



SECTOR SPECIFIC WORKPLACE SAFETY STANDARDS FOR THEATERS AND PERFORMANCE VENUES TO ADDRESS COVID-19

As of February 25, 2021

Purpose

These workplace safety standards for Theaters and Performance Venues, are posted in advance of their effective date to allow Theaters and Performance Venues time to prepare to operate in compliance with these mandatory health and safety standards. Theaters and Performance Venues remain subject to the previously issued January 22, 2021 safety standards until these revised workplace safety standards go into effect on March 1, 2021.

These sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards for Theaters and Performance Venues are issued to provide owners and operators of Theaters and Performance Venues and workers and customers with instructions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19.

A performance venue is a facility where performers are in a designated area, such as a stage, audience members remain in fixed or assigned seating during the performance, and seated dining service is not provided.

These standards are minimum requirements only and are not exclusive or exhaustive. The public health data for disease prevention that inform these guidelines can and does change frequently, and the operator of the Theater or Performance Venue is accountable for adhering to all local, state and federal requirements. The operator of the Venue is also responsible for staying abreast of any updates to these requirements.

Violation of these standards may result in civil fines of up to \$500 per violation; provided that each individual instance of non-compliance and each day of a continuing violation may be fined as a separate violation. Each person present over any capacity limit specified below may likewise be fined as a separate violation.

Facilities Permitted to Open to the Public by Type and Community Status

In accordance with [COVID-19 Order no. 65](#) Advancing all Communities to Phase 3, Step 2 COVID-19 Safety Rules, Indoor Theaters and Performance Venues designated as a Phase 3 Step 2 enterprise may open.

Large capacity event venues in all municipalities must continue to remain closed until authorized to reopen in Phase IV. Large capacity venues are defined as having capacities of 5,000 persons or more as specified in a certificate of occupancy or other, equivalent authorization. This includes venues used for group or spectator sports, entertainment, business, and cultural events including:

- Stadiums, arenas, and ballparks
- Exhibition and convention halls

Safety Standards for Movie Theaters and Performance Venues in Massachusetts:

No activity in Theaters or Performance Venues can occur without meeting these sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards. These standards apply to all Theaters and Performance Venues in

operation until rescinded or amended by the State. The operator of each Theater or Performance Venue shall be responsible for meeting these standards.

The following workplace specific guidance is organized around four distinct categories covering Social Distancing, Hygiene Protocols, Staffing and Operations, and Cleaning and Disinfecting.

I. Social Distancing and Capacity Limits

- Require face coverings for all workers and customers, except where unsafe due to medical condition or disability
 - Audience members must wear face coverings while seated during the performance or movie unless unsafe due to disability or medical condition
 - Audience members may remove face coverings while seated and eating or drinking but must otherwise wear face coverings
- Indoor movie theaters must monitor customer entries and exits and limit occupancy at all times to:
 - 50% of each individual theater or screening room's maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder and never more than 250 persons in a single enclosed, indoor space
 - Venues for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow up to 10 persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible space, and never more than 250 persons in a single enclosed, indoor space
- Indoor and Outdoor Theaters and Performance venues must monitor customer entries and exits and limit occupancy at all times to:
 - 50% of the venue's maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder, but in no event shall the venue admit or host more than 500 persons
 - Venues for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow up to 10 persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible space, and never more than 500 persons
- All occupant counts and calculations for indoor and outdoor venues must include all customers, patrons and attendees but may exclude workers and performers
- For rehearsals, virtual performances, and other events without an audience, indoor and outdoor venues must limit occupancy at all times to 50% of the venue's maximum permitted occupancy as documented in the occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder, but in no event shall the venue allow more than 250 persons
- Post clearly visible signage regarding the need to maintain 6 feet of social distancing and not to enter a room until that distancing can be maintained
- Venues must put markers outside of the building to ensure 6 feet of distance for customers who are waiting outside to enter
- Venues are encouraged to offer exclusive hours or other accommodations for those in high-risk populations as defined by the CDC
- Ensure separation of 6 feet or more between individuals where possible:
 - Close or reconfigure worker common spaces and high density areas where workers are likely to congregate) to allow social distancing. Employers are encouraged to close break rooms or limit their use
 - Physical partitions must separate workstations that cannot be spaced out (partitions must be at least 6 feet in height)
 - Install physical barriers for ticket stations where possible, otherwise maintain 6 feet

- distance where not possible
 - Install visual social distancing markers to encourage customers to remain 6 feet apart (e.g., lines for equipment if applicable, checkout lines, lines to use the restroom)
- Establish directional pathways to manage visitor flow for foot traffic, to minimize contact (e.g., one-way entrance and exit to shows, one-way pathways). Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies
- Reconfigure seating areas to ensure 6 feet distancing between customers not in the same group
 - Distance shall be measured from the closest boundary of one customer recreation or seating area to the closest boundary of another customer recreation or seating area
 - This may require blocking every other row of seats and staggered seating within rows
- Limit group sizes to no more than 6 people per group attending together for movie theaters and indoor and outdoor theaters and performance venues
- Stagger lunch and break times for workers, regulating max number of people in one place and ensuring at least 6 feet of physical distancing
- Contactless payment methods and / or digital ticketing are encouraged
- Special protocols shall be followed for close contact between live performers:
 - Performers are to wear face coverings during performances whenever feasible
 - Performers should remain at least 6 feet apart even if wearing masks. Any activity requiring performers to be closer than 6 feet must be as brief as possible
 - Activities that require prolonged direct contact (e.g. intimate scenes, fight scenes) are discouraged
 - Prohibit direct interaction between performers and audience before, during, or after performances (including backstage and post-performance meet and greets)
- For live performances, singing and the playing of brass and wind instruments is discouraged. Singing is not permitted in any indoor performance venues. For outdoor performances involving singing or indoor and outdoor performances involving brass or wind instruments, special distancing must be followed:
 - At least 10 feet between performers
 - At least 25 feet between performers and first row of the audience
 - Plexiglass barriers cannot be used to reduce required distance between performers or between performers and the audience
- Performances that are shorter in duration are encouraged
- Encourage the use of electronic versions or no-touch displays in place of commonly touched physical materials (such as menus and playbills) where possible. All commonly touched physical materials must be discarded or sanitized between use
- Any self-serve racks or containers for these materials should be removed, and instead all materials must be handed out individually by workers

II. Hygiene Protocols

- Disinfect shared equipment before use by another worker
- Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, wherever possible and encourage frequent handwashing; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative
- Supply workers at workplace location with adequate cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes)
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol shall be made available at entrances, exits and throughout floor areas for workers, performers, and customers
- Avoid sharing equipment and supplies between workers including performers

- Post visible signage throughout the site to remind customers and workers of hygiene and safety protocols
- Prohibit any mutual touching of customer or worker equipment without sanitation between uses

III. Staffing and Operations

- Provide training to workers on up-to-date safety information and precautions including hygiene and other measures aimed at reducing disease transmission, including:
 - Social distancing, hand-washing, proper use of face coverings
 - Self-screening at home, including temperature and symptom checks
 - Importance of not coming to work if ill
 - When to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe
 - Which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus
- Venues must screen workers at each shift by ensuring the following:
 - Worker is not experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0 and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
 - Worker has not had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19
 - Worker has not been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official
 - Workers who fail to meet the above criteria must be sent home
- Adjust workplace hours and shifts (leverage working teams with different schedules or staggered arrival / departure) to minimize contact across workers and reduce congestion at entry point
- Limit worker movement to discrete work zones to minimize overlap where possible
- Venues should maintain operating hours that allow for on-going off-hour sanitation and cleaning consistent with CDC guidelines for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting
- Limit visitors and service providers on site; shipping and deliveries should be completed in designated areas
- Maintain a log of workers and visitors to support potential contact tracing (name, date, time, contact information)
- All performers and workers must follow the Commonwealth's current out-of-state travel order: [mass.gov/MATraveler](https://www.mass.gov/MATraveler). In addition, employers are strongly discouraged from requiring or allowing business-related travel to destinations other than those appearing on the Department of Public Health's list of COVID-19 lower risk States. Employers that permit employer-paid or -reimbursed travel to those States shall take measures to ensure employees comply with this order. Employers are also urged to strongly discourage their employees from taking leisure travel to destinations not included on the list of COVID-19 lower-risk States
- Workers shall not appear for work or complete a shift if feeling ill
- Workers who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the Centers for Disease Control (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home

- Workers are strongly encouraged to self-identify symptoms or any close contact to a known or suspected COVID-19 case to the employer
- Encourage workers who test positive for COVID-19, to disclose to the employer of the office for purposes of cleaning / disinfecting and contact tracing. If the employer is notified of any positive case at the workplace, the employer must immediately notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the workplace is located. Employers must assist the LBOH with contact tracing efforts, including advising likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other workers may be recommended consistent with guidance and / or at the request of the LBOH
- Post notice to workers and customers of important health information and relevant safety measures as outlined in the Commonwealth's [Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplace](#)
- Stagger event times (such as theater showings) to avoid congregation of customers in different groups and to allow for thorough cleaning of the activity space (e.g., seating areas or tables) before new customers arrive
- Encourage advanced reservations and digital ticketing where possible
- Workers should facilitate organized entrance and exit between events where audiences are arranged in rows or other large groups to prevent unnecessary congregation of customers
- Facilities should develop a seating plan for which customers can reserve spots ahead of time and which is adjustable to the size of the booking party allowing couples and small groups to sit together while maintaining at least 6 feet of distance from other individuals/groups
- Additional on-site amenities and services may only open and operate when those amenities or services would otherwise be authorized to operate under the Commonwealth's Phased Reopening Plan and then must adhere to all sector-specific safety protocols, available on the [Reopening Plan website](#), applicable to the amenity or service. Examples include:
 - Restaurants/food service: Must follow the latest restaurant guidelines
 - Gift shops: Must follow the latest retail guidelines
 - Performer hair and makeup: Must follow the latest close contact business guidance
 - Dancing and dance areas: Must remain closed until Phase 4. Only performers are allowed to dance for their performances
 - Drive-In Performances must follow the Drive-In Theaters Standards including remaining in the vehicles during the performance
- Intermissions should be avoided in order to limit time of performance and to prevent congregating and close contact with others
- Reconfigure lobbies to discourage congregation of customers before, during, or after shows

IV. Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Conduct frequent cleaning and disinfection of site (at least daily and more frequently if feasible)
- Keep cleaning logs that include date, time, and scope of cleaning
- Conduct frequent disinfecting of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, bathrooms, seats, ticket counters, staff break rooms)
- In event of a positive case, shut down site for a deep cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace in accordance with current CDC guidance
- Open windows and doors to increase air flow where possible
- Disinfect seating areas and any other mutually-touched objects immediately after each use. At no point should customers come in contact with objects that others have touched without first being disinfecting according to CDC guidelines

Additional worker safety guidelines and resources (with hyperlinks to web pages) are available below:

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

[OSHA – COVID-19 Webpage](#)

[OSHA – Enforcement Guidelines Webpage](#)

[OSHA Fact Sheet – Protecting Workers During a Pandemic](#)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

[CDC – Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)

[CDC – Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease \(Updated 3/21/20\)](#)

Additional Information:

Massachusetts State Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website

mass.gov/covid19

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>