

ICE RINK FACILITY

REOPENING GUIDELINES AFTER QUARANTINE

The federal government has issued new guidelines that provide the framework for reopening businesses throughout the country. These guidelines are governed by three distinct phases, and the government identifies which types of businesses are allowed to reopen in each of the phases, and also defines the required social distancing protocols to be adhered to for each business type. The overall list of businesses named includes:

- 1) Schools and Organized Youth Activities
- 2) Senior Living Facilities and Hospitals
- 3) Gyms
- 4) Bars
- 5) Large Venues

Ice rinks are unique in that their business model is driven by organized youth activities, but they also operate like a large venue. As a result, the new federal guidelines issued for both “organized youth activities” and “large venues” may apply to ice rinks. Accordingly, the following summarizes the guidelines for each phase relative to both organized youth sports and large venues:

- **PHASE ONE** - This first stage allows “large venues” such as restaurants, movie theaters, sporting venues, and places of worship to reopen under “**strict**” social distancing protocols. However, under Phase One, the federal government guidelines recommend that schools and organized youth activities remain closed.
- **PHASE TWO** - In Phase Two, large venues can operate under “**moderate**” social distancing protocols, and organized youth sports can now reopen. There were no social distancing requirements listed for organized youth sports in this phase.
- **PHASE THREE** - During this final stage, large venues can operate under “**limited**” social distancing protocols. Again, organized youth sports were not listed in the Phase Three guidelines.

WHEN CAN OUR ICE RINK REOPEN?

The federal guidelines do not include deadlines – or a particular target date – for reopening. Instead, the plan allows states to move into each successive phase after achieving certain criteria, which will include a 14-day period of data evidencing the decline of COVID-19 case counts. Reopenings will be implemented on a statewide, or county-by-county, basis at the discretion of each state’s governor. This reopening timeline may not only depend on what state your business resides in, but also what geographic area within the state your business is located. The guidelines for reopening in metropolitan areas that have suffered severe COVID-19 outbreaks could be much different than the guidelines established for rural and suburban areas where outbreaks have been mild.

Additionally, please bear in mind that many ice rinks may have two separate reopening timelines to follow to accommodate their dual-purpose uses. Ice rinks that want to use their facility for recreational skating, one-on-one training sessions, and allow enjoyment of their arcade or merchandise outlets might

fall under the “large venue” category and would be able to reopen during Phase One. However, ice rinks being used for organized youth activities, such as hockey practices and games will almost certainly not be able to be open until Phase Two.

WHAT SPECIFIC GUIDELINES WILL OUR ICE RINK NEED TO FOLLOW ONCE WE REOPEN?

The federal guidelines use terms like “strict,” “moderate,” and “limited” to define the social distancing requirements. Admittedly, these terms are vague and will be open for interpretation by each state. However, it is vital for the owners and operators of ice rinks to realize that the “duty of care” has now changed drastically from prior standards in order to protect guests and employees from COVID-19.

Policies and procedures that would have been considered eccentric only two months ago may now be considered “minimum standards” going forward. Strictly adhering to all federal, state, and local guidelines is the first step. The second step involves implementing the guidelines in a way that makes sense for your specific venue as well as the standards in your industry.

The following points outline policies and procedures ice rinks should consider implementing to be properly prepared in the event they become requirements of your state during Phase One and Phase Two of the COVID-19 business reopening plan.

Note: Ice rinks should strictly adhere to all federal, state and local guidelines set forth.

ADMITTANCE PROTOCOLS

- Consider having employees complete a Travel Declaration and COVID-19 Exposure form. Employees that have traveled overseas or to “hot-spot” areas of the United States, or who have come in contact with an individual affected by the COVID-19 virus should be subject to a 14-day self-quarantine prior to being allowed to work at your facility.
- Consider conducting temperature checks for employees and guests prior to allowing them entrance into your facility. No-touch infrared thermometers can be purchased at a reasonable cost and are an effective tool to ensure individuals inside your facility do not have a fever. Additionally, anyone exhibiting cold or flu-like symptoms should not be allowed on the premises.
- Consider requiring employees and guests to wear a mask while at your facility.
- Ensure important notices are posted in appropriate and visible locations at your venue to inform guests of the new measures and practices your rink has put in place with regard to COVID-19.

SOCIAL DISTANCING POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Develop policies and procedures to ensure the number of guests allowed inside each area of the facility (e.g. ice rink, locker rooms, merchandise outlets, arcade, etc.) meets the requirements set forth by your local and state guidelines.
- To enforce social distancing policies, consider dividing the facility into zones and limit the capacity per zone. Staff should monitor each area to ensure safe distancing is taking place. If recreational skating is allowed, adding the proper number of skateguards will be key to ensure skaters follow physical distancing protocols.
- ***Queue Lines*** - Arrange all queue lines (facility entry, concession stands, and merchandise store lines, etc.) so guests remain spaced at least six-feet apart. Signage and floor markers can be used to direct guests where to stand.

- **Arcade** – Block-off, turn-off, or place “out of order” signage on certain games to ensure that available games are spaced at least six-feet apart. Games can be placed on an operating rotation throughout the day.
- **Merchandise Outlets** – Reduce the number of guests allowed inside the store. Ensure attendants are vigilant and strictly enforcing distancing rules.
- **Locker Rooms** – Block-off changing room lockers, sinks, and urinals so that available spaces are at least six-feet apart. Consider eliminating the use of showers.
- **Concession Stands** – Ensure tables and seats are spaced at least six-feet apart.
- Ensure all staff members are trained in the facility’s new social distancing policies and procedures. Social distancing parameters should apply to all guests and all staff without exception.
- Ensure important notices are posted in appropriate and visible locations at your venue to inform guests of the new measures and practices your rink has put in place with regard to COVID-19.

REGULATING GENERAL HYGIENE

- Ensure all facility staff are properly trained on the facility’s enhanced cleaning policies and procedures. Document all enhanced sanitation practices your facility has developed, as well as the training sessions for employees.
- Ensure enough time, staff, and resources are available for cleaning the facility throughout the day and after the facility closes. Develop a cleaning checklist and ensure that all cleanings are properly documented.
- Ensure staff are constantly cleaning high-touch areas (doors, door handles, tables, counters, chairs, arcade games, restroom amenities, etc.) with a disinfectant throughout the day and as needed.
- Install additional hand sanitation stations at strategic locations throughout your facility.
- Develop procedures to be implemented in the event a guest or local health authority reports a confirmed COVID-19 case has been present at your facility.
- Develop a relationship with a reputable cleaning company that can be quickly deployed in the event enhanced cleaning is required due to a confirmed COVID-19 case at your facility.
- Discontinue the usage of reusable condiments from counters, tables, or in other common areas. Provide single-serving packets of condiments upon request.
- Install plexiglass barriers at tills and counters as an additional level of protection for staff.
- Encourage the use of contactless payment methods (i.e. guest swipes their own credit/debit card).

As you might expect, there will be a drastic difference in how your facility will look and operate when it reopens to the public, as compared to how it operated prior to the quarantine. Over time, these restrictions will gradually loosen, eventually allowing ice rinks to operate at a normal capacity. However, during these extraordinary times, owners and operators of ice rinks will be given a significant opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to protecting the health and safety of their guests and employees. Now, more than ever, it is critical to understand that if your facility does not appear clean and smell clean, your guests and employees may quickly consider it unsafe and turn elsewhere for their skating needs. Maintaining a clean and safe environment will go a long way to earn the trust and confidence of your guests and employees and will build faith that your ice rink is a safe place to visit and enjoy once again.

Stay safe and stay healthy!