

ALASKA TOURISM INDUSTRY PROTOCOLS



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INTRODUCTION

Travel in Alaska in the “new normal” following the COVID-19 pandemic will be focused on ensuring trust from travelers, our staff and teams. The Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) along with industry representatives, state health officials and partnering organizations must provide leadership and guidance to Alaska’s tourism businesses as they are allowed to re-open safely, across our state.

The information in this document reflects the feedback and advice gathered from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and White House guidelines: “Opening Up America Again” and in consultation with community representatives and state public health experts.

ATIA has developed these guidelines by bringing together representatives from various travel industry sectors—hotels, lodges, airlines, transportation companies, rental cars, visitor centers, meeting venues, event producers, travel advisors, cruise lines, tour guides, etc.— and working with community partners, health and medical experts, to reach agreement on a core set of health and safety protocols the industry may adapt to their businesses. The guidelines included in this document are meant to have wide applicability across Alaska’s diverse tourism industry. At the same time and in some instances, the suggested techniques lean toward the most conservative suggestion. In certain cases, existing protocols from partnering organizations and the State of Alaska, were incorporated into this document and are noted. Any recommendations from this document are not meant to replace state and federal mandates.

These tourism industry protocols represent Alaska’s travel community commitment toward the health and safety of our customers and employees. At the same time, we know we need a partnership with our customers, travelers themselves. Travelers must also follow health guidelines to do their part to help protect their families and those around them. We must all work together.

1. OVERALL GUIDANCE

Alaska's tourism community is committed to the health and safety of our teams, our families, our communities, and our guests. To continue to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, each business owner, employee, and organization represented are encouraged to:

Wash hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Washing hands can decrease the risk of transmission of respiratory viruses by -50%.

Use face coverings

- Use masks, face coverings or other personal protective equipment (PPE) like cleaning gloves, cloth face coverings, etc. (cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance). It is important for staff to use face coverings as people could spread the virus to others even if they do not feel sick.
- Everyone should wear face coverings when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other supplies.
- Continue to practice social distancing between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

Social distance

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, even inside your home and place of work. If possible, maintain the appropriate distance, as noted by local or state guidelines, between the person who is sick and other household or team members.
- Maintain social distancing, as appropriate, between yourself and other people outside of your home and or place of work.
- Do not gather in groups (follow local and state guidance on group size).
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings, until it is safe to do so.
- Keeping distance from others is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting sick. This includes older people and those with underlying health conditions.

Cover coughs and sneezes

- Remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Clean and disinfect

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces routinely. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks, etc.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them. Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Then, use a household disinfectant.

Stay at home if you are sick

- If you don't feel well, be kind to your neighbors and fellow travelers and choose to stay at home. Even if you feel you have mild symptoms related to COVID-19, stay close to home and do not visit public areas or use public transportation.
- If you are feeling ill, take care of yourself, get rest and stay hydrated.
- Stay in touch with your doctor about your symptoms and get medical attention if any symptoms worsen.

2. SOCIAL DISTANCING

Travel experiences are inherently a social activity, however there are ways you can adapt and keep distance between your staff and guests. For example,

- Guided group size should meet any updated capacity mandates identified by state and community guidance; however, group sizes may differ based on space, capacity and equipment.
- Social distancing of 6 feet apart when grouped, should be maintained if possible.
- Social distancing of 10 feet apart should occur when transitioning guests, except in the instance of a medical emergency.
- Passengers and/or guests from the same household or trusted group are not required to social distance from each other. A “trusted group” is one where each individual shows no signs of illness and have already been in and/or maintained contact with each other indicating they are taking responsibility for traveling together. Same household and trusted groups should all be pre-screened.
- Use individual water bottles and pre-packaged snacks (no sharing).
- Wear face coverings for employees and guests, when not engaged in an activity or moving.

Physical Barriers

- Place signage or floor tape for lines and/or in common areas, discouraging congregating in groups (follow state and local guidance).
- On guided tours with food service, a business should have clear protective barriers, seating that is spaced to social distance guidelines and protective gear - gloves and face coverings – for staff.
- Use Plexiglas or a like barrier at check-in locations, and food service areas when possible.
- Adapt any common areas where your guests may gather by limiting the number of employees and customers in certain areas.
- Provide entry and exit, where possible, through different routes using one-way traffic.
- Tour businesses should stagger arrival and pick up times of customers to limit contact.

Attendance

- Limit the number of participants per group to state health and or community guidelines.
- Multiple groups can make reservations with a tour business and if they are strategically managed to maintain distance requirements before embarking on the tour and/or experience.
- Tour operations can accept groups of household members or “trusted” groups if no signs of illness.

- Businesses are encouraged to have each member of a trusted group sign a waiver indicating they agree to travel together.

3. HYGIENE

As travel and tourism businesses start to re-open, it is critical employees and guests know your business is employing enhanced efforts to keep people healthy. Travel businesses should adopt health screening policies or processes requiring all employees to monitor their health and report any changes and signs of the coronavirus. Travelers also have a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and can work with their tourism vendor to report their own health conditions through screening forms and waivers.

Tourism employers

- Encourage all employees and guests to wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available upon entry to any facility and/or joining an activity.
- Encourage employees to not report to work if they are ill and/or showing any symptoms.
- Require staff to self-isolate if showing symptoms of COVID-19, if awaiting test results, or if diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Review policies to more easily enable employees to stay home when sick or when possibly exposed to the coronavirus. This could also include updating sick leave policies and allowing employees to stay home to care for sick family members or to fulfill self-isolation requirements.
- Designate an on-site employee responsible for monitoring and following processes.

Travel businesses should offer resources and education to their customers, including:

- Signage communicating COVID-19 symptoms.
- Posted or online guidance to local public health resources in case testing or treatment is needed.
- Posted or online materials describing good health practices to protect themselves and others.
- Communications encouraging travelers to stay home if they are sick and to postpone travel until they are well.
- Communications stating clear rates to customers, including potential additional fees which will be passed on to clients (testing fees, etc.)

4. STAFFING AND OPERATIONS

Travel and tourism businesses can adapt their staffing and operations to help mitigate the spread of the coronavirus and provide a safe environment for employees and guests. Tourism businesses are encouraged to:

Staffing & Operations

- Identify a workplace coordinator or designee who is responsible for COVID-19 issues and following business processes and/or updated policies.
- Wear face coverings and/or masks, especially when interacting with guests during non-activity.
- Communicate with your vendors providing services and/or products about their employees' health, screening and sanitizing procedures.
- Educate both employees and guests through ongoing training on your business response plans, CDC guidance and health mandates.
- Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if an employee becomes symptomatic at the worksite.
- Review, update, or develop workplace plans to consider alternative work schedules, extended stay at home policies (when feasible), and non-punitive leave policies for sick employees.
- Consider regular health checks and screening for your staff.
- Ensure flexible leave policies for staff who need to stay home due to school/childcare closures.
- Assess your essential activities and the reliance others and the community have on your services or products; be prepared to adjust business practices if needed to maintain your operations (e.g. identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or postpone experiences temporarily).
- Develop response plans and share best practices with partners in your industry and communities – trade associations, chambers of commerce – to improve community response efforts. Share these plans also with local municipalities, public health officials and incident command teams.
- Consider installing physical barriers, such as transparent screens and temporary walls, where appropriate.
- Limit non-essential work travel.
- Limit staff physical contact with customers, when applicable, through online ordering, curbside delivery, automated services, etc.

Employee Housing

If your tourism business has employee housing, social distancing, hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting guidelines continue to apply to your team members' facilities. You might consider establishing different shifts to reduce the total number of employees at your location at a given time. Additional considerations:

Shared living spaces, kitchens, food prep areas, dining rooms, laundry facilities, restrooms

- Only house family members in same rooms and/or limit the number of staff in each living space.
- Limit family-style eating with your teams.
- Do not allow shared food, drinks, drinking glasses, cups or utensils.
- Non-disposable food service items used, should be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- Post guidelines for doing laundry and handling of dirty laundry (uniforms). Limit the number of people who can enter and utilize shared laundry rooms and/or facilities.
- Sinks, showers and toilets could be an infection source. Avoid having personal toiletries remain in shared spaces. Totes can be used for personal items so they do not touch shared surfaces.

In Housing

- COVID-19 prevention supplies should be provided in common areas, such as soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol, tissues, trash baskets, and, if possible, cloth face coverings that are washed or discarded after each use.
- Non-essential volunteers and visitors in shared areas should be limited or avoided.
- Staff should avoid entering residents' rooms or living quarters unless it is necessary.
- Staff should use virtual communications and check-ins (phone or video chat), as appropriate.

5. CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Protecting against the spread of COVID-19 requires changing the way we clean and disinfect our spaces, equipment and our operating environment. Specific practices will vary from one tourism sector to another. Overall cleaning and disinfecting procedures should follow leading public health guidelines; and may need to be consistently updated and adapted. To promote the health and safety of our customers and employees, every segment of the travel industry should implement these general procedures:

- More frequent & diligent hand washing by all employees and, in the absence of hand washing, make frequent use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol).
- Sanitizing more frequently, using products and disinfectants meeting requirements for effectiveness against COVID-19; special attention to high-touch surfaces.
- Providing hand sanitizer in public areas and before entering a building, boarding a vessel or vehicle or train; or engaging in an activity.
- Modifying business hours to carry out thorough sanitation and disinfection procedures as guided by state and/or local authorities (this may include overnight cleaning or operating with a 72-hour “break” to implement cleaning procedures).
- If a business cannot close for a period of 72 consecutive hours per week to allow for natural deactivation of the virus, on-site personnel should perform comprehensive disinfection of all common surfaces; cleaning and disinfecting must be conducted in compliance with CDC protocols on a weekly basis.
- New training for employees on implementing these measures, including an assigned “quality control” lead staff member.

6. MITIGATION

Travel and tourism businesses can prepare for COVID-19 with comprehensive mitigation plans in the case of employees or guests becoming ill with the coronavirus. These plans can also support community efforts if their destination is experiencing increased cases or the spread of COVID-19. Businesses are encouraged to develop mitigation plans now, so they are prepared as economies re-open in their local and regional areas as well as statewide in Alaska.

Tourism business owners should know where to find local and state information on COVID-19, including the level of COVID-19 cases, most up-to-date health mandates and travel advisories.

Establish a mitigation plan for employees and guests who may get ill with a return-to work plan following CDC guidance: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-businessresponse.html.

***Mitigation checklist for tourism businesses**

- Prepare a Crisis Management / Action Plan, that includes local and state health official guidelines on what do to if you, an employee or guest gets sick (isolation procedures; return-to-work plans; etc.)
- Develop communications for your guests (rescheduling or refund messaging, open or closure notices, screening forms & logs, etc.) Keep website and other social media updated and current
- Schedule meetings with local health officials, staff or management teams, trade associations, vendors, colleagues, mentors
- Update liability waivers to include exposure to an airborne virus or illness
- Draft plans or protocols that meet industry standards for dealing with COVID-19
- If you plan on operating, research Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies for your business
- Monitor state and community mandates and guidelines

**Swan Mountain Consulting Group*

***Isolation versus Quarantine**

Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been *exposed* to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from their state or local health department.

Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are *sick* with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. People who are in isolation should stay home until it is safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific “sick room” or area and using a separate bathroom (if available).

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation.html>

7. TRAVELERS

The Alaska tourism community is committed to the health and safety of our teams, families, communities and guests. We know it takes a commitment from our guests to help stop the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). COVID-19 has been reported in all states. It is important to recognize that travel, while can be done with safety measures in mind, does increase your chances of getting and spreading diseases like COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends you stay home and practice social distancing especially if you are at a higher risk of severe illness. Do not travel if you are sick or travel with someone who is sick.

What travelers can do

- Stay home when you are sick. This will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub your hands together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with others and practice social distancing.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid close contact, especially if you or someone you know is at a higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.
- Be aware of various state and community travel and health guidelines.

Additionally, **Alaska's tourism community** will work with you to help mitigate the spread of the coronavirus:

- Guests must complete and sign a health screening form (see example questions on p. 16).
- Guests must agree not to participate in the tour activity if they exhibit current symptoms of COVID 19; have been in contact with someone that has tested positive with a case of COVID-19 or been in contact with someone in the past 14 days; are a recovering case and are less than 14 days from the onset.
- Guests must comply with state of Alaska Health Mandate 10.1 which requires out of state travelers to self-quarantine and remain symptom free for 14 days (extended until June 2, 2020).

TEMPLATES

NOTICE

[YOUR BUSINESS NAME] has chosen to re-open our business to guests.

The health and safety of our teams and guests is a priority. **[YOUR BUSINESS NAME]** is complying with all state and municipal laws, ordinances, government rules, advisories and regulations as well as those from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) related to COVID-19 and the health and safety of those working, visiting and entering this property.

Any **guest or visitor** to **[YOUR BUSINESS NAME]** property and/or facility that exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 may be asked to reschedule their visit.

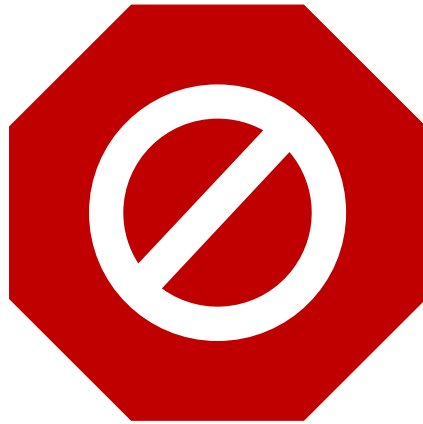
Thank you and stay safe and healthy.

[YOUR BUSINESS NAME / LOGO]

EXAMPLE COVID-19 PRE-SCREENING SCRIPT & QUESTIONS:

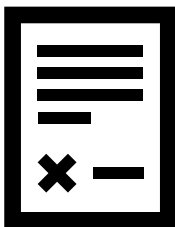
“Welcome to [YOUR BUSINESS], Mr. Smith. We’re glad you’re here! As part of our ongoing effort to ensure you are staying in a healthy environment and to comply with the COVID-19 health mandates issued by the State of Alaska, we have a couple of quick questions I need to cover with you as you’re checking in with us today.”

1. What is your first and last name?
2. Have you or anyone in your household or trusted traveling group experienced cold or flu like symptoms within the last 21 days?
3. Have you or any household or trusted group member had a fever in the last 72 hours?
4. Have you or anyone in your household or trusted group traveled within the last 30 days? If Yes, from where?
5. Have you been tested for COVID-19?
6. If you have been tested for COVID-19, are you awaiting results currently?
7. If you tested negative to COVID-19, then skip to the next question.
8. If you tested positive for COVID-19, have you been cleared of the virus and now considered recovered by the health department?
9. Have you been in contact with any person known to have tested positive for COVID-19 or awaiting results of the COVID-19 test?



Pause and help us keep you and our teams healthy

Please complete a **health screening form &** if you have any of these symptoms . . .



Fever

Cough

Shortness of breath

New loss of taste or smell

Muscle pain

Headache

Sore throat

We ask that you reschedule and come back again soon.
Thank you.

INSERT YOUR
COMPANY
LOGO HERE



REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- **US Travel Association:** https://www.ustravel.org/sites/default/files/media_root/document/HealthandSafetyGuidance.pdf
- **American Hotel & Lodging Association:** <https://www.ahla.com/sites/default/files/SafeStayReport.pdf>
- **Passenger Vessel Association:** [Click here to access these guidelines](#)
- **CHARR:** <https://www.alaskacharr.com/coronavirus-and-hospitality.html>
- **Sport fishing:** <https://krsa.com/covid-19/angler-resources/>
- **World Travel & Tourism Council:** <https://wttc.org/en-gb/COVID-19>
- **Alaska Travel Industry Association:** <https://www.alaskatia.org/coronavirus-guidance>

State of Alaska's Reopen Alaska Responsibly Plan: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/reopen/>

Center for Disease Control (CDC) Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

- List N Disinfectants for use against SARS – CoV-2: www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2
- CDC hand washing materials: https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fhandwashing%2Fresources.html
- Hand washing and cleanliness posters: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>

Mitigation Plans

- Implementation of Mitigation Strategies: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>
- Guidance on preparing workspaces: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>