

**ALASKA TOURISM INDUSTRY
PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES**





TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	03
1. GENERAL GUIDANCE	04
2. SOCIAL DISTANCING	06
3. STAFFING AND OPERATIONS	07
4. CLEANING & DISINFECTING	09
5. MITIGATION PLANS	10
6. TRAVELER GUIDANCE	14
7. REFERENCES & RESOURCES	16

INTRODUCTION

Travel in Alaska in the “new normal” during 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 are providing collaborative recommendations that can be shared throughout our industry and travel community. The travel industry has continued its commitment to safety during the pandemic, and has shown resilience when faced with the new challenges it imposed. As we prepare for a natural transition to this “new normal,” the goal remains the same– to work together to become stronger as we recover.

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.) to work with community partners and health and medical experts to reach agreement on a core set of health and safety protocols the industry may adapt to their businesses. The individual insight of participants was combined with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and White House guidelines: “Opening Up America Again”.

The guidelines included in this document are intended to provide 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. In an ever-changing landscape any recommendations from this document are not meant to replace state and federal mandates. In addition, our industry can do our part to ensure travelers are aware of and encouraged to follow health guidelines that may differ across communities.

These tourism industry protocols represent Alaska’s travel community’s commitment toward the health and safety of our customers and employees and are meant to be used as a resource during these trying times. We must all work together, and ATIA is proud to represent statewide leadership of the travel and tourism industry in Alaska.

1. GENERAL 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, K95 or KN95 masks, cloth face coverings, etc. (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.
- Encourage the use of 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. A 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 have [symptoms of COVID-19](#), get [tested](#).
 - While waiting for [test results](#) stay away from others, including staying apart from those living in your household.
 - [Self-tests](#) are one of several options for [testing for the virus that causes COVID-19](#) and may be more convenient than laboratory-based tests and point-of-care tests.
 - You can visit your [state](#), [tribal](#), [local](#), and [territorial health department's website](#) to look for the latest local information on testing sites.
- 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.

Vaccinations and Boosters

- [COVID 19-vaccines are effective](#) and can lower your risk of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.
- COVID-19 vaccines also help prevent serious illness and death in children and adults even if [they do get COVID-19](#).
- CDC Recommends
 - Everyone ages 5 years and older should get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they can.
 - To get the most protection, get all recommended doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. Take [all precautions](#) until [you are fully vaccinated](#).
 - Everyone ages 16 years and older can get a [booster shot](#) either 6 months after their initial Pfizer or Moderna series, or 2 months after their initial Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.
 - All currently approved or authorized COVID-19 vaccines are [safe](#) and [effective](#) and [reduce your risk](#) of severe illness.
- Encourage eligible employees and guests to get vaccinated to reduce the spread of disease, which helps protect those who get vaccinated and the people around them.
- CDC recommendations for testing, quarantine and isolation differ depending on if you are up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccination.
 - Employers should know the differences in the CDC guidance based on vaccination status and incorporate the guidance into their mitigation protocols.
 - For the full CDC guidance on vaccination, boosters and additional considerations for the unvaccinated [here](#).

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 do not need 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 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 are encouraged to 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.
- Tour operations can accept groups of household members or “trusted” groups if there are 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. 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 may include shared living spaces, kitchens, food prep areas, dining rooms, laundry facilities, restrooms.

- Only house family members in the same rooms and/or limit the number of staff in each living space.
- Limit family-style eating with your teams.
- Encourage employees not to share 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 can be made available 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.
- Consider limiting non-essential volunteers and visitors in shared areas.
- 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.

4. 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, we encourage every segment of the travel industry to 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.

5. MITIGATION

For travel and tourism businesses to operate safely, it is critical that employees and visitors know your business is employing enhanced efforts to keep people healthy. Travel businesses should consider adopting health screening policies or processes requiring all employees to monitor their health and report any changes and/or 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 protocols.
- Create clear guidelines for employees regarding mask-wearing and vaccine and/or testing status.

Travel businesses may 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, transportation to healthcare for rural areas, etc.)

Resources can be found in the Ready Together Member Toolkit at [AlaskaTIA.org](https://www.alaskaTIA.org)

MITIGATION PLANS

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 for safe tourism 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 your business in cooperation with your teams, your community public health officials, your industry colleagues and others as you adapt your business operations due to COVID-19.

Mitigation checklist for tourism businesses - *Swan Mountain Consulting Group*

- Prepare a Crisis Management / Action Plan, that includes local and state health official guidelines on what to do 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, etc.)
- Create screening forms & logs (example provided below)
- 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
- Ensure you have enough Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies for your business
- Monitor state and community mandates and guidelines

Example Mitigation Plan

If an employee or guest exhibits symptoms or has been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19:

- Isolate the person from other employees and guests (determine where on or off-site they can safely isolate themselves from others)
- Require the person to be tested for COVID-19
- Limit contact with other people until they receive a negative test result
- Immediately require other people to wear masks and practice social distancing regardless of current state or federal guidelines and mandates

If an employee or guest tests positive for COVID-19:

- Isolate for 5 days and if they are asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours), follow that by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter. (CDC Update 12/27/21: This change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after).
- Monitor patient status (temperature and vital signs) as well as patient symptoms
- Mandate testing for all persons who have come in contact with the COVID-positive employee or visitor (self-isolate while awaiting test results).
- Notify appropriate agencies, employees, and other visitors of results while maintaining HIPAA protection

Additional Considerations

Consider options for self-isolation for both employees and visitors (these may be different).

- On-site
- Local hotel or other lodging
- If there are no local options, identify nearest community where lodging is available
- Nearest healthcare and hospital facilities (especially in rural areas)

How are your guests arriving? Consider:

- Which airports they are traveling through
- If they are part of a larger tour plan
- Whether they have reservations booked through another tour operator

Accessibility to healthcare

- Is there a hospital or other healthcare facility nearby? If not, communicate this with your guests and determine protocol for early detection of positive cases
- Maintain list of nearest testing sites
- If you suspect a guest or employee has COVID-19 (or has tested positive) are there systems in place for isolating on-site? If not, consider alternative options in the area.
- Encourage visitors and guests to be respectful of the lands and areas they are visiting, including following local COVID-19 guidelines that may differ throughout their trip.

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 recently 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?

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>

6. 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 COVID-19. It is important to recognize that travel, while it 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.

Traveling as Families with Children

For families traveling with children, tourism businesses may want to consider incorporating into their business operations, steps geared more for family and children needs in the effort to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In general, as with all travelers, be consistent in talking with kids about everyday actions to help keep them healthy. This includes conversations about hand washing, staying away from people who are sick and covering their coughs and sneezes with their elbows or tissues. Be clear, direct and honest with younger and older children when talking about general hygiene. Provide constant and gentle reminders to children about social distancing and hand washing. Kids learn by routine and watching adults' actions as well.

- Other business adaptations to consider when welcoming travelers with children:
- Designated hazardous waste bins for diapers and other baby-related trash.
- Gloves for parents to change babies and to throw away in designated waste containers.
- Wash stations that are sized for small people, like lower sinks and/or hand sanitizer stations with signage especially for children to “wash your hands here.”
- Posted signs with pictures instead of words describing hand washing, covering sneezes and coughs and other general hygiene practices.
- Having pre-wrapped snacks for kids or ask parents to bring their own.
- Designating a staff person to be your “kid” manager to watch for kids grouping together or redirecting kids toward washing hands, etc.
- Be clear about your business and/or organization’s policy on wearing masks and give clear direction to families about this policy. If possible, provide face coverings sized for kids and adults.
- Demonstrate during pre-trip or pre-experience talks, what “6 feet” looks like using relevant Alaska examples (e.g. 10 salmon, 5 life jackets, etc.)

7. REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Federal Resources

CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>

CDC COVID-19 Travel Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

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>

State Resources

Alaska DHSS COVID-19 Homepage: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/epi/id/pages/covid-19/default.aspx>

Alaska DHSS COVID-19 Guidance: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/epi/id/pages/covid-19/guidance.aspx>

Alaska DHSS COVID-19 Data Dashboard: <https://alaska-coronavirus-vaccine-outreach-alaska.dhss.hub.arcgis.com/>

Alaska DHSS COVID-19 Travel Guidance: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/epi/id/pages/covid-19/travel.aspx>

Health Advisories: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-advisories/>

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

Local Resources (specifically for rural communities where members receive information from a single entity)

Tribal Health Organizations: <https://www.ihs.gov/alaska/tribalhealthorganizations/>

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>

Tourism 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:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/1f129eb3601/ddf55c83-4d6b-4158-b6f9-e42cfd1b851d.pdf>

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>

Outdoor Industry Association: https://outdoorindustry.org/covid-19-resources-outdoor-industry/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=covid19