Advancing Towards Normal Operations for Entertainment Venues

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Introduction

From an operational perspective, the 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in pervasive disruption to business operations and supply chains around the globe, causing businesses, such as entertainment venues, to cease all operations. By early March, 2020, many local and state authorities across the United States (U.S.) began enacting restrictions to ban public gatherings, including concerts, festivals, and award shows.

As rates of new COVID-19 cases have begun to level off in the U.S. – and decline in some areas – policymakers and business leaders have cautiously shifted their attention toward planning safe return to normal business operations. Some states, such as California, have proposed phased reopening plans that allow for an incremental increase in business activities based on factors representing risk and need. Some states have proposed phased plans that allow for an incremental opening of business establishments based on various factors, including risk and need.

Non-sporting entertainment venues include many types of entertainment and educational establishments. The reopening of these venues should be approached on a case-by-case basis, with attention to local, state, and federal guidelines. Owners and managers should start by focusing on when, how, and why crowds may form in their space, as well as identifying all the frequently touched surfaces. Compared with sporting venues, many of which are located in outdoor environments or are large complexes with high ventilation capacities, non-sporting event venues are often small or enclosed spaces. General approaches for reopening will require greater emphasis on the indoor environment. The operations in these venues may also be specific to the facility, purpose, and attractions contained within each space.

With restrictions beginning to lift, non-sporting entertainment venues are faced with difficult questions that must be addressed before reopening, such as:

> How can we minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission to our staff, visitors, and artists while at our establishment?
> What health and safety needs should be considered within the facility prior to reopening?
> How do we communicate to our staff, visitors, and artists that we are doing all we can to protect them from the disease?
> How would our facility handle contact tracing if needed?
> What additional supplies and/or medical support should we have in place prior to opening?
> What contingency plans should we have in place if a venue needs to shut down again?

The guidelines in this document are therefore intended to be used as a starting point for developing comprehensive plans for reopening businesses. The information herein provides general guidance in line with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations and provides specific examples that entertainment venues can consider when developing their reopening plans.
General Guidance

The reopening of non-sporting entertainment venues should be approached on a case-by-case basis, with attention to local, state, and federal guidelines. Although each venue and attraction will have unique challenges, the following examples of general guidance can provide a starting point:

> The number of guests at each venue should be limited so that contact between individuals is decreased. Consider using a reservation-only system where applicable.

> Consider using crowd control measures such as stanchions to separate and guide groups.

> Discourage grouping and gathering of employees during down times.

> Ticketing/admittance and food ordering should be made electronic when possible.

> Electronic forms of payment should be requested over physical currency if possible.

> Food and beverage services should be modified to provide robust health protections.
  > Food service practices should be aligned with guidelines outlined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
  > Consider encouraging electronic ordering and/or limiting in-person ordering.
  > Provide no-touch refuse and recycling bins.
  > Consider increasing the number of food vendors in order to reduce lines and allow for orders/scheduled pick-ups.

> Employees should be provided with gloves and masks, and guests should be encouraged to use personal protection as well.

> Stagger the number of employees in breakrooms at one time in order to maintain physical distancing.

> Increase disinfection measures.
  > Equipment should not be shared, and, when possible, disinfected with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved disinfectants between uses (List N).
  > Consider appointing a restroom attendant.
  > Consider replacing hand dryers with disposable paper towels.
  > Ensure access into and out of restrooms can be done hands-free (if not, keep a trashcan by the door so individuals can use a paper towel to open the door and then dispose of it readily).

> Communal water fountain use should be discouraged, and individual water bottles should be provided if water is allowed.

These guidelines offer practical measures for consideration when planning to reopen and aim at reducing the risk of transmitting COVID-19, with the understanding that venues will adhere to local, state, and federal health guidance. Recommendations outlined in this document address some of the key questions above, and provide tips for some of the unique challenges faced by selected entertainment venues. The TABLE below provides additional information and examples regarding the reopening specific types of entertainment venues.
### TABLE: Unique challenges and infection prevention control options for select non-sporting venues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Non-Sporting Venues</th>
<th>Unique Challenges</th>
<th>Infection Prevention Control Options</th>
<th>Enhanced Disinfection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Casinos</strong></td>
<td>Valet parking; shared game pieces; restaurants; hotels</td>
<td>Lower capacity; all other machine limits to players at each table; discontinue valet parking temporarily</td>
<td>Hand sanitizer and wipes throughout facility; limit use of shared game pieces, and disinfect between uses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cinemas and Movie Theaters</strong></td>
<td>Self-serve machines; lines; popcorn refills; paper tickets and admittance</td>
<td>Reduce capacity of theaters; skip seats/rows between groups of viewers; mark distances of six feet in queues for ticket lines and concessions; move to online ticketing and food ordering when possible; close self-service drink stations</td>
<td>Hand sanitizer and wipes throughout facility; do not provide refills in same containers (popcorn and drink cups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arcades</strong></td>
<td>Tokens and cash machines; “Redemption stores” (prizes); multiplayer games</td>
<td>Lower occupancy limits; close every other game and multiplayer games</td>
<td>Hand sanitizer and wipes throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amusement and Water Parks</strong></td>
<td>Lines; games; giftshops; rental wheelchairs and strollers; food areas</td>
<td>Use online food ordering and electronic tickets; use of guides to indicate unidirectional movement; limit number of players on games; prohibit bags or install contact-free detectors</td>
<td>Hand sanitizer and wipes throughout; proper chlorine or bromine disinfection levels in water parks; disinfect games between players</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Music Halls</strong></td>
<td>Number and density of attendees; lines for concessions and restrooms; food and beverage service; large number of performers; contact during bag inspection/ticket scan</td>
<td>Reduce capacity and number of occupied seats and alter seating layout to promote distancing; reduce number of performers and/or distance between performers; convert to mobile ticket sales and scanners; prohibit bags or install contact-free detectors; mark distances of six feet in queues (entrances, food/beverages, restrooms)</td>
<td>Hand sanitizer and wipes throughout; disinfection of facilities after each event; move to disposable food and beverage containers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dance Halls</strong></td>
<td>Cups; utensils; menus; bar stools</td>
<td>Reduce capacity of venues; limit the number of bar stools and tables</td>
<td>Hand sanitizer and wipes throughout; use disposable cups, utensils, and menus when possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zoos and Aquariums</strong></td>
<td>Layout of the facility (indoors, outdoor transitions) and movement of visitors; gift shops; food areas; barriers between guests and animals</td>
<td>Guides to indicate unidirectional movement; limit number of visitors viewing exhibits; electronic ticket sales and food ordering; reduce capacity of venues; consider drive-through exhibits</td>
<td>Hand sanitizer and wipes throughout; sanitize door handles if unable to be left open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Museums</strong></td>
<td>Interactive exhibits; gift shops; planetariums/theaters; food areas</td>
<td>Controlled and timed access to events with occupancy limits; prohibit some interactive events/exhibits; electronic ticket sales and food ordering</td>
<td>Hand sanitizer and no-touching policy for exhibits; stanchions for spacing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Guidelines for Selected Non-Sporting Venues Scenarios**

The following additional details provide guidelines for two selected entertainment venues. These are provided to serve as an example of protective measures that can be implemented for unique venues, and are intended to be used in conjunction with the TABLE above. In addition, these guidelines are not exhaustive, and should be used as a starting point for owners and managers drafting plans to reopen.

### CINEMAS AND MOVIE THEATERS

Cinemas and movie theaters pose unique challenges, as they house high density groups for extended periods of time in the same area. The guidelines below can help cinemas and movie theatres as they start to consider the health and safety aspects of reopening:

- Consider reducing the number of people allowed into a theatre room to 50% (or less).
- Assigned seating should be used, such that guests are not seated next to one another.
- Stagger screen times so that patrons for one movie do not arrive at the same times as those for another.
  - Consider staggering screenings to also allow for disinfecting and air circulation in each individual theater space.
- Patrons should be encouraged to not to linger or socialize in the lobby prior to or after viewing the movie.
- Patrons should be encouraged to purchase movie tickets online.
  - If not possible, then ticket-buying areas should be demarcated to ensure physical distancing, and be clearly designated.
- Food and bar service should follow practices outlined by the FDA and local and state guidance.
  - Refills of popcorn, drinks, and other items should be discontinued, and new containers should always be used.
  - Self-serve beverage machines and condiment stations should be closed when possible, and, when not possible, increased sanitation practices should be employed.
- Automated hand sanitizer dispensers should be provided throughout the facility.
  - Signage should be posted at each hand sanitizer station encouraging its use and illustrating proper hand sanitizing technique.

### ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

The unique challenges faced by zoos and aquariums include integrating indoor and outdoor venues, using barriers between guests and animals, and combining different types of public spaces, such as restrooms, cafeterias, and gift shops. The guidelines below provide aspects to be considered to help zoos and aquariums begin developing plans for reopening:

- Reduce the number of people allowed in the venue to 50% capacity (or less).
  - Capacity considerations should not only be applied to the venue as a whole, but also to exhibits and viewing areas so as to allow for physical distancing. Physical distancing should be maintained even for smaller groups congregating at an exhibit.
- The use of guides (e.g. tape; paint) to direct guests in a unilateral movement is recommended.
- Signage and barriers should be posted to keep patrons from touching exhibit barriers, signs, information booths, and other frequently touched surfaces.
- Ticket sales should be conducted exclusively online, and using smart phone apps for food and drink ordering can limit congestion around information desks and cafes.
  - Food and bar service should follow practices outlined by the FDA and local and state guidance.
- Automated hand sanitizer dispensers should be provided at each exhibit.
  - Signage should be posted at each hand sanitizer station encouraging its use and illustrating proper hand sanitizing technique.
- Doors should be left open when possible, but when the use of door handles is necessary, increased sanitation practices should be followed.
- Employees should wear masks and gloves, and guests should be encouraged to wear masks as well.
- Signage in bathrooms should be posted encouraging handwashing and illustrating proper handwashing technique.
EXAMPLES OF UNIQUE SOLUTIONS USED BY ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

Given the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the concern about transmission to both workers and patrons, entertainment venues and organizations have already begun applying unique solutions. Two examples of successful creative solutions follow.

San Antonio Zoo

Because of the quarantine measures in Texas, the San Antonio Zoo (SAZ) was forced to close to the public while only allowing employee access for animal care. In response to this shutdown, the SAZ created a drive-thru experience for patrons. Tickets are sold online, and include an audio tour that can be accessed via SoundCloud on the SAZ website. In addition, SAZ has provided a map advising patrons which audio recording to play when, as well as the location of each exhibit, thereby limiting interaction between employees, animals, and patrons. In addition, patrons within cars are not able to interact with each other, thus significantly reducing the risk of transmission.

Livestreams and Virtual Concerts

Musicians and performance venues have also devised a unique solution to connect with fans and provide entertainment in the form of livestreams and virtual concerts. Several sites have begun hosting musical artists for fans to watch and virtually interact with, ranging from lesser known artists to celebrity singers and bands. In addition to one-off performances or concerts, festivals have moved all performances to livestreams. Fans can thus still see the intended artists without having to travel to a physical festival location.

Conclusion

Entertainment venues (not including sporting facilities, which are addressed separately) cover many types of entertainment and educational establishments. Owners and managers of these spaces should start the reopening process by focusing on when, how, and why crowds may form in their space, as well as identifying all the frequently-touched surfaces. In addition, plans to reopen should include multiple layers of protection (e.g., physical distancing; disinfection; communication; and crowd control), as well as the ability to be flexible regarding potential changes that may occur as business life progresses amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. Combining layers of protections with flexibility can position non-sporting venues to respond, adapt, and adjust instead of just reacting.

Resources

GENERAL

The EPA has published a frequently updated list of disinfectants for use against SAS-CoV-2: https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2


The CDC has published information regarding to drinking water, treated recreational water, and wastewater as it pertains to COVID-19: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html

The CDC and White House has released Opening Up America Again, a phased approach to reopen workplaces: https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/
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