Stay Safe Guidance for Campgrounds

Background

The purpose of this document is to provide direction and information about best practices for Minnesota developed campground operators as they operate facilities in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This document was developed in consultation with several private, municipal, county, regional, state and federal entities based on our current understanding of state and national guidance relevant to the operation of developed campgrounds. These guidelines will:

- Protect the health and safety of visitors and staff, while maintaining camping opportunities.
- Help operators provide services in a consistent and safe way.
- Provide consistent messaging so visitors understand what is expected of them.

The guidelines in this document are minimum actions to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Operators are encouraged to develop and enact additional operational policies to address specific campground needs and operational constraints, as necessary. Operators must comply with the requirements of this guidance, in addition to the Outdoor Recreation and Facilities Guidelines issued jointly by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the requirements of Executive Order (EO) 21-11. EO 21-11 will begin Monday, March 15, 2021 at 12 p.m. (noon) and does not have an end date. Effective March 31, 2021 at 11:59 p.m., larger venues, restaurants, gyms and pools will be able to expand their occupancy per the Stay Safe Guidance. Effective April 14, 2021 at 11:59 p.m., the requirement to work from home shifts to a strong
recommendation. The Resources section at the end of this document also contains links to relevant state laws, and state and federal guidance that operators are encouraged to review.

Campground operators will need to be ready to further adapt their operations, and even close them, if conditions or information changes and public health considerations warrant doing so.

GUIDELINES FOR CAMPGROUND OPERATORS

Operators must follow the guidelines below and ensure that social distancing, sanitation, and safety for visitors and staff can be met.

Managing availability and safe operation of facilities

1. **Required Preparedness Plan.** Campground operators must develop and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan to manage exposure to the virus. Refer to the Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities on Stay Safe MN.

2. **Campground capacity.** Follow capacity limits for the campground. Campground maximum occupancy must be based on the number of bathrooms open and available with social distancing (for more information on toilet and bathing requirements at recreational campgrounds see MN Rules 4630.0900). Consult MDH guidelines when considering sanitation-related capacity limits. Operators should also take into account accessibility compliance, which may be affected by bathroom availability.

3. **Campsites.** The social gathering limits of up to 15 people indoors (e.g., in a tent, RV, group-site building) and up to 50 people outdoors apply at campsites, including group campsites. Individual campsites, including those in developed campgrounds and remote and dispersed campsites, may be made available for recreational use so long as social distancing and gathering size limits are maintained. Larger group sites may need to be operated at reduced capacity to ensure the outdoor social gathering limit is not exceeded and social distancing can be maintained.

4. **Campsite spacing.** Ensure spacing between campsites is adequate to allow for six feet of social distancing between people from different households. Some individual campsites may need to be closed to prevent campground overcrowding or to provide adequate distance between sites.

5. **Common spaces, facilities, and services.** The requirements that apply to communal services and amenities, such as visitor centers, amphitheaters, large pavilions, group centers, communal fire rings, and other facilities that congregate people depend on the nature of the activity or service being provided.
   - Food and beverage operations are subject to the Stay Safe Guidance for Restaurants and Bars.
   - Retail services are subject to the Stay Safe Guidance for Retail Businesses.
- Rental of outdoor recreational equipment is allowed subject to the [Outdoor Recreation and Facilities Guidelines](#).

- Entertainment activities or events (e.g., movies, concerts in the park, mini-golf, video arcades, etc.) that occur in a venue where admission and occupancy can be controlled and are predictable may occur subject to the occupancy limits and other requirements for venues in EO 21-11 and the applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues](#).

- The operation of public swimming pools is subject to the [COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance for Public Swimming Pools](#).

- Fitness centers and exercise rooms are subject to the [Stay Safe Guidance for Gyms, Studios and Fitness Centers](#).

- Guided and instructional outdoor recreation services are subject to the relevant group size limit (25 people for any portion of the service delivered indoors and 50 people outdoors) and other requirements found in the [Outdoor Recreation and Facilities Guidelines](#).

- Youth programming, including overnight camps, is subject to the [child care and youth-serving programs section](#) of MDH’s [Schools and Child Care: COVID-19](#) web page.

- Private parties or celebrations held in a venue (e.g. visitor center or pavilion) are subject to the [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues](#).

- All other common spaces that are not addressed above must operate consistent with the [Outdoor Recreation and Facilities Guidelines](#) and must adhere to the social gathering limits of no more than 15 people indoors, and 50 people outdoors.

  - Social gatherings are groups of people who are not members of the same household, congregated together for a common or coordinated social, community, or leisure purpose.

6. **Cleaning of facilities.** Establish a regular schedule and checklist for cleaning and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces (doorknobs, counters, handrails, etc.), shared items, and high traffic areas. Follow CDC’s [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#) and CDC’s [Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#). Select and use effective and safe supplies to clean and disinfect. These [EPA-registered household disinfectants](#) are recommended by the CDC for cleaning.

7. **Special considerations for bathroom and shower facilities.** Implement the following in managing shower and bathroom buildings:

   - Clean and disinfect bathrooms regularly, particularly high-touch surfaces.

   - Provide materials for handwashing/hand sanitizing and post signs reminding people to wash their hands.

   - Place a trash receptacle by the door to ensure a paper towel can be readily disposed of when operating the door. The location and positioning of waste receptacles must not interfere with Life Safety requirements (e.g. egress, evacuation, emergency equipment) or any reasonable accommodations provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
Post signs reminding those in the facility to maintain at least six feet of social distance from members of other households. It is not necessary to disable or tape-off sinks, bathroom stalls or showers that are closer than six feet since people from the same household may safely use adjacent facilities. If the facility size does not allow for social distancing between households, limit use to one household at a time.

8. **Lodging facilities.** Camper cabins, yurts, lodges and other overnight facilities may be open consistent with MDH and CDC guidelines. Operators will have to determine appropriate cleaning procedures based on the amenities, types of surfaces, and items within lodging units and document them in their COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. Please see the [COVID-19 Guidance for Hotel Managers and Owners](https://www.health.state.mn.us/COVID19/business_guidance.html) for additional recommendations.

### Managing interactions among visitors and staff

1. **Visitor transactions.** Provide and encourage, to the maximum extent possible, the use of online payments or on-site pay stations for handling campsite reservations, fees, and permits. Provide hand sanitizer at in-person check-in counters and points of purchase.

2. **COVID-19 screening.** Establish and implement health screening for staff and volunteers upon or prior to arrival at a work location. See MDH’s [Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist](https://www.health.state.mn.us/COVID19/employee_screening.html). Staff and volunteers whose responses to the health screening indicates they are potentially infectious must stay or be sent home and follow the information on the State of Minnesota’s [Get Tested](https://www.health.state.mn.us/web/epi/COVID-19/get-tested.html) website and MDH’s guidelines for COVID-19: When to Return to Work on [Businesses and Employers: COVID-19](https://www.health.state.mn.us/COVID19/business_guidance.html). Also establish and implement procedures for addressing visitors who may be potentially infectious.

3. **Personal protective equipment.** Provide staff and volunteers with personal protective equipment such as gloves, goggles, face shields, and face coverings as appropriate for the activity being performed.

4. **Follow face covering requirements.** As of July 25, 2020, people over age 5 in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces in accordance with [Executive Order 20-81](https://bit.ly/2XM6wWY). Additionally, workers (including both staff and volunteers) are required to wear a face covering when working outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained.
   - Executive Order 20-81 includes exemptions for people who are unable to wear or
tolerate a face covering due to a medical or mental health condition or other reasons. There are also situations in which a face covering may be temporarily removed or where face coverings are not required. For example, a person may temporarily remove their face covering when presenting, eating, or communicating with an individual who is deaf or hearing impaired.

- Face coverings are strongly encouraged, but not required, for people participating in outdoor recreational activities when social distancing is not possible or is difficult to maintain.
- Industry guidance also establishes sector-specific face covering requirements, and individuals must follow these requirements when in those settings. For example, face coverings are required outdoors at all times for patrons of entertainment venues in the Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues.
- Face coverings are NOT a replacement for social distancing.
- For more information see Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81 and MDH Facemasks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

5. **Staff and volunteer training.** Train staff and volunteers, such as campground hosts, on social distancing, face covering and sanitation requirements, as well as any procedural changes for routine operations, emergency situations, or weather emergency alerts. Ensure that emergency action plans are updated to reflect any facility closures, operational changes, and revised emergency weather procedures.

6. **Consistent information.** Develop and deploy clear and consistent messaging for visitors on social distancing, face coverings, hand washing/sanitizing, facility closures, building and site capacity limits, and expectations for visitor behavior. Use this messaging when creating signage, posting information on websites, emailing to customers, and in other communications with the public. Some helpful resources include the following:
   - MDH Materials and Resources
   - CDC Communication Resources

7. **Appropriate signage.** Post public informational signage, where appropriate, to encourage compliance with the following:
   - Social distancing of at least six feet between individuals from different households, in particular at entrances, exits, and locations where people tend to congregate such as trailheads, kiosks, restrooms and shelters.
   - Capacity limits for facilities that take into account any gathering-size limitations and maximum occupancy with social distancing of at least six feet between individuals from different households.
   - Cleaning protocols for individuals to follow before and after using public amenities.
   - Basic COVID-19 health reminders, such as staying home when you are sick, covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands frequently, wearing a face covering to protect others, and avoiding touching your face.
Managing new cleaning protocols

1. **Required cleaning protocols.** Developed campground operators must develop cleaning protocols based on MDH and CDC guidelines. Several resources are available, including recommendations about frequent cleaning and sanitization of touchpoints, restrooms and common areas. In particular, reference [COVID-19 Guidance for Hotel Managers and Owners](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hotel/managing-cleaning.html), [CDC’s Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent=get/schools/cleaning-disinfecting.html) and [CDC’s Resources for Parks and Recreational Activities](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-activities.html). Ensure the use of EPA-approved cleaning and disinfecting supplies and procedures. Visibly post general information about cleaning protocols so visitors know what to expect (e.g., restrooms will be open to the public and cleaned a certain number of times per day).

2. **Proactive closures.** Commit to the highest standards of safe sanitation and operational practices to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread. If social distancing and sanitation protocols cannot be followed for any reason, proactively close the facility until they can be implemented.

3. **Staying informed.** Regularly consult MDH, CDC and [Stay Safe MN](https://www.staysafemn.com) guidance for businesses and organizations, as well as the DNR/MDH Outdoor Recreation Guidelines, for any updated information on cleaning protocols and best practices to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread.

Guidelines for Visitors

Consistent messaging will help visitors effectively plan and prepare for their visit. Campground operators should ensure their customers receive this information. Information distribution methods may include social media, news releases, e-mails sent to campers, and on-site postings, among other methods.

Campground visitors should:

1. **Stay home if sick.** Anyone with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing) should stay home and follow the information on the State of Minnesota’s [Get Tested](https://www.health.mn.gov/coronavirus/test/gettested) web site and [CDC’s What to Do If You Are Sick](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/what-to-do-if-sick/what-to-do-if-sick.html).

2. **Plan ahead.** When you are able, make reservations and purchase permits, firewood, ice and other items online or by phone before you arrive on site. Cash-less and minimal-contact transactions are becoming a common operating procedure in many establishments to avoid lines and person-to-person interactions. This will help protect you, other visitors, and staff.

3. **Be self-sufficient.** Be prepared to be as self-contained and self-sufficient as possible. For example, arrive prepared with your own soap, surface disinfectant supplies, hand sanitizer, face covering, paper towels/hand towels and toilet paper just to be sure.

4. **Socially distance yourself.** To ensure that six feet of social distancing can be maintained, it is best to set up your campsite—sleeping, campfire and eating areas—to maximize distance from adjacent campsites that host people from different households. Only share a tent, camper or RV with people from a different household if you can maintain social distancing at all times. Social distancing is also important at bathrooms, pay stations, campfires, trails and any other areas where you may encounter people from different households.
5. **Follow face covering requirements.** As of July 25, 2020, people over age 5 in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces in accordance with Executive Order 20-81. Additionally, workers are required to wear a face covering when working outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained.

   - Executive Order 20-81 includes exemptions for people who are unable to wear or tolerate a face covering due to a medical or mental health condition or other reasons. There are also situations in which a face covering may be temporarily removed or where face coverings are not required. For example, a person may temporarily remove their face covering when presenting, eating, or communicating with an individual who is deaf or hearing impaired.

   - Face coverings are strongly encouraged, but not required, for people participating in outdoor recreational activities when social distancing is not possible or is difficult to maintain.

   - Industry guidance also establishes sector-specific face covering requirements, and individuals must follow these requirements when in those settings. For example, face coverings are required outdoors at all times for patrons of entertainment venues in the Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues.

   - Face coverings are NOT a replacement for social distancing.

   - For more information see Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81 and MDH Facemasks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

6. **Know before you go.** Be prepared for lower levels of service and public contact. Plan ahead for your visit. Ensure that you have maps of the area downloaded or printed before you leave home, in case they are not available on site. Check online resources for updated information about rules changes, facility closures and program availability so you know what to expect when you arrive.

7. **Follow the rules.** Follow all campground rules and instructions, whether given in writing or verbally, that protect your safety and the safety of others. These rules and instructions will likely include facility-specific direction about things such as:

   - Wearing face coverings in public settings, such as within bathrooms, shelters, and ranger stations and around kiosks.

   - Observing cleaning protocols for self-service facilities and amenities before and after using them.

   - Leaving furniture, such as picnic tables and chairs, as you find them—they were likely appropriately spaced by the campground operator to encourage social distancing.

   - Maintaining social distancing among members of different households and observe gathering-size limitations if multiple households are using your campsite/campfire. Where maintaining
social distancing is not possible with people from other households, limit individual campsites to use by members of a single household.

- Following directional signage – e.g., wait your turn and capacity limits – designed to maintain social distancing in buildings, at overlooks, and around other confining spaces.

8. **Be well informed.**

- Visit Minnesota’s [COVID-19 response web site](https://www.covid19response.mn.gov), [Stay Safe MN](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/staysafermn.html) and [MDH guidelines](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/) for information and tips to help keep yourself, your family, and the community healthy.

- Visit the [Outdoor Recreation and Facilities Guidelines](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/covid-19-outdoor-recreation-guidelines.html) for up-to-date Outdoor Recreation Guidelines.

---

**Resources**


Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81 – [health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html)


MDH Facemasks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – [health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks)


Minnesota Department of Health – [health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html)

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Updates, Templates and Instructions – [dli.mn.gov/updates](https://www.dli.mn.gov/updates)


State of Minnesota Get Tested web site – [https://mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/index.jsp](https://mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/index.jsp)
