

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH  
Acting Commissioner




Ned Lamont  
Governor  
Susan Bysiewicz  
Lt. Governor

### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND DRINKING WATER BRANCH

#### Circular Letter 2020-40

**TO:** Local Health Directors

**FROM:** Lori J. Mathieu, Branch Chief 

**DATE:** May 19, 2020

**RE:** COVID-19 Guidance for Reopening Connecticut's Recreational Areas and Activities

---

As the state of Connecticut begins to reopen and the warmer weather makes us think about using public pools, beaches, swimming areas, and outdoor recreational areas, the prevention of COVID-19 remains of utmost importance. Recognizing the benefits of outdoor recreational activities for the health and well-being of the residents of our state, the Department of Public Health (DPH) is providing in this circular letter control measures to help reduce the risk of person-to-person transmission of COVID-19. It is important to note that the risk of person-to-person transmission from extended close contact with an infected individual remains high even in outdoor areas. As such, current infection control recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and DPH should be followed in indoor and outdoor spaces where contact with individuals outside of your household can be reasonably expected.

#### Guidance for Engaging in Outdoor Recreation

- Practice proper social distancing and wear a surgical-style mask, cloth mask, or other face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth at all times when close contact with other individuals is unavoidable.
- Do not engage in outdoor recreational activities with individuals outside of your household.
- Stay as close to home as possible. Do not travel long distances to parks or other recreation areas that may require additional stops along the way.
- Stay at least six feet away from other people at all times, if possible.
- Avoid recreational areas that are crowded.
- Continue to practice good personal hygiene while outdoors. Avoid touching surfaces in public, avoid touching your face, and cough and sneeze into your elbow.



Phone: (860) 509-7293 • Fax: (860) 509-7295  
Telecommunications Relay Service 7-1-1  
410 Capitol Avenue, P.O. Box 340308  
Hartford, Connecticut 06134-0308  
[www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph)

*Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer*



## Guidance for Reopening Public Pools

- DPH recommends that all public pool areas, and in turn the public pools, remain closed at this time. DPH's recommendation is based not on the concern for COVID-19 living in the pool water, but rather on a concern with the policing of crowd control and social distancing in and around a public pool, the disinfection of common bathroom areas and showers, and the disinfection of commonly touched surfaces such as the pool's ladder and stair handrails.
- Owners of seasonal outdoor public pools are encouraged to implement their normally-scheduled annual pool start-up procedure in order to prevent stagnant water from breeding bacteria and other viruses and to ease start-up burdens that may be experienced by local health departments and contractors.
- Once a public pool's start-up procedure is complete, the owner of the pool should continue running it 24/7. The owner should also ensure that the required minimum disinfection levels in the pool are maintained at all times.
- Lifeguards and other personnel in the pool area should wear a surgical-style mask, cloth mask, or other face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth when they are entering, exiting, or moving around work or common areas where contact with others cannot be avoided: this includes first aid, lost child searches, assisting handicapped individuals, and any other close contact with visitors.
  - Visitors, friends, and off duty lifeguards should not be within six feet of lifeguard stands. Operators should delineate an exclusion line using cones or lines.
  - Lifeguards should avoid sitting next to each other on lifeguard stands.
    - Lifeguards should maintain social distance between lifeguards while providing the same coverage and protection necessary to ensure public safety
    - When workers are isolated in a workstation alone (i.e. a lifeguard sitting in an elevated chair overseeing the swim area), face coverings are not necessary.

## Guidance on Beaches and Swimming Areas

- Many beaches and swimming areas are scheduled to open Memorial Day Weekend. In response to a request for information regarding COVID-19 and swimming, CDC informed the DPH that, at this time, it is not aware of cases of COVID-19 caused by the recreational use of either freshwater or saltwater for swimming.
- Social distancing practices are recommended when frequenting a beach or swimming area, keeping a minimum distance of six feet between other beach patrons.
- Testing for COVID-19 in recreational waters at swimming areas is not recommended at this time. Routine testing to determine the safety of the recreation water that is routinely conducted throughout the swimming season is adequate for protecting public health.
- Lifeguards and other personnel in the swimming area should wear a surgical-style mask, cloth mask, or other face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth when they are entering, exiting, or moving around work or common areas where contact with others cannot be avoided: this includes first aid, lost child searches, assisting handicapped individuals, and any other close contact with visitors.
  - Visitors, friends, and off duty lifeguards should not be within six feet of lifeguard stands. Operators should delineate an exclusion line using cones or lines.
  - Lifeguards should avoid sitting next to each other on lifeguard stands.
    - Lifeguards should maintain social distance between lifeguards while providing the same coverage and protection necessary to ensure public safety.
    - When workers are isolated in a workstation alone (i.e. a lifeguard sitting in an elevated chair overseeing the swim area), face coverings are not necessary.

## Lifeguards (if applicable):

- The best way to protect all persons from the virus that causes COVID-19 is to practice primary prevention which means preventing person-to-person contact, eliminating the possibility for groups of six or more to form, and preventing exposure to respiratory droplets of ill persons. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html>

- Lifeguards are not required to be on duty at public pools, however, pursuant to [§ 19-13-B33b of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies](#), when no lifeguard service is in effect, public pools are required to post a warning sign in plain view, which is required to state "Warning--No Lifeguard on Duty" with legible letters a minimum of 4 inches high. The warning is required to be accessible from all entry points into the pool area.
- Lifeguards on duty should routinely clean and disinfect their lifeguard chairs and equipment.
- Lifeguard equipment that is not assigned to an individual guard, including, but not limited to, the lifeguard chair, torp buoy, first aid kit, rescue board, surfboards, dingy, oars and flags must be disinfected after each use, between shift changes, and at the end of the day.
  - Face coverings should not be utilized when lifeguards are engaging in water rescue activities, as they may pose a danger.
    - Secondary lifeguards must have masks and gloves on and take over as soon as the rescuing lifeguards reach the shoreline.
  - Lifeguards should avoid mouth-to-mouth contact during lifesaving procedures.
    - Bag valve masks (BVM) are the only acceptable way of delivering rescue breaths.
    - If BVM are not available for ventilation, compression-only CPR should be used.

### **Guidance on Public Restroom Maintenance at Beaches, Public Pools, and Parks**

- [CDC guidance](#) states that, if possible, all parks and recreational areas should open and maintain their public restrooms, including having functional toilets, regular cleaning of facilities, and stocking public restrooms with soap and hand sanitizer.
- Visit the CDC website to learn more about specific guidance on maintaining public restrooms at recreational facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/park-administrators.html>
- The decision to open a public restroom at a park or recreational facility shall be made at the local level based on the overseeing entity's/owner's ability to adequately follow the CDC guidelines with consideration for size, frequency of use and location of the public restroom.

### **Special Considerations**

- During this public health emergency, DPH recommends that everyone adhere to federal and state guidance regarding COVID-19, including CDC's "[social distancing](#)" and "[outdoor recreation](#)" guidance, Governor Ned Lamont's [executive orders](#), and [DECD's guidance regarding](#) "Stay Safe, Stay Home".
- CDC guidance states that people 65 years and older, people who live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities, and people with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and are guided to stay home when possible. The following webpage has additional information about high risk groups and the actions higher risk people can take to reduce their risk of getting sick: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>

c: Heather Aaron, MPH, LNHA, Deputy Commissioner, DPH  
 Brian Toal, Acting Section Chief, Environmental Health Section, DPH