



Event Safety Alliance Releases Reopening Guidelines for Live Events

By: Sid Fohrman and Samuel Cohen

Even as restrictions on large gatherings are lifted on the local level, the experience of live entertainment will change drastically in a post-quarantine world. The collective live event industries adherence to safety guidelines and prudent practices based on up-to-date information will be unquestionably critical to our return to enjoying live sports, music, and entertainment.

The music and touring industries are at the forefront of the resurgence of the live event industry. Venue owners and staff are now facing the daunting challenge of striking a balance between safety and practicality during a time of uncertainty. On May 19th, in accordance with a state-approved plan, the [first socially distanced concert](#) was held in Arkansas featuring an acoustic performance by Travis McCready. Among many other safety precautions, the capacity of the venue was reduced by 80% and seats were separated into limited-capacity “pods”.

Other creative studios and agencies, many of which are boundary-pushing leaders in the innovation of live visuals and experiences, are examining new technology that may become universally adopted. They will face difficult questions, as certain technologies, such as [thermal scanning](#), are promising, but expensive, and are thus far unknown to be effective in preventing the spread of the virus. Could PPE designed specifically for nightlife become a new norm? This hazmat-esque [protective suit](#) was designed by the creative studio that worked on Amazon’s Intersect Festival and Skrillex’s Mothership tour.

The Event Safety Alliance (ESA) [has released](#) a comprehensive reopening guide for event professionals and employers. Various live entertainment entities contributed to the guidelines, including venues, promoters, suppliers, caterers, theaters, and universities. Small and mid-size venues, which will be among the first legally permitted to reopen, should pay close attention to this new guidance, as their safe reopening will pave the way for larger events and venues and the live event industry at large.

The ESA notes that “[s]ince there is still insufficient testing, no contact tracing, and no vaccine against COVID-19, this guidance is particularly detailed. The first edition is tailored to be especially useful for event professionals reopening the smallest events with the fewest resources available to mitigate their risks, since in every municipal reopening plan these will be allowed to reopen first.”

Among the recommended considerations addressed in the guide:

- Educating patrons by communicating guidelines via the venue's website, social media channels, ticket purchasing sites, emails and push notifications, mobile apps, on-site signage, and verbally through staff;
- Establishing policies and procedures for sick workers and responding to confirmed cases of COVID-19;
- [Paid sick leave](#): employees in the United States with COVID-19 should be paid sick leave by their employers under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act;
- Contact tracing (as it becomes available) if an outbreak flares up;
- Designating an infection mitigation coordinator;
- Requiring hand-washing for staff every hour, as well as after sneezing, mopping, smoking, eating, drinking and other select activities;
- [Requiring masks](#) and gloves for staff when conducting checks on workers or patrons or when handling any items on which infection can be transmitted;
- Providing handwashing stations at all points of ingress;
- Temperature screenings [for employees](#) and patrons;
- Clear protective shields for will-call and box-office windows;
- Frequently sanitizing high touch areas door handles, sink faucets, soap dispensers, elevator buttons, phones, water fountains, vending machines, trash bins and computers, etc.;
- Social distancing requirements, including limiting accessible seating, and staggering lines into venues so patrons don't have to cluster in lines;
- Documenting that health and safety practices were followed and at the correct intervals, to mitigate the risk of liability;

As we know, things are changing quickly and the guidelines and interpretations described here may change. This article represents our best understanding and interpretations based on where things currently stand. Venue owners, promoters, and other stakeholders may want to tailor their risk mitigation efforts in accordance with a variety of factors, including geographic location, size of staff, layout, and capacity of the venue. Of course, there is no guarantee of absolute safety. Consistent with the guidance, best practices should consider enacting the planning and training required to implement reasonable safety measures as soon as reasonably practicable, while also adhering to applicable directives and regulations.

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