



Santa Clara County  
**PUBLIC  
HEALTH**

# MANDATORY DIRECTIVE:



# Gatherings

**NOT YET EFFECTIVE**

[sccgov.org/coronavirus](https://sccgov.org/coronavirus)

**County of Santa Clara**  
**Public Health Department**

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**NOT YET EFFECTIVE**

**This Directive is effective at 12:01 a.m. on the day following announcement by the California Department of Public Health that the County has entered Tier 3 (Orange Tier) under the State’s “Blueprint for a Safer Economy” as described at [covid19.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/20190903).**

**MANDATORY DIRECTIVE FOR GATHERINGS**

**\*Please confirm that your gathering is allowed under the State Order. Where there is a difference between the local County Order and the State Order, the more restrictive order must be followed.\***

Information on the State’s Order and State guidance is available at [covid19.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/20190903)

**Issued: July 14, 2020**  
**Revised: October 9, 2020**

*The State Health Officer has generally prohibited indoor and outdoor gatherings of all kinds statewide, with limited exceptions for worship services, cultural ceremonies like weddings and funerals, protest or political activities, and any gathering that is explicitly allowed by a State COVID-19 Industry Guidance document .*

*All gatherings are subject to the mandatory requirements in this Directive.*

*Note: While wedding ceremonies may occur subject to the mandatory requirements of this Directive, the State has clarified that “[w]edding receptions/parties/celebrations are NOT permitted at this time” under State Public Health Officer orders.*

While COVID-19 is still circulating in our community, the Health Officer strongly discourages any gathering together with people from other households. Indoor gatherings are particularly risky because COVID-19 transmission occurs more easily indoors than outdoors, and COVID-19 continues to circulate widely. The most recent scientific evidence underscores the risk of transmission indoors, and **indoor gatherings are strongly discouraged**. But gatherings are not

prohibited as long as everyone attending the gathering strictly complies with all the requirements set forth below to reduce risk and keep everyone who attends as safe as possible.

A “gathering” is an event, assembly, meeting, or convening that brings together multiple people from separate households in a single space, indoors or outdoors, at the same time and in a coordinated fashion—like a wedding, banquet, conference, religious service, festival, fair, party, performance, movie theater operation, barbecue, protest, or picnic. Although the County allows all gatherings to occur in compliance with this Directive, at this time the State allows gatherings only for purposes of worship services, cultural ceremonies like funerals and weddings (but not wedding receptions, which are prohibited), and protest or political activities. Because the stricter of the requirements applies, the only gatherings allowed in the County are those allowed by the State.

A gathering does not include, and this Directive does not apply to, normal operations held in childcare settings or preschool, kindergarten, elementary, secondary, or higher education classrooms; areas where people may be in transit (like train stations and airports); or settings in which people are in the same general space at the same time but doing separate activities, like medical offices, hospitals, or business environments like offices, stores, and restaurants where people may be working, shopping, or eating in the same general area but are not gathering together in an organized fashion. A gathering also does not include internal meetings solely among employees of a single business held at that business’s own facility or worksite. Those activities are subject to separate requirements and guidance set forth in the Health Officer’s October 5 Order and/or other Health Officer Directives.

This Directive explains the local requirements for gatherings in Santa Clara County. **This Directive is *mandatory*, and failure to follow it is a violation of the Health Officer’s Order issued October 5, 2020 (“Order”).**

### *The Order Issued October 5, 2020*

The Order imposes several restrictions on all businesses and activities to ensure that the County stays as safe as possible. All businesses (including nonprofits, educational entities, and any other business entity, regardless of its corporate structure) that organize or host gatherings—such as religious institutions, wedding venues, wedding planners/coordinators, convention centers, and conference/meeting room rental facilities—must comply with the following requirements:

- **Social Distancing Protocol:** All businesses and governmental entities must fill out and submit an updated Social Distancing Protocol within 14 days of the Order’s effective date. The Social Distancing Protocol must be filled out using an updated template, which will be available [here](#). The Protocol is submitted under penalty of perjury, meaning that everything written on the form must be truthful and accurate to the best of the signer’s knowledge, and submitting false information is a crime. The Protocol must be distributed to all workers, and it must be accessible to all officials who are enforcing the Order.

- **Signage:** All businesses and governmental entities must print (1) an updated COVID-19 PREPARED Sign and (2) a Social Distancing Protocol Visitor Information Sheet, and both must be posted prominently at all facility entrances. These are available for printing after submission of the Social Distancing Protocol online. The Social Distancing Protocol specifies additional signage requirements.
- **Face Coverings:** Everyone must wear face coverings at all times specified in the California Department of Public Health’s mandatory [Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings](#) (“Face Covering Guidance”) and in any specific directives issued by the County Health Officer. **Unless otherwise stated in this Directive, face coverings must be worn at all times when attending a gathering.** Further, even where not required under State or local guidance and orders, face coverings should be worn to the maximum extent possible (1) when indoors and not in one’s own residence and (2) whenever outdoors and within six feet of anyone outside one’s own household.

**Capacity Limitation:** All businesses must limit the number of people inside the facility at the same time to ensure that everyone is able to maintain at least 6 feet of social distance from everyone outside their household at all times. This Directive specifies additional capacity limits for indoor gatherings.

### ***Mandatory Requirements for All Gatherings***

In general, the more people a person interacts with at a gathering, the closer the physical interaction is, the more enclosed the gathering space is, and the longer the interaction lasts, the higher the risk that a person with an unknown SARS-CoV-2 infection (the infection that causes COVID-19) might spread it to others. If not everyone follows the rules to safely gather, the risk of spreading SARS-CoV-2 is even higher. Based on those principles, the Health Officer’s directives for *all* gatherings are:

*1. If Gathering, the Health Officer Strongly Urges You to Gather Outdoors*

- Gatherings that occur outdoors are significantly safer than indoor gatherings. To qualify as an outdoor gathering, the gathering must be held entirely outside, except that attendees may go inside to use restrooms as long as the restrooms are frequently sanitized.
- The maximum number of people allowed at an outdoor gathering of any type is **200 people** (even if the space is big enough to allow proper social distancing for more than 200 people). This includes everyone present, such as hosts, workers, and guests. The space must be large enough so that everyone at a gathering can maintain at least 6-foot social distance from anyone (other than people from their own household).

- Example 1: A small church hosts a funeral ceremony in its churchyard. The churchyard is only big enough to allow 100 people to easily maintain 6-foot social distancing between households at all times. **No more than 100 people may be present at the funeral ceremony.**
- Example 2: A couple holds their wedding ceremony outdoors at a historic hotel. The outdoor ceremony space is big enough for 250 people to maintain 6-foot distancing. **Even so, no more than 200 people may be present at the wedding ceremony, as 200 is the absolute maximum for outdoor gatherings.**
- A gathering is considered an outdoor gathering only if it is held at a facility that allows the free flow of outdoor air through the entire space. To qualify as an outdoor facility, the facility must meet **one** of the following requirements:
  - a. The facility is completely uncovered and open to the sky (meaning no shade structures are in use other than individual table umbrellas), such as an outdoor courtyard or patio; or,
  - b. If the facility is covered (in whole or in part) by a temporary or permanent shade structure (such as an awning, canopy, or roof), at least 50% of its perimeter is open to the outdoors. For example, a square tent with a roof must have at least two of its sides completely open to qualify as an outdoor facility.
- Fences and screens that do not impede airflow are not considered walls or sides for purposes of determining whether an area is outdoors. Partitions around or within the facility may be used and do not qualify as sides so long as they are no more than 4 feet in height as measured from the floor.

## 2. *The Health Officer Strongly Discourages Indoor Gatherings, But They Are Allowed*

The maximum number of people allowed at an indoor gathering is **100 people OR 25% of the facility's capacity**, whichever is **fewer**. This includes everyone present, such as hosts, workers, and guests.

- Example 1: A hotel hosts a political event in its grand ballroom, which is 50,000 square feet. **No more than 100 people may be present at the event because this is the absolute maximum for indoor gatherings.**
- Example 2: An organization holds a memorial service at a church which has a capacity of 160 people. **No more than 40 people may attend the service because there may be no more than 25% of the facility's capacity.**

3. *Don't Attend Gatherings If You Feel Sick or You Are in a High-Risk Group*

- If you feel sick or have any COVID-19-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, night sweats, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tiredness, muscle or body aches, headaches, confusion, or loss of sense of taste/smell), **stay home and do not attend any gatherings.**
- As explained on the [People Who Need Extra Precautions](#) page, people at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 are strongly urged not to attend any gatherings.

4. *All Gatherings Must Have an Identified and Designated Host Who Is Responsible for Ensuring Compliance With All Requirements*

- ***A specific person or business (including nonprofits, religious organizations, educational entities, or any other business entity) must be the designated host for a gathering and ensure compliance with all requirements in the Order and this Directive.***
- The host also must maintain a list with names and contact information of all participants at the gathering. If a participant tests positive for COVID-19, the host is legally required to assist the County Public Health Department in any case investigation and contact tracing associated with the gathering. Public Health will ask for the list of attendees *only* if an attendee tests positive for COVID-19. The County Public Health Department will keep this information confidential and use it only for case investigation and contract tracing purposes. Hosts must maintain these records for at least 21 days.

5. *Practice Social Distancing and Hand Hygiene at Gatherings*

- At all gatherings **everyone must stay at least 6 feet away from other people (except people in their own household) at all times.**
- Seating arrangements must provide at least 6 feet of distance (in all directions—front-to-back and side-to-side) between different households. This can be done by spacing chairs apart, or for fixed seating like benches or pews, by marking off rows and indicating seating areas with tape. Seating and tables must be sanitized after each use.
- Everyone at a gathering should frequently wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. The host must make handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer available for participants to use.

- Use of shared items during a gathering is prohibited. People must bring their own picnic blankets, prayer mats, hymnals/religious texts, and similar items. Any item that is normally passed from hand-to-hand, like a donation box, must be put in a stationary place for people to place their donations into one-by-one.

6. *Wear a Face Covering to Keep COVID-19 from Spreading*

- **Except as described below, everyone must wear a face covering at all times during a gathering** (except for very young children, people for whom face coverings are medically inadvisable, or for communication by or with people who are hearing impaired).
- People at outdoor gatherings may remove their face coverings to eat or drink. (Food and drink may not be served at indoor gatherings—including at movie theaters—except as necessary to carry out a religious ceremony.) People must put their face covering back on as soon as they are finished with the activity.
- If an outdoor gathering involves a performance/presentation, performers/presenters may remove their face coverings while they are actively speaking, but they must replace their face coverings immediately after they finish. Anyone who removes their face covering to speak must maintain at least 10 feet of social distance from everyone not in their household until their face covering is replaced.
  - Example 1: A judge is officiating a wedding ceremony. The judge may remove their face covering while performing the wedding service, but they must remain at least 10 feet away from everyone outside their household (including the couple getting married) until they are finished speaking and their face covering is back on.
  - Example 2: A theater company performs an outdoor play in a local park. The play has no live audience and is livestreamed to remote viewers. Performers in the play may remove their face coverings to speak so long as they remain at least 10 feet away from everyone not in their household (including fellow performers) until they are finished speaking and their face coverings are back on. Note that these performers may *not* remove their face coverings to sing, as singing without a face covering is strictly prohibited at all gatherings.
- Face coverings may also be removed to meet urgent medical needs (for example, to use an asthma inhaler, consume items needed to manage diabetes, take medication, or if feeling light-headed).

## 7. *Stagger Attendance at Gatherings*

- For gatherings that have the potential to draw larger groups, like community meetings or religious services, consider offering multiple sessions, requiring reservations that cap attendance at each session, staggering arrivals and departures, and encouraging or requiring that the same group stays together (for example, Group A attends the Sunday morning worship service every week, and Group B attends the separate Tuesday evening worship service every week).
- There is no limit on the number of gatherings that may be held at different times on a single day—for example, a mosque may hold prayer services five times a day—as long as (i) each gathering follows all the rules, and (ii) restrooms, chairs and tables, and any other high-touch surfaces are properly sanitized between groups.
- A venue may host *multiple outdoor gatherings* at the same time (for example, multiple small barbecues in a large outdoor space like a 20-acre ranch)—as long as:
  - Each gathering follows all the rules in the Order and in this Directive. Each gathering must, for instance, have its own designated host who must maintain a list of participant names and contact information.
  - Each gathering has its own area marked by prominent signage, barriers, or ropes, and there is a buffer zone of at least 100 feet between the boundaries of any two separate gatherings.
  - The participants at a gathering, including hosts, workers, and guests, do not mix between or among different gatherings and stay strictly in their own area.
  - There are sufficient restroom facilities, or a system of using the restroom facilities, such that participants from different gatherings do not have contact with one another when they use the restroom.
- A venue may host *multiple indoor gatherings* at the same time (for example, multiple gatherings in separate rooms within a building)—as long as:
  - Each gathering follows all the rules in the Order and in this Directive. Each gathering must, for instance, have its own designated host who must maintain a list of participant names and contact information.
  - Each gathering is fully separated by solid, floor-to-ceiling walls or partitions from any other gathering.
  - Where possible, the HVAC system for each space with a gathering should ventilate to the outdoors, rather than into a space with another gathering.

- The participants at a gathering, including hosts, workers, and guests, do not mix between or among different gatherings and do not enter into a common space with participants from any other gathering.
- There are sufficient restroom facilities, or a system of using the restroom facilities, such that participants from different gatherings do not have contact with one another when they use the restroom.

#### 8. *Rules for Singing, Chanting, Shouting, and Wind Instruments at Outdoor Gatherings*

Singing, chanting, shouting, or playing wind instruments significantly increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission because these activities generate the release of respiratory droplets and fine aerosols into the air. They are therefore subject to the following rules and recommendations.

- All people who are singing or chanting **must wear a face covering at all times** while singing or chanting, including any individual who is leading a song or chant. Because these activities pose a very high risk of COVID-19 transmission, face coverings are particularly essential to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets and fine aerosols; therefore, people who cannot wear a face covering for medical or other reasons may not sing, chant, shout, or play wind instruments.
  - Similarly, the opening of any wind instrument must be covered (e.g., with cloth) to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets from the instrument.
- People who are singing, shouting, chanting, or playing wind instruments are strongly encouraged to maintain increased social distancing greater than 6 feet to further reduce risk.
- People who are singing or chanting are strongly encouraged to do so at a quiet volume (at or below the volume of a normal speaking voice).
- Instrumental music that does not involve wind instruments (meaning any instrument that is played by the mouth, such as a trumpet or clarinet) is allowed as long as the musicians maintain at least 6-foot social distancing.
- Singing, chanting, and playing wind instruments is **strictly prohibited indoors** if there are members of more than one household present.

#### 9. *Maximize Ventilation for Indoor Gatherings*

- Open doors and windows to maximize circulation of outdoor air whenever environmental conditions and building requirements allow. Consider modifications

- to the facility to increase outdoor air exchange, such as replacing non-opening windows with openable screened windows. Contact your local Building Department for more information on permit requirements.
- Indoor facilities with central air handling/HVAC systems must ensure that HVAC systems are serviced and functioning properly and, to the extent feasible and appropriate to the facility:
    - Evaluate possibilities for and implement upgrades to the system to ensure that air filters are functioning at the highest efficiency compatible with the currently installed filter rack and air handling system (ideally MERV-13 or greater).
    - Increase the percentage of outdoor air through the HVAC system, readjusting or overriding recirculation (“economizer”) dampers.
    - Disable demand-control ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.
    - Implement the additional measures set forth in the County’s Guidance for Ventilation and Air Filtration Systems.
  - Indoor facilities that do not have central air handling/HVAC systems or that do not operate or control the system must take the following measures, to the extent feasible and appropriate to the facility:
    - Set any ceiling fans to draw air upwards away from participants.
    - If using portable fans, position them near open doors/windows and use them to draw or blow inside air to the outside of the facility. Position fans to minimize blowing air between occupants, which may spread aerosols.
    - Consider installing portable air filters appropriate to the space.
    - Implement additional applicable measures set forth in the County’s Guidance for Ventilation and Air Filtration Systems.
  - Upon request by a County Enforcement Officer or County Public Health Department Staff, the facility may be required to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the facility’s ventilation and air filtration system by an appropriately licensed professional, and produce documentation regarding this evaluation to the County.

### *Stay Informed*

For answers to frequently asked questions about this industry and other topics, please see the FAQ page. **Please note that this Directive may be updated.** For up-to-date information on the Health Officer Order, please visit the County Public Health Department's website at [www.sccgov.org/coronavirus](http://www.sccgov.org/coronavirus).