



June 3, 2021

**MEMO: COVID-19 Phase 3 Tips for outdoor events in Seattle city parks**

Please contact **Seattle Parks Event Scheduling Unit** regarding holding an event in a city park.

Information is available at [www.Seattle.gov/Parks/Reserve](http://www.Seattle.gov/Parks/Reserve)

The unit may be contacted at: 206-684-4080 ext. 3, or [ParkUsePermits@seattle.gov](mailto:ParkUsePermits@seattle.gov)

**Overview:**

There are many types of outdoor events that can be held at city parks; some have specific guidance in the Governor's COVID-19 Guidelines, and some do not.

**The following information is intended to highlight items on what is allowed by the Governor's COVID-19 Guidelines which seem relevant for events held at city parks.** We encourage event organizers to review not only the documents listed below but consider whether other guidance documents may apply to your event. Please note that Seattle Parks and Recreation is not a public health agency and the information in this memo is only intended to highlight some of the items in the Governor's Guidelines. A list of guidance documents is available at:

[www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers](http://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers)

**Current policy:**

A. The Mayor's Office has approved use of the Governor's Guidelines for Phasing. Currently we are in Phase 3 but may move to another Phase at any time. Whatever Phase we are in at the start of the event or activity are the Guidelines that will apply.

B. The Governor's Office has now posted updated outdoor event gathering guidelines with details for Phase 3 (previous guidelines only had details for Phase 2).

C. These developments provide the ability for Seattle Parks' Event Scheduling Unit to begin permitting applications for events that comply with Phase 2 and Phase 3 guidelines (as opposed to Phase 1 which allowed only up to 5 people) and provide some tips on details relevant to events in city parks - though there are many details not addressed in the guidelines.

**I. Key info from the Governor's Guideline items for Phase 2 and 3:**

**Attendance:**

1. Phase 2 allows for outdoor events to have up to 200 participants or 25% of what the space can hold, whichever is less.

Phase 2 also limits groups to a maximum-size of 15 people limited to two households per group. Each group of 15 must always be physically distanced six feet apart from other groups.

Phase 3 allows for outdoor events to have up to 400 participants or 25% of what the space can hold, whichever is less.

Phase 3 also limits groups to a maximum-size of 15 people limited to two households per group. Each group of 15 must always be physically distanced six feet apart from other groups.

2. There are also limits on attendance based on square footage per person. Whichever attendance is lower is the attendance rule that applies (either 200 or 400, or square footage).

Outdoor capacity: Each fair/special event shall calculate the number of participants allowed at one time by using at least 72 sq feet per participant so required six feet physical distancing can be maintained. For example: a space that is 100 x 200 feet = 20,000 sq feet divided by 72 = 277 people at any one time. For comparison, an acre is 43,560 square feet, or about 200 feet x 217 feet and can hold up to 605 people using the square foot rule.

Only the space reserved for guests and where event activities take place can be counted toward the acreage needed for physical distancing (for instance, cannot count parking area or unused areas of the park as part of acreage). All participants and vendors are to be included in calculating the number of people allowed at one time (staff and volunteers are excluded).

3. All individuals (ages 5 and up) in attendance must wear a face covering in accordance with state, county, and venue regulations. This rule takes precedence over recent CDC guidance for wearing masks outdoors.

4. The venue (event organizer) must provide clear communications to renters, artistic partners, event producers, and other visiting groups prior to arrival regarding the venue sanitation and safety expectations. In addition, the venue must post signage (around the event space) that clearly outlines which spaces may be used by renters.

5. Consider one-way foot traffic and clear directions to better control the flow of guests throughout the event, especially in certain heavily used and/or narrow thoroughways to allow for better guest separation. Limit entry to crowded areas to allow for appropriate physical distancing [More detail is in the Guidelines for Farmers Markets in the "COVID-19 Guidance for Food Workers & Food Establishments" PDF].

6. Implement timed and/or advanced reservation ticketing systems and pre-assigned seating or activity areas, whenever possible, to stagger guest visits and help maintain physical distances. (Many online ticketing websites allow organizers to have 'free' tickets as a way of managing reservations and keeping track of how many people plan to attend.)

7. The event organizer shall:

**Communication:**

- Designate a point of contact to ensure the "Healthy Washington –Roadmap to Recovery" Proclamation 20-25.12 (et seq.) and requirements per Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) and Health Department, are met with a written safety plan specific to each venue that meets the minimum requirements as set forth by the Healthy Washington plan.
- Provide clear communications to patrons prior to arrival regarding safety expectations.
- Post signage outdoors and inside that declares expectations for the visitors to enter the venue, including caution to physical distance, wash hands, use hand sanitizer, wear a face covering, and other safety precautions.
- Clean daily and adhere to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for cleaning and sanitation of public facilities are followed. Clean and sanitize all occupied areas between performances.
- Frequently sanitize high touch surfaces including counter tops, doors, elevator buttons, and workstations, particularly during events.

- Install sanitation stations throughout the venue, including backstage and office spaces, that include hand sanitizer and wipes.
- Evaluate and adjust when possible, audience flow and general lobby spaces to maximize physical distancing and minimize engagement of high touch surfaces.
- Train and strategically place staff or volunteers to encourage flow and physical distancing of visitors.
- Identify, control, and limit congregation points in venues where staff and visitors may come into proximity.

## **II. Designing your event to comply with COVID-19 Guidelines.**

### **Mobile vs. Stationary attendee events:**

In an oversimplified way, events in city parks may be thought of as falling into one of two situations: events in which attendees are stationary, and events in which attendees are mobile.

**Events in which the attendees are stationary** may include outdoor movies and theater events. Organizers may wish to determine the boundaries of the seating area and measure to establish the total square footage of it to implement the attendance based on square footage from item 2 above. The ‘seating pod’ areas may have enough room for up to 15 people, and also be at least 6 feet apart from the next pod. This will result in a definite fixed number of total seating areas. The seating areas may be outlined on the natural grass/the ground using flour – which is biodegradable and generally not harmful to clothing or people (but should not be used on synthetic fields). Not every seating area will necessarily have 15 people: some may have 1 or 2 people who are quarantining together, some may have 4 or 5 people, and so on. The event organizer may wish to use an online ticketing system (in which the tickets may be free) as a way of allowing attendees to sign up in advance for the fixed number seating areas and indicate how many are in their group. This way event organizers can keep track of the total number of how many people are planning to attend, and also the total number of people in any one seating pod/area.

**Events in which the attendees are mobile** may include many of the typical community festival events held in parks. Organizers may wish to determine the boundaries of the activity area and measure to establish the total square footage of it to implement the attendance based on square footage from item 2 above. In addition, the ‘Farmers Market’ approach is suggested in the Governor’s Guidelines:

“Consider one-way foot traffic and clear directions to better control the flow of guests throughout the event, especially in certain heavily used and/or narrow throughways to allow for better guest separation. Limit entry to crowded areas to allow for appropriate physical distancing.”

This suggests setting up your event layout as a sort of pathway defined by booths on either side facing to the center of the pathway with a clear entry point and exit point. This creates as one-way flow through your event. Booths can be a mix of vendors/sales, information/non-profits, and small-scale activity/entertainment. You can use yellow caution tape (available in many hardware stores) to wrap around the back/outside of the booths along with signage directing attendees to the entry point to help the public understand how to participate in your event. Vendors should be 6 feet from each other and from customers/the public.

Event staff/volunteers can be stationed at the entry and exit points with counters to keep track so that the total number of attendees in the event space at any one time does not exceed the number allowed by the square footage per person guideline (the staff may need to communicate with each other via cell phone etc.

during the event so that the exit point staff can let the entry point staff know when people leave so that more people may be allowed to enter).

**Small-scale activity/entertainment booths:**

The public is trained to gather in front of stages in a tightly clustered configuration for an extended period (an hour or more) depending on the musical artist or speaker featured. It may be difficult for an event organizer to prevent this behavior and keep groups of people at least 6 feet apart in front of a stage. A stage strategy may be to use the scenario above for events in which audiences are stationary to manage the number of attendees at a stage area and how far apart they are. However, this strategy may significantly use a significant portion of the total space an event organizer has for their entire event, and also may significantly affect the limit on total attendance at any one time. For instance, if the entire event space is 200 feet by 200 feet (40,000 square feet) then at 72 square feet per person, a maximum of 555 people could be allowed. But under Phase 3 Guidance, a maximum of 400 people are allowed at any one time, and for Phase 2 it is 200.

If an event organizer marks out areas for say 100 seating pods (which may hold up to 15 people each, and must 6 feet away from each other), with an average of 3 people sitting in each area, then 300 people will be at the stage with only 100 people allowed in the rest of the event (for 400 total as per Phase 3). Depending on the length of the stage activity (maybe 1 hour for a live band), this will significantly limit the total number of people who can be allowed into the event for the day.

An alternate strategy may be to have several smaller activity/entertainment booths placed around the event space which feature frequent small-scale audience participation activities. For instance, an activity booth could offer hands-on children's craft activities for 20 – 30 minutes per hour, or a dance instructor working with 10 -15 people guiding them in dance moves for 15 to 20 minutes twice per hour, or a solo or small group ensemble performance for 20 to 30 minutes per hour. The audiences would need to comply with the 15 person/2 household groups with 6 feet in-between guidance, which can be accommodated if enough space is provided on all sides of the activity booths. By having one or more small-scale activity/entertainment booths which repeat frequently throughout the event, this disperses the attendees throughout the space rather than clumping them together in front of a stage, and it also provides multiple timeslots for engagement activities rather than attendees feeling there is only one timeslot for the performer or speaker which they might miss out on.

**Consider live streaming your event:**

An additional strategy that can be used on its own or in addition to others is to livestream performances and speakers. Streaming technology is abundant and low-cost and live streaming can be successfully done from many cellphones. Streaming performances and speakers allows anyone with a cell phone to tune in from anywhere in the event space and beyond. It allows people who may be interested in your event but not comfortable attending in person to participate to an extent. Holding a hybrid event that is both in-person with streaming may also reduce the demand of people attending in person, so that there are not long lines of people waiting to enter your event. Since cell and wifi connectivity varies by location, it may be a good idea to test your connectivity devices in advance of your event to find out how well they work at the location.

**Other considerations:**

Event organizers should plan for how to discourage or disperse any crowds which are attracted to their event but which gather outside the designated event area. Additionally, event organizers should consider

distancing and spacing of restroom/porta-potty facilities to be 6 feet apart, as well as have a supply of masks and hand sanitizer available for participants who arrive without them.

### **Governor's COVID-19 Guidelines**

The items above are highlights intended to provide broad outlines of the Governor's COVID-19 Guidance relevant to outdoor gatherings in city parks. More details are in the following documents; please review them. The Governor's guidelines document that are most helpful for outdoor public gatherings in city parks are:

COVID-19 Fairs and Special Events Guidance

COVID-19 Guidance for Food Workers & Food Establishments - in particular the Guidelines for Farmers Markets (page 11)

the PDFs are available here:

[www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers](http://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers)

Some relevant additional information may be found in the following guidance documents depending on the details of a particular type of event:

COVID19 Performing Arts Theater Sector Guidance

COVID19 Fitness and Training

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