

INDUSTRY GUIDANCE FOR SAFELY REOPENING: CAMPGROUNDS



BACKGROUND

The purpose of this document is to provide direction and information about best practices for Minnesota developed campground operators as they prepare to reopen 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 in 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. When the State of Minnesota allows developed campgrounds to reopen, these guidelines are expected to become part of the conditions of operating, and campground operators must conform their business operations to these guidelines. Additional direction may be provided from the following (see Resources section for applicable websites):

- ▶ Executive Orders
- ▶ Outdoor Recreation Guidelines issued jointly by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- ▶ MDH and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) public health guidance

- ▶ Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) guidance on reopening businesses.

No operator is required to open developed campground facilities when reopening is authorized. In planning for reopening, operators should carefully consider phased reopening to ensure that their facilities and staff are ready with detailed operational plans and training and they have the necessary signage, personal protective equipment, and other supplies necessary to ensure safe operations. 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 Department of Labor and Industry website for updated templates and instructions.
- 2. Single and multiple households.** Individual campsites, including those in developed campgrounds and remote and dispersed campsites, may be made available for recreational use by members of the same household. Larger group sites may be made available for multiple household groups at reduced capacity to ensure

maximum group size is not exceeded and social distancing can be maintained. Please refer to the most current Executive Orders and MDH guidance for information on COVID-19 related group size limitations.

3. Common spaces and services. Communal services and amenities, such as visitor centers, amphitheaters, large pavilions, group centers, communal fire rings, playgrounds, and other facilities that congregate large groups should not be open for use until public health officials indicate it is safe for groups larger than 10 people to congregate. When allowed to be open, the operation of pools must conform to MDH guidance. If these facilities are located within or close to a camping area, these facilities should be clearly signed as closed to the public. Smaller picnic shelters, such as those that typically accommodate only small groups or are part of a group campsite, could remain open with posted social distancing-related restrictions (e.g., limit use to one household at a time, or no more than 10 people in a group, depending on the facility size).

4. Capacity and cleaning of facilities. Facilities and services, such as those listed below, may be available to the public if they can be operated consistent with MDH, CDC and DEED guidance (see in particular DEED’s Safely Returning to Work Guidance), including social distancing and cleaning protocols. Operators must implement enhanced cleaning protocols and minimize face-to-face check-in/check-out procedures. If social distancing and sanitation protocols consistent with MDH and CDC guidance are not possible, operators may have to limit capacity or close some of these facilities or amenities:

- Bathrooms/shower buildings (note that single-user bathroom facilities, and alternative storm shelters, must then be arranged)
- Laundry facilities
- Fish cleaning stations and docks
- Contact ranger stations
- Picnic shelters and areas, with reduced capacity
- Food service (must be licensed, and guidance for restaurants must be followed)
- Rental/loaner recreational equipment

If campground operators conclude that their bathroom and shower facilities cannot be maintained in a safe and sanitary manner consistent with COVID-19 guidelines, they may want to consider limiting use to one person or household at a time, or leaving these facilities closed and allowing only visitors in recreational camping vehicles with on-board bathrooms.



- 5. Special considerations for bathroom and shower facilities.** Operators should use the following in managing shower and bathroom buildings:
- Doors to multi-stall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching the handles, opening-devices, or powered door-operators with the hand, whenever possible. If the door cannot be opened without touching the handle or door-operator with the hand, the business must ensure a trash-receptacle is placed by the door to ensure a paper towel can be readily disposed of when operating the door. The location and positioning of waste-receptacles should not interfere with Life Safety requirements (e.g. egress, evacuation, emergency equipment) or any reasonable accommodations provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - For single restrooms, provide signage and materials (soap, paper towels and trash cans) for individuals to use without touching handles.
 - Disconnect or tape-off hand air dryers and provide paper towels in restrooms, provide hand sanitizer, or advise visitors that they should bring their own disposable towels.
 - Post signage reminding those in the facility to wash their hands.
 - Only allow shower use if there are partitions or else place signage to maintain proper physical distancing of six feet. Reinforce distancing in these areas with posted signs. If partitions or proper physical distancing of six feet is not possible, these facilities should be limited to use by one person/household at a time, or remain closed.

6. **Lodging facilities.** Camper cabins, yurts 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. Operators should increase turn-time for housekeeping and, where practical, allow facilities to remain vacant for 24-hours before thorough cleaning for the next guest. Please see [MDH Interim Guidance for Hotel Managers and Owners](#) for additional recommendations.
7. **Campground capacity.** Capacity limits for the overall recreational unit, based on designated parking spaces available, should be proactively enforced. Campground maximum occupancy should be based on the number of bathrooms open and available with social distancing (see bathroom/shower-to-campsite ratios identified in [MN Rules 4630.0900](#)). Operators should consult MDH guidelines when considering sanitation-related capacity limits. Bathroom availability may affect accessibility compliance, and should also be considered.
8. **Campsite spacing.** Spacing between campsites should be adequate to allow for social distancing. Some individual campsites may need to be closed to prevent campground overcrowding or to provide adequate distance between sites. As a best practice, it is recommended that campsites unscreened by vegetation be at least 50 feet apart from the centerlines of surrounding campsite spurs and the adjacent campsite, or at least 30 feet apart from the near sides of adjoining spurs.
9. **Visitor supplies.** To help visitors minimize their travel, consider having basic supplies on hand (e.g., spare toiletries, sunscreen, bug spray) so campers don't need to "run into town" to buy forgotten or depleted items. Keep in mind that if food is being sold or served, the proper license must be obtained prior to operation. See the [MDH licensing webpage](#).

Managing interactions among visitors and staff

1. **Visitor transactions.** To the maximum extent possible, provide and encourage the use of online payments or on-site pay stations for handling campsite reservations, fees, and permits, and retail transactions such as firewood, ice and other purchases. This will reduce visitor-staff interactions by eliminating the need for signatures and exchange of cash. This does not mean that cash cannot be accepted; rather, its use should be minimized and precautions taken to reduce the risk of virus transmission.
2. **COVID-19 screening.** Operators should screen all staff for COVID-19 prior to staff starting work duties. Screening should include all questions on the [MDH Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist](#), which is available on the [MDH website](#) in printable English, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish versions. Staff who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or who live with someone or have been in close contact with someone with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, should review CDC's [If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone](#) and should stay at home. Staff should consult [MDH guidelines](#) for when it is safe to return to work. Operators are encouraged to develop policies for screening visitors using the same questions and procedures and plan how they will address situations in which visitors become ill at the campground.
3. **Personal protective equipment.** Provide staff and volunteers with personal protective equipment such as gloves, goggles, face shields, and face masks as appropriate for the activity being performed.
4. **Staff and volunteer training.** Staff and volunteers, such as campground hosts, should be trained on social distancing and sanitation guidelines, 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.



5. Consistent information. Operators should develop and deploy clear and consistent messaging for visitors on social distancing, facility closures, building and site capacity limits, and expectations for visitor behavior. Operators should use this messaging when creating their own signage, posting information on websites, emails to customers, and other communications with the public. Some helpful resources include the following:

- [MDH Materials and Resources](#)
- [CDC Communication Resources](#)

6. Appropriate signage. Public informational signage should be posted, where appropriate, to encourage 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 group-size limitations and maximum occupancy with social distancing of at least six feet between individuals from different households.
- Sanitizing 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 cloth mask to protect others, and avoiding touching your face.

Managing new cleaning protocols

1. Required cleaning protocols. Developed campground operators must develop new 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 [MDH Interim Guidance for Hotel Managers and Owners](#), [CDC’s Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) and [CDC’s Resources for Parks and Recreational Activities](#). 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 ## times per day).

- 2. Staggered use.** Operators may want to consider staggered use (e.g., by campsite number) to facilitate implementation of enhanced cleaning and sanitation protocols.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Staying informed.** Regularly consult MDH, CDC and DEED guidance, 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.

When camping, visitors should follow these recommendations:

- 5. 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.
- 6. 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, paper towels/hand towels and toilet paper just to be sure.
- 7. Socially distance yourself.** To ensure that 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.
- 8. Recreate with your household.** Restrict use of your individual campsite/campfire to only those in your immediate household.

9. 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. Many programs and facilities will be canceled or closed, so check online resources for updated information about rules changes and closures so you know what to expect when you arrive.

10. 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 masks 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.
- Restricting use of your individual campsite/ campfire to only those in your immediate household.
- Following directional signage – e.g., wait your turn and capacity limits – that will promote social distancing in buildings, at overlooks, and around other confining spaces.

11. Be well informed.

- Continue to consult MDH Guidelines for up-to-date information on keeping yourself and your family healthy at www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html
- Visit the Minnesota DNR website for up-to-date Outdoor Recreation Guidelines at www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/covid-19-outdoor-recreation-guidelines.html



Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidelines – cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/park-administrators.html

EPA-approved Cleaning and Disinfecting Supplies and Procedures – epa.gov/coronavirus/guidance-cleaning-and-disinfecting-public-spaces-workplaces-businesses-schools-and-homes

Interim Guidance for Hotel Managers and Owners – health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/lodgingcleaning.pdf

Minnesota Administrative Rules for Toilet, Bathing and Laundry Facilities – revisor.mn.gov/rules/4630.0900/

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Safe Work Guidelines – mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/safework/

Minnesota Department of Health – health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Updates, Templates and Instructions – dli.mn.gov/updates

National Park Service Coronavirus Updates – nps.gov/aboutus/news/public-health-update.htm

National Recreation and Park Association – nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/health-wellness/coronavirus-disease-2019

State of Minnesota Executive Orders – mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp

State of Minnesota Symptom Screener – mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/is-it-covid

State of Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Guidelines – dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/covid-19-outdoor-recreation-guidelines.html

U.S. Forest Service Coronavirus Updates – fs.usda.gov/about-agency/covid19-updates

mn.gov/deed/guidance

