently, appropriately marked, and monitored to ensure social distancing guidelines are followed. Ensure an adequate supply of soap and paper towels is present at all times.
- Provide staff with disinfectant wipes for frequent easy wiping down of surfaces.
- All food contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized at least once every 2 hours.
- Each theater auditorium must be cleaned and disinfected after every screening. Increase intervals between movie screenings to accommodate the enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocol.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning sensitive electronic equipment (e.g., ticket machines, projectors, assisted listening devices). For more information about disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19, see the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html)
- For information about COVID-19 specific cleaning practices see *Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo)

### Building Considerations

- Consider making the following improvements to improve building ventilation ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html)):
  - Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows.
    - Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms).
  - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
  - Decrease occupancy of spaces with poor ventilation.
  - Improve central air filtration to the highest level compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
  - Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
  - Turn off any demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours.
  - Consider portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas).

- Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.
- Consult with a specialist to see what works for your building.
- If the building was closed for an extended period of time, ensure all water systems are safe to use. For more information, see CDC's Guidance for Reopening Buildings after Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html).

### **Establish a Plan for COVID-19 Exposure**

- Establish a plan in the event an employee or patron is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Identify a point of contact at the establishment that an employee or patron can notify if they test positive for COVID-19 and choose to disclose this information.
- If an employee chooses to report to the establishment that they are positive for COVID-19, the establishment must have a notification process to share the following with staff:
  - Education about COVID-19, including the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
  - Referral to the Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov)
  - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/testing)
- Refer to the guidance *First Steps for Non-Healthcare Employers when Employees Test Positive for COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).
  - A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, during that person's infectious period.
  - The infectious period starts two days before symptom onset and typically ends 10 days after symptom onset (or test date for people who do not have symptoms).
- Establishments must notify DC Health when:
  - An employee who frequently interacts with patrons notifies the establishment they **tested positive for COVID-19** (not before results come back)

**AND**

  - the person was in the building **during their infectious period**.
- Notify DC Health by submitting an online form on the DC Health COVID-19 Reporting Requirements website [dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements](https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements):
  - Submit a **Non-Healthcare Facility COVID-19 Consult Form**.
- An investigator from DC Health will follow-up within 48 hours to all appropriately submitted notifications. Please note this time may increase as cases of COVID-19 increase in the District.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance) regularly for the most current information.