



**Note: This guidance is no longer in effect. Most businesses now follow the [COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards](#). Visit the California Department of Public Health's [COVID-19 website](#) for the current COVID-19 public health guidance. This document is provided only for historical purposes.**



# COVID-19 INDUSTRY GUIDANCE: Water Parks

**April 28, 2021**

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*This guidance is designed to address sectors and activities opening statewide. However, local health officers may implement more stringent rules tailored to local epidemiological conditions, so employers should also confirm relevant local opening policies.*



# OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the health of Californians. Reported illness ranges from very mild (some people have no symptoms) to severe illness that may result in death. Certain groups, including those with serious underlying medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, are at higher risk of hospitalization and serious complications. In addition, the risk of more severe disease and death increases with increasing age. As the pandemic has unfolded, we have learned that many organs can be affected by COVID-19 and there are many ways the infection can affect someone's health.

While most persons with COVID-19 recover and return to their baseline level of health, some people can have symptoms that can last for weeks or even months after recovery from acute illness. Even people who are not hospitalized and who have mild illness can experience persistent or late symptoms.

Transmission is most likely when people are in close contact or in a poorly ventilated area with an infected person. Transmission can occur when the infected person has symptoms, is without symptoms, or has not yet developed symptoms. Virus particles can travel more than six feet in indoor spaces and remain suspended in air even after an infected person has left the room. Indoor settings pose a much higher risk of transmission than outdoor settings. When an infected person does certain activities, such as singing or chanting, loud talking, or heavy breathing, for example with exercise, it can further increase risk compared to normal breathing and talking.

Therefore, it is essential that all possible steps be taken to ensure the safety of workers and the public.

Key prevention practices include:

- ✓ getting vaccinated when eligible,
- ✓ physical distancing to the maximum extent possible,
- ✓ use of face coverings by workers (where respiratory protection is not already required) and customers/clients,
- ✓ for indoor locations, ensuring adequate ventilation in all spaces,
- ✓ frequent handwashing and regular cleaning and disinfection,
- ✓ training workers on these and other elements of the COVID-19 prevention program.

On November 30, 2020, the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) implemented mandatory [emergency temporary standards](#) (ETS) to prevent worker exposures to COVID-19 in most workplaces where workers are not covered by Cal/OSHA's [Aerosol Transmissible Diseases standard](#). Under the ETS, employers have obligations including to develop and implement policies and procedures to prevent disease transmission in the workplace; to identify new disease cases if they occur; and, when they are identified, to intervene quickly and work with public health authorities to halt the spread of the virus. The ETS covers topics that are also addressed by this guidance. The guidance has been updated to clarify any instances where public health guidance imposes additional *requirements* beyond those mandated by the ETS and to highlight additional recommended practices for public health purposes beyond those mandated by the ETS.

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# Purpose

This document provides guidance for Water Parks to support a safe, clean environment for workers and customers. Attendance at water parks shall be limited according to the County Risk Level. For the most updated information on county status, visit [Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#). Please note that local health departments can have more restrictive criteria and different closures. Find [your county's local information](#).

- **Across all Tiers:**

- Employers who have employees working at Water Parks must develop a worker COVID-19 testing program for weekly optional testing of all workers who may encounter other workers, or support staff. PCR or antigen tests are permissible diagnosis tests for workers where the interval of between tests is no greater than seven days. For workers returning to work where the interval between a prior test has been greater than seven days after receiving a prior test, only a PCR test is permissible.
- Workers participating in routine weekly testing or who are fully vaccinated are NOT counted toward any occupancy capacity limit. All workers not participating in a routine weekly testing program or are not fully vaccinated shall count toward any occupancy limit.
- Use of face coverings is mandatory throughout the park in all settings indoor and outdoor, unless actively eating and/or drinking, or while on a ride or in a setting that would cause the face covering to become wet. Guests without a face covering must remain six feet from people who are not in the same household. Guests who do not comply should be removed from the facility immediately. Face coverings must be made available to visitors who lose their face covering while in the park.
- Advise staff and guests with face coverings, to NOT wear them in the water. A wet cloth mask can make it difficult to breathe and likely will not work correctly. Given this, it is particularly important to maintain social distancing when in the water. Encourage everyone to bring a second (or more) face covering in case the first one gets wet.
- Allow for exemptions identified in the [CDPH Face Covering Guidance](#).
- Workers in the water park sector, who cannot feasibly work with a face covering, are not required to wear a face covering during the time in which such tasks are actually being performed on the condition that (1) the unmasked worker is at least six feet away from all other persons, or (2) all unmasked workers and any workers who come into contact with those people are routinely tested at least twice weekly for COVID-19.
- In-state visitors only, check for current [CDPH Travel Advisory](#) & [CDC travel guidance](#) in effect.
- Information must be prominently placed on all communications, including the Reservation and Ticketing systems, to ensure guests are aware of Reservation and Ticketing Requirements. At the time a guest makes a park reservation and purchases park tickets, the park operators must obtain an attestation that when visiting the park, the guest's party size will not contain more than 3 households and the guest, and all members of the guest's party are in-state or fully vaccinated out-of-state visitors.

- Indoor rides must be limited to no more than 15 minutes.
- Indoor pools, including wave pools, are not permitted until the Orange and Yellow Tiers.
- Guests from different households or other parties must be at least six feet apart during queuing for rides.
- Occupancy limits are based on the fire department occupant limit. If no fire department occupant limit is available for the total facility, the operating design capacity will be used as the basis for determining the reduced capacity.
- Park visitors are permitted to eat and drink only in designated dining areas. Concession stands must be accompanied by additional designated and shaded eating areas. Food and/or drink consumption is NOT permitted while queuing or using rides and attractions, including cinematic attractions. Encourage guest to purchase all food and beverage from an app (if applicable) and pick up the food in the designated area.
- Venues that have fully vaccinated or tested negative attendees only, may increase their capacity. Refer to the [Addendum to Blueprint Activity & Business Tiers Chart – Tested and Fully Vaccinated Individuals and Sections](#).

**Purple – Widespread – Tier 1**

Closed

**Red – Substantial – Tier 2**

- Outdoor parks must limit visitors to a maximum of 15% capacity.
- Indoor parks, pools and rides must remain closed.
- No indoor dining
- Small Groups only – Limited to a maximum of 10 people or 3 household groups with no intergroup mixing.
- Walk up ticket sales allowed. Park operators must collect complete name and contact information (including a phone number) of the ticket purchaser for necessary contact tracing.

**Orange – Moderate – Tier 3**

- Outdoor parks must limit visitors to a maximum of 25% capacity.
- Indoor parks, pools and rides limited to a maximum of 15% capacity.
- Indoor dining limited to a maximum of 25% capacity
- Walk up ticket sales allowed. Park operators must collect complete name and contact information (including a phone number) of the ticket purchaser for necessary contact tracing.

**Yellow – Minimal – Tier 4**

- Outdoor parks must limit visitors to a maximum of 40% capacity.
- Indoor parks, pools and rides limited to a maximum of 25% capacity.
- Indoor dining limited to a maximum of 50%

- Walk up ticket sales allowed. Park operators must collect complete name and contact information (including phone number) of the ticket purchaser for necessary contact tracing.

**NOTE:** Water parks have a number of operational aspects and service offerings available in other guidance on the [Industry Guidance to Reduce Risk](#) website. Operators must review this guidance to apply the appropriate protocols to all aspects of their operations, unless otherwise required in this document. Such operations may include:

- [Bars Guidance](#)
- [Wineries Breweries, and Distilleries Guidance](#)
- Gift shops and retail operations (see [Retail Guidance](#))
- Hotels and lodging (see [Hotels, Lodging, and Short-Term Rentals Guidance](#))
- Family entertainment centers, including miniature golf and arcades (see [Family Entertainment Centers Guidance](#))
- Interactive exhibits (see [Zoos and Museums Guidance](#))
- [Outdoor Seated Live Events and Performances Guidance](#)
- [Indoor Seated Live Events and Performances Guidance](#)
- Trams, shuttles, and other transit ([Public and Private Passenger Carriers, Transit, and Intercity Passenger Rail Guidance](#))
  - Limit shuttle service whenever possible and in accordance with obligations to individuals with disabilities.
- Grounds, building maintenance, custodial services ([Limited Services Guidance](#))

The guidance is not intended to revoke or repeal any worker rights, either statutory, regulatory or collectively bargained, and is not exhaustive, as it does not include county health orders, nor is it a substitute for any existing safety and health-related regulatory requirements such as those of Cal/OSHA.<sup>1</sup> Stay current on changes to public health guidance and state/local orders, as the COVID-19 situation continues. Cal/OSHA has more safety and health guidance on their [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Guidance and Resources Web Page](#). CDC has additional for [businesses and employers](#).



## Required Use of Face Coverings

Consult the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) Guidance on the Use of Face Coverings](#), which mandates the use of face coverings for both members of the public and employees in all public and workplace settings outside the home. Complete details, including all requirements and exemptions to these rules, can be found in the guidance, which should be checked periodically for updates. Additionally, CDPH provides [advice](#) on effective practices regarding face covering.

Face coverings should be worn indoors in all public areas except when in pools or on slides where they may get wet.



## Workplace COVID-19 Prevention Program

As required by the Cal/OSHA [COVID-19 prevention standards](#), employers must establish, implement and maintain a written COVID-19 Prevention Program that is available to employees and their authorized representatives (i.e., union). Complete details, including all requirements and exemptions to these rules, templates for model COVID-19 Prevention Programs, and Frequently Asked Questions can be found at the following [link](#). All references and guidance should be checked periodically for updates.



## Outbreak and Testing

Employers are also required to comply with Cal/OSHA's regulations for [outbreaks](#) and [major outbreaks](#), including any [relevant testing requirements for employees and reporting requirements](#). They should review [FAQs on Outbreaks](#) for more considerations and explanation of the regulations.

Consult [CDPH's Responding to COVID-19 at the Workplace](#) for specific definitions on what constitutes an outbreak and all required reporting requirements.



## Individual Control Measures and Screening

The Cal/OSHA ETS requires employers to develop and implement a process for screening employees for and responding to employees with COVID-19 symptoms, as well as to address several other individual control measures through implementation of the required components of the COVID-19 Prevention Program. See the linked materials for details on those requirements.

In addition to the requirements under the ETS, employers must:

- Take reasonable measures, including public address announcements, posting signage in strategic and highly-visible locations, and in reservation confirmations, to remind the public and workers that they must use face coverings whenever not eating or drinking (unless exempted per the ETS or [CDPH Face Covering Guidance](#)), practice physical distancing, not touch their face, frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and use hand sanitizer.
- CDPH recommends the following additional measures to further mitigate risk of transmission or other health risks:
  - Encourage guests or customers who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 to stay home.
  - Provide resources to promote customers' personal hygiene. This will include tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, adequate time for handwashing, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, and disposable towels.



## Ventilation

- All businesses permitted to operate indoors must follow the CDPH and Cal/OSHA interim [guidance for ventilation, filtration, and air quality](#) to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in indoor settings. This guidance also addresses ventilation requirements contained in the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 ETS.
- Additional detailed guidance on ventilation is also available from the [CDC](#).



## Cleaning, and Disinfecting Protocols

- Employers must implement cleaning and disinfecting procedures, as defined within the Cal/OSHA [COVID-19 ETS](#). Cleaning and disinfecting must be done in a manner that does not create a hazard to workers.
- CDPH guidance does not impose any additional requirements beyond those under the ETS.
- CDPH recommends the following additional measures to further mitigate risk of transmission or other health risks:
  - To minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water, take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown.
  - Provide time for workers to implement cleaning practices during their shift. Assign cleaning assignments during working hours as part of the employee's job duties. Procure options for third-party cleaning companies to assist with the increased cleaning demand, as needed.
  - Install hands-free devices, if possible, including motion sensor lights, contactless payment systems, automatic soap and paper towel dispensers, and timecard systems.
  - Encourage the use of debit or credit cards by customers, for example, through signage.
  - When choosing disinfecting chemicals, use products approved for use against COVID-19 on the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-approved](#) list and follow product instructions. Choose disinfectants that are less likely to trigger asthma by using products on EPA's "N" list that contain hydrogen peroxide (no stronger than 3%) or ethanol (ethyl alcohol) and that do not contain peroxyacetic acid or peracetic acid. Avoid disinfectant products on the "N" list that contain asthmagens, such as bleach (sodium hypochlorite) or quaternary ammonium compounds (e.g., benzalkonium chloride). Consult with the company or engineer that designed the aquatic venue to decide which List N disinfectants approved by the EPA are best for the aquatic venue. Follow the [asthma-safer cleaning methods](#) recommended by the California Department of Public Health and ensure proper ventilation.

- It is recommended that the water in the facility undergoes ultraviolet light and Diatomaceous earth filters, and an automated chemistry system to ensure that all water meets the state required levels of chlorination.
- Maintain proper disinfectant levels (1-10 parts per million free chlorine or 3-8 ppm bromine) and pH (7.2-8).



## Physical Distancing Guidelines

- Physical distancing alone is insufficient to prevent transmission of COVID-19.
- Employers must implement protocols and procedures regarding physical distancing of at least six feet between workers and other persons, as defined within the Cal/OSHA [COVID-19 Prevention ETS](#). More details and examples can be found in [Cal/OSHA's FAQs](#).
- CDPH recommends the following additional measures to further mitigate risk of transmission or other health risks:
  - Avoid in-person meetings per Blueprint for a Safer Economy Tier allowances, and, if they are necessary, adjust them to occur outdoors, and ensure physical distancing. Consider use of smaller individual meetings at facilities to maintain physical distancing guidelines.
  - Provide a single, clearly designated entrance and separate exit to help maintain physical distancing where possible.
  - Where possible, create outdoor break areas with shade coverings and seating arrangements that ensures physical distancing for eating, drinking, or other activities that do not allow a mask to be worn.



## Additional Recommendations for Admission, Entry and Security

- Ensure parking, entrance, and exit areas are marked, monitored, and configured to allow for physical distancing and no crowding or congregating.
- Consider ways to schedule staggered ingress in order to minimize lines for wandering, bag check, and ticket scanning. Virtual queuing, for example, could provide metered access to the front of a line.
- Consider protecting ticketing offices and will call with impermeable barriers, like Plexiglass. Instruct guests where to queue to maintain a minimum of six feet of physical distance.
- Close sections of switchback lines/queues to ensure sufficient physical distance of at least six feet between visitors.
- Encourage guests to make purchases online (prior to their visit) or from apps once inside the park to minimize lines and on-site payment transactions.

Consider whether guests could check themselves in at self-service kiosks outside the health and security screening area.

- Consider offering all-inclusive package deals/wristbands that combine park admission, parking, and special upgrades like reserved seating and cabana rental to reduce the number of transactions with employees made inside the park.
- Workers checking bags should modify activities to minimize directly touching guest items. This could include using styluses or other instruments to search bags, asking guests to open bags and move contents, etc. Where practices might cause direct contact with patrons or their items, workers should immediately sanitize hands or wear disposable gloves and change between each guest search.
- In order to avoid touching guests' personal items, park operators should consider enforcing a small clear bag policy and ask guests to open their own bags for inspection. Consider necessary exceptions for medical and personal hygiene products.
- Implement security tools that allow workers to maintain at least six feet of physical distance from patrons. This could include the use of walkthrough metal detectors rather than hand wand metal detectors.
- Walk-through metal detectors are effective at detecting metallic objects while allowing security workers to maintain social distance. Hand wands are a less costly alternative which still allow no-contact metal detection, but they require the security worker to be closer than six feet from the guest. Any worker conducting a pat-down search must wear disposable gloves that are immediately discarded after interaction with a guest, followed by handwashing or hand sanitizer before putting on a fresh pair of gloves.
- Install and use touchless ticket scanners whenever possible. Ask guests to scan tickets themselves rather than passing digital electronic devices or paper tickets back and forth between workers and patrons. When workers must assist patrons and physical distancing is difficult, workers must wear a face covering and wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer as described in this guidance. Guests must wear face coverings during the exchange and be encouraged to wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer before and after exchanging goods as well.
- Evaluate locker arrangements where guests store personal belongings to ensure those spaces can be regularly cleaned and disinfected and appropriately spaced to allow for physical distancing. Consider closing or rotating some sections to allow for appropriate physical distancing during busy times. Post signs reminding guests to maintain physical distances of at least six feet and to wait for others to vacate before approaching the locker. Consider positioning a worker in the locker area to limit the number of people in the space at one time. Clean and disinfect lockers between

each use or provide bags so guests can stow their personal items in those bags before placing them in a locker.

- In the event of an emergency, park operators should consider and plan for physical distancing in areas of ingress/egress and guest staging areas.



## Additional Recommendations for Rides and Pools

- Consider alternative queuing methods where possible to manage capacity and facilitate physical distancing. Consider using a virtual queue system where practical (e.g. guests could make online reservations for particular attractions through an app or during the ticket purchasing process). Provide staffing to monitor guest compliance with distancing and face coverings while in queues.
- Consider refining height check operations to make them touch-free and easy to manage and view from a few feet away (e.g. highly visible height markers, elevated bar for the guest to stand under.)
- Household members do not need to be seated six feet apart.
- For pools, advise all guests that face coverings should be put away when not in use, so they are not accidentally touched or picked up by others.
- Set up a system so that furniture and equipment (e.g., lounge chairs) that need to be cleaned and disinfected is kept separate from furniture that has already been cleaned and disinfected.
- Encourage patrons to bring and use their own towels wherever possible. If the facility is providing them, launder towels according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water temperature and dry items completely. Handle towels with disposable gloves and minimal disturbance, i.e., do not shake them.
- Discourage people from sharing items, particularly those that are difficult to clean and disinfect or those that are meant to come in contact with the face (e.g., goggles, nose clips, and snorkels).
- Ensure that the facility has adequate equipment for patrons, such as kick boards, pool noodles, and other flotation devices, to minimize sharing wherever possible. Clean and disinfect the items after each use.
- Change the deck layout and other areas surrounding the pool to ensure that the standing and seating areas can support physical distancing requirements. This could include removing lounge chairs or taping off areas to discourage use.
- Ensure that lifeguards who are actively lifeguarding are not also expected to monitor handwashing, use of cloth face coverings, or physical distancing. Assign this monitoring responsibility to another worker.

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<sup>1</sup>Additional requirements must be considered for vulnerable populations. Amusement parks must comply with all [Cal/OSHA](#) standards and be prepared to adhere to its guidance as well as guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#). Additionally, employers must be prepared to alter their operations as those guidelines change.

