



IAAPA COVID-19 Reopening Guidance

Addendum: Considerations for Rides and Attractions, 3/5/2021

This addendum acts as a supplement to the Attraction-Specific Guidance for Rides and Attractions found in the [Third Edition \(October 5, 2020\) of the IAAPA COVID-19 Reopening Guidance](#).

Overview

Based on industry experience and evolving guidance from health authorities, IAAPA recommends operators review/reevaluate their protocols related to ride and attractions operations and ride vehicle capacity to safely enhance their guest experience and to continue to ensure the safety and well-being of employees.

If operators determine modifications are appropriate, they should consult with applicable health authorities to ensure alignment on their approach. All vehicle modifications must be reviewed and approved with ride manufacturers prior to installation.

Background

Since May 2020, numerous theme and amusement parks have safely reopened around the world by successfully implementing the protocols and procedures established by the industry.

With many months of experience, park operators have learned a great deal about running their attractions with COVID-19 precautions and operational adjustments in place. They continuously use that learning to refine their approach, improving safety for guests and employees, and enhancing the overall visitor experience.

In addition, many parks have safely managed their guest experience with varying levels of physical distancing on rides and attractions. Those distancing guidelines range from 6 feet (2 meters) in the U.S. to 3 feet plus (1 meter plus) while wearing a face covering in some European countries, or even no additional physical distancing in some Asian countries.

As operators are learning, so are scientists and infectious disease specialists. Health experts have shared new information about COVID-19 and how it is transferred from one person to another, particularly considering the length of time of exposure, air movement, and viral loads.

Ride and Attraction Vehicle Physical Distancing/Capacity

In the Attraction-Specific Guidelines for Rides and Attractions (page 38) in the IAAPA COVID-19 Reopening Guidance Third edition, item 4, operators are encouraged to consider reducing the number of guests per ride vehicle to facilitate physical distancing between riders, including leaving some seats or rows unoccupied. With additional industry experience and more recent guidance from health authorities on the effectiveness of masks/face coverings, the role of exposure time, and the benefits of increased air flow/ventilation, operators may want to reconsider how they manage ride vehicle capacities.

Additional Considerations

Operators may consider evaluating each ride and its unique characteristics when determining physical distancing and vehicle capacity. As a part of that evaluation, operators may consider the following:

- 1) Requiring all riders to wear masks/face coverings while on the attraction given their effectiveness in reducing the spread of COVID-19.
- 2) Studying the ride vehicle to see if it provides a natural barrier or screen that restricts air movement between guests. If necessary, operators can confer with the ride's manufacturer to determine if additional barriers can be added to the ride vehicle to separate riders. (Note: Adjustments to the ride should **not** be considered without having those modifications reviewed and approved by the manufacturer and the appropriate inspection body/authority.)
- 3) Evaluating the length of time of exposure during the ride experience. Health authorities have defined close contact in the context of COVID-19 as being less than 6 feet of another individual for more than 15 minutes. If the time of exposure is less than 15 minutes and all guests are wearing masks, there may be less need for physical distancing during a ride experience. Operators should consider taking ride cycle times, including loading and unloading, into account as they evaluate exposure time and consider legal obligations and guidelines from applicable health authorities.

If operators reduce distancing due to limited time of exposure they should also consider delaying conditions that could create a longer exposure (i.e. ride stoppage or evacuation). In those cases, it may be necessary to introduce a contact tracing protocol so officials could contact someone if they came in contact with another guest on that same vehicle who tested positive for COVID-19 following their visit.

Resources

Close Contact: U.S. Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

Contact Tracing: U.S. Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/contact-tracing.html>

- 4) Evaluating air flow and ventilation. Operators can consider enhancing air flow and ventilation as one strategy to help reduce COVID transmission. If an attraction is outdoors, there may be sufficient air flow to reduce droplet or aerosol concentration and risk. If an attraction is indoors, operators may consider evaluating the building's ventilation system to increase air flow and the amount of outside air that is brought into the indoor spaces containing the ride and relevant pre-show experiences.

Resources

From the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/ventilation-and-coronavirus-covid-19>

From the U.S. Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html>

From the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers: <https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/commercial#general>

- 5) Evaluating seating positions. Riders in a face-to-back seating configuration (like on an airplane) may be at less risk than riders in a face-to-face configuration.

- 6) Providing hand sanitizer for guests to use prior to boarding and after exiting the attraction to reduce the transference of germs from riders to the ride vehicle and vice versa.
- 7) Deciding if physical distancing is necessary if members from the same traveling party are seated together in the same vehicle or on the same row in a larger vehicle.

Operators should continue to consult with applicable health authorities as they evaluate and refine their operations and COVID protocols.

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