

Guidance for Operating Cooling Centers During COVID-19

July 2022 Update

Extreme heat is a major threat to the public’s health. Exposure to extreme heat can cause a variety of health problems from general fatigue to muscular cramping to life-threatening heat stroke. Cooling centers are designed to provide relief and protection during extreme heat.

The health and safety of staff and visitors at cooling centers is our number one priority. Cooling centers are considered higher risk settings for COVID-19 because different households of vulnerable persons (such as seniors and those with medical conditions) may be brought together indoors for an extended period of time.

HIGHLIGHTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a high-risk setting, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health requires the use of protective masks for anyone entering a cooling center. • Individuals with COVID-19 infection or symptoms of COVID-19 should be excluded from the cooling center. • Members of the public who may be known contacts of a COVID-19 case are permitted inside cooling centers as long as they have no symptoms, wear a protective mask at all times, and maintain at least six feet of distance from other households. • Employees who are close contacts to a COVID-19 case should be excluded from working in the cooling center area if they are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccination and have not recently had COVID-19 (see workplace employee standards below).
SIGNAGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post signageⁱ at each entrance instructing all persons entering to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wear a protective maskⁱⁱ. Children aged two and under and persons with certain disabilities are exempt.ⁱⁱⁱ ➤ Do not enter if any person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has any symptoms of COVID-19, • Has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 5 days, and/or • Is under home isolation orders. ➤ Maintain six feet of distance from people from other households. <input type="checkbox"/> Place additional reminder messages throughout the facility on masking, respiratory etiquette, hand washing, and physical distancing. <input type="checkbox"/> If eating or drinking is allowed, signage in the designated area should remind visitors that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ They must be seated while eating or drinking, and ➤ They must keep their mask on unless actively eating or drinking.
PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND SANITATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take steps, where possible, to limit crowding by reducing bottlenecks at the entry and exit to the facility, separating tables and seating, and enabling easy access to restrooms. <input type="checkbox"/> If eating and drinking is allowed:

- Set up a designated zone away from other seating areas that is specifically used for those eating and drinking. Make sure this area is well ventilated (see below).
- Require that persons maintain a 6-foot distance from others while eating or drinking, and only remove their face mask while they are actively eating or drinking.
- Place hand sanitizer at entrances and common areas, and assure soap and water are available within the facility. Restrooms normally open to the public should remain open to the public.
- Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cleaning and disinfection guidelines for community facilities.^{iv}

VENTILATION^v

- Optimize ventilation by bringing outdoor air indoors and circulating clean air.
 - Run heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems during all occupied hours to ensure clean air enters and is distributed throughout the building.
 - Ensure that exhaust fans in bathrooms are functioning and set fans to run during occupied hours.
 - Increase volume of clean, outdoor air at times of higher COVID-19 community transmission risk by modifying the number of air changes per hour (2-6 ACH is recommended).
 - Consider running the HVAC system to refresh air before arrival and/or remove remaining particles at the end of the day (1-2 hours before/after the building is occupied).
 - Open operable windows, as weather, outdoor air quality, occupant safety, and HVAC systems permit. To the extent possible, enable cross ventilation by opening windows and doors at opposite sides of the room or building.
 - Check with an HVAC expert to understand the maximum outdoor air your system can support.
 - Adjust HVAC settings while considering thermal comfort, humidity, outdoor air quality, and energy use.
- Enhance air filtration using the central HVAC system and in-room air cleaning devices.
 - Install properly sized MERV-13 air filters, or the highest rated MERV filters that the HVAC system can accommodate.
 - Close off any gaps around air filters to minimize air moving around them instead of through them.
 - Use portable air cleaners to increase air cleaning rates in areas where air flow and central filtration are insufficient.
 - Increase ventilation and/or filtration in areas with higher emission of airborne particles and aerosols (e.g., gyms, cafeterias, etc.). Make adjustments for these areas by:
 - Increasing the volume of clean, outdoor air delivery.
 - Using portable air cleaners.
 - Setting up extra exhaust ventilation to move air directly to the outside.
 - Consider an upper-room Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation system to clean the air (require professional design and installation, in consultation with experts).

EMPLOYEE WORKPLACE STANDARDS

- All employees with COVID-19 must be excluded from work and follow CalOSHA return to work requirements. Asymptomatic employees who were a close contact to case who have either 1) completed a COVID-19 vaccine series AND received a booster dose if eligible, or 2) were infected with COVID-19 within the past 90 days, may continue to work unless symptoms of COVID-19 develop. Asymptomatic employees who were a close contact to a case who have not completed a primary vaccine series and received a booster, if eligible, must be excluded from working in the cooling center for at least 5 days from last exposure. Refer to CalOSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards Frequently Asked Questions-CDPH Isolation and Quarantine Frequently Asked Questions.^{vi}
- Follow instructions provided by your Human Resources Department. Refer to CalOSHA's COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards.^{vii}

ⁱ publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/BestPractices/#signage

ⁱⁱ <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/masks/RulesAndRecommendations/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/masks/#kindofmask>

^{iv} <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

^v https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-03/508-cleanairbuildings_factsheet_v5_508.pdf

^{vi} <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/covid19faqs.html#iso>

^{vii} <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/ETS.html>