

Phase II & III Rhode Island Parks and Beaches Guidelines

In accordance with Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) emergency regulations, businesses and organizations must prepare and implement a COVID-19 Control Plan. A checklist and template can be found at [ReopeningRI.com](https://reopeningri.com). The RIDOH emergency regulations can be found [here](#). The State prepared a [guidance document](#) to assist organizations in meeting the requirements outlined in these RIDOH regulations. State and municipal agencies must comply with RIDOH regulations and all active [executive orders](#). Parks and beaches should also abide by the [State of Rhode Island reopening guidance](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) guidance](#) issued for the parks and recreation sectors.

The guidelines below summarize additional steps the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) is taking and with which other park and beach operators should comply.

If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact DEM.riparks@dem.ri.gov.

In Phase I, RIDEM reopened State parks in a graduated manner, with reduced parking and restrictions limiting activities to active uses, such as walking, hiking, biking and fishing. In Phases II and III, RIDEM will ease restrictions in parks and beaches as conditions permit. This includes opening these areas up for additional public uses.

Phase II & III Operations:

- **Physical distancing:** To maintain proper distance, visitors who are not in a household group must maintain a minimum distance of six feet and will be limited to gathering sizes in accordance with current executive orders, RIDOH regulations and [ReopeningRI.com](https://reopeningri.com) guidance. Groups must be a minimum of six feet apart from other groups. Visitors must practice physical distancing wherever possible while swimming or doing other water-based activities.
- **Capacity:** Estimate the maximum number of visitors that will be allowed entry to meet physical distancing guidance. In order to do so, operators may:
 - Limit the number of seasonal and daily beach passes sold at beaches;
 - Reduce the number of parking spaces or access points;
 - Require separate entrance and exit points; and
 - Close certain areas as necessary.

The restrictions should be flexible so that managers can adjust limits up or down depending on the number of visitors and visitor compliance with physical distancing practices and group size requirements. The methodology used to determine the maximum number of visitors for facilities can include visual observations; historical experience of park managers; and technology such as surveys, GIS overlay, and engineering to determine the capacity limit. For saltwater beaches, capacity limits should take high tides into consideration.

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- **Quarantine:** Out-of-state visitors should be informed of and adhere to any current [executive orders](#) related to out-of-state travelers and quarantine requirements through visual messaging, such as, signage at facility entrances and/or reference to [executive order\(s\)](#) on the park's website.
- **Food and beverage sales:** All food and beverage sales offered by concessionaires shall follow the most recent executive orders, regulations, and/or guidance related to restaurants.
- **Face coverings:** All persons (employees and visitors) are required to wear face coverings that cover their nose and mouth when in areas where congregating is common and where six-foot physical distancing cannot be maintained in accordance with RIDOH regulations and current [executive orders](#). Areas include, but are not limited to, boardwalks, restrooms, changing rooms, and concession stands. Face coverings should not be worn in the water.
- **Cleaning procedures:** Public areas including high-touch points (e.g. rails, restrooms, showers, changing rooms, etc.) should be cleaned in accordance with [RIDOH regulations](#) and [CDC guidelines](#), with the exception of picnic tables. Patrons who rent or use picnic tables will be told to use table coverings, if possible, and to bring sanitizing wipes for cleaning picnic tables before use.
- **Public restrooms and shower facilities:**
 - Operators should ensure that six-foot physical distancing is adhered through occupancy limits and staggered queueing lines or roping where feasible. Signage will be posted.
 - Portable toilets – If restrooms cannot be opened, portable toilets should be used. RIDEM's portable toilets-johns will be supplied by a vendor, who will also be responsible for doing the regular deep cleaning. The following is the RIDOH-approved cleaning schedule for portable toilets:
 - High-use portable toilets
 - Thorough cleaning and sanitizing once per day by the vendor; and
 - High-touch areas in the units (door handles, hand sanitizer dispensers, and toilet seats) wiped down frequently by seasonal staff.
 - Moderate- and low-use portable toilets
 - Thorough cleaning and sanitizing once per day by the vendor; and
 - Cleaning wipes and/or cleaning materials should be made available so individuals can clean surfaces before and after use.
- **Playgrounds:** Outdoor playgrounds and play areas may open, provided operators meet current cleaning and disinfecting protocols in accordance with [RIDOH regulations](#) and [CDC guidelines](#). Park operators should display posters and signs to remind visitors to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Visitors should be encouraged to review [CDC guidance for visiting parks and recreation](#) facilities and to bring hand sanitizer for disinfecting after use.

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- **Events and special-use permits:** Special events and special-use permits will be issued only if applicants meet gathering size and or public event size limits in accordance with [current executive orders](#), [RIDOH regulations](#), and [ReopeningRI.com](#) guidance. Event participants who are not in household groups must be able to comply with the six-foot physical distance requirements for the duration of the event or activity.
- **Customer service:** Employees and concessionaires are required to wash their hands with soap and water and sanitize their hands on a routine basis. Employees and concessionaires in positions that require direct contact with customers should wear gloves only if they are normally required to do so.
- **Outdoor recreation activities and equipment rentals:** Authorized vendors, concessionaires, or special-use permit holders who offer lessons, classes, or rentals will be required to have a COVID-19 Control Plan and will be required to meet all COVID-related regulations, requirements, and guidelines. Equipment loaned or rented to visitors (e.g. canoes, kayaks, boogie boards, beach chairs and umbrellas) shall be sanitized between each use.
- **Fees and payments:** RIDEM will offer online sales of beach passes and will explore and implement other cashless and touchless options for permits where and when feasible. RIDEM shall communicate the availability of these options on its social media channels and website. Other operators are encouraged to use cashless and touchless options as well.
- **Park employees:**
 - Parks and Recreation staff will be screened daily in compliance with procedures for State employees issued by the Department of Administration. Employees who are determined to be sick will be sent home.
 - Park employees will wear cloth face coverings that cover their mouth and nose consistent with the requirements of current [executive orders](#). Employees who are responsible for administering first aid, such as park rangers and lifeguards, will wear surgical masks while administering first aid. RIDEM has developed guidance for the appropriate level of PPE for specific positions and settings.
- **Clear communications plan:**
 - Develop clear messages regarding restrictions and COVID-19 measures and communicate to visitors through website, social media channels, and the media.
 - Develop and post physical distancing reminders and other signage as needed throughout facilities.
 - RIDEM will have park rangers at some larger facilities to greet visitors and to provide COVID-19-related reminders.
 - RIDEM will use signage on the roads at some facilities to notify the public when parking is at capacity.