

GUIDANCE ON NEW FLEXIBILITIES REGARDING OCCUPANCY AND SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR COMMERCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AND OTHER PARTNERS
July 2, 2021

PURPOSE

On June 1, 2021 the National Park Service (NPS) issued new guidance providing flexibilities regarding occupancy standards and social distancing including for spectator events and operations in small or tight spaces. These changes went into effect immediately. This document describes changes which may be relevant to commercial service providers including concessioners, lease holders and commercial use authorization holders, and other partners.

Occupancy Standards

Under Section 5.2.A of the DOI COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, “no DOI indoor workplace or visitor experience facility, venue, or other areas where visitors typically congregate in large crowds should operate above 25% of normal occupancy during periods of significant or high community transmission as defined by [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] (CDC).”

Update

The NPS now has the discretion to waive or modify that requirement in facilities managed directly by the NPS, as well in NPS facilities managed by concessioners, lease holders, commercial use authorization holders and other partners.

In cases where a superintendent determines through a completed DOI COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool that it is appropriate, they now may exercise their discretion to modify or lift occupancy limitations for indoor workplaces, visitor experience facilities, venues, or other areas where visitors typically congregate in large crowds. Such analyses and decisions should be made considering local and state epidemiological data, as well as policies in place in local jurisdictions and nearby NPS units. Providing space for physical distancing should still be encouraged. If a park is moving from a reduced occupancy posture to an unrestricted posture, the superintendent should rescind administrative orders establishing reduced occupancy.

Superintendents are also authorized to modify, impose, or reimpose occupancy restrictions at any level relative to normal occupancy as appropriate.

Small or Tight Spaces

Section 5.2.B of the DOI COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan states that, “To the extent practicable, individuals will be asked to maintain a distance of at least six feet from others at all times whether indoors or outdoors, consistent with CDC guidelines, including in offices, conference rooms and all other communal and workspaces.”

Update

The NPS now may waive the requirement to maintain social distancing in small or tight spaces that may include but are not limited to the following:

- Historic house tour stops where there is limited space
- Tight space on stairwells where visitors must pass each other
- Exhibit halls where visitor circulation space is limited
- Elevators that are integral to visitor services where space is limited
- Tight spaces on observation decks
- Tight spaces in caves along routes accessed by visitors
- Small visitor center bookstores and other retail spaces, ranger stations, or similar spaces
- Small kitchens or other support facilities that contribute to visitor experience

In cases where a superintendent determines through a completed DOI COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool that lifting social distancing requirements in small or tight spaces is appropriate, they may also implement supplemental public health mitigation measures that exceed standards required by the DOI, including but not limited to the following:

- Requiring the wearing of face masks for ALL people occupying these spaces, not just those whose vaccination status is unknown or who are not yet fully vaccinated
- Ensuring that visitors do not exceed the cumulative 15-minute standard for close proximity to others
- Reducing occupancy in some spaces
- Controlling access through timed ticketing
- Instituting reservations or other crowd control tactics

Spectator Events

Section 5.2.B of the DOI COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan states that, “To the extent practicable, individuals will be asked to maintain a distance of at least six feet from others at all times whether indoors or outdoors, consistent with CDC guidelines, including in offices, conference rooms and all other communal and workspaces.”

Update

The NPS now may waive the requirement to maintain social distancing for performing arts and other spectator events. In cases where a superintendent determines through a completed DOI COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool that lifting social distancing requirements for a spectator event is appropriate, they may also implement supplemental public health mitigation measures that exceed standards required by DOI, including but not limited to the following:

- Requiring the wearing of face masks for ALL attendees, not just those who are not yet fully vaccinated
- Ensuring that visitors do not exceed the cumulative 15-minute standard for close proximity to others
- Reducing occupancy in some spaces
- Controlling access through timed ticketing

- Instituting reservations or other crowd control tactics

Implementation

Concessioners, lease holders, commercial use authorization holders, and other partners must coordinate with superintendents to identify those locations in their assigned facilities where they would like to waive social distancing requirements. They must work with the superintendent to identify any supplemental mitigation measures that may be required in those locations. Action to relax social distancing requirements may not be implemented until the superintendent approves the action. Superintendents are authorized to modify, impose, or reimpose occupancy restrictions at any level relative to normal occupancy as appropriate.