



Coronavirus Pandemic **FAQs: Reopening Virginia**

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Why reopen in phases?

At the beginning of this pandemic, public health experts stressed the importance of “flattening the curve” – slowing the transmission of COVID-19 from person to person to prevent a heavy surge of cases that could overwhelm our healthcare workers and facilities. That is still important now. This disease still poses a serious risk to public health, and Virginia state officials are exercising evidence-based caution to prevent a second surge of cases.

Most of Virginia entered Phase One of reopening on May 15, 2020. The Northern Virginia Region, the County of Accomack, and the City of Richmond entered Phase One on May 29, 2020.

What’s open during Phase One?

Phase One of the Virginia state government’s reopening plan began on Friday, May 15, 2020. During this phase, many businesses and public spaces are allowed to reopen with limitations. Some highlights:

- Restaurants and bars are open for take-out, delivery, and outdoor seating at 50% capacity
- Houses of worship are open for indoor services at 50% capacity and can continue holding drive-in services
- Non-essential retail stores are open at 50% capacity
- Salons and barbershops are open on an appointment-only basis with one customer per service provider
- Beaches are open for fishing and exercise only ([Gov. Northam has indicated exceptions to this for Virginia Beach](#))
- Social gatherings are limited to 10 people or fewer
- Childcare is open for working families
- State parks are open for day use and some overnight use
- STILL CLOSED: Entertainment and public amusement venues (like theaters)
- STILL CLOSED: Gyms and fitness studios (some exceptions for outdoor classes)
- STILL CLOSED: Overnight summer camps
- STILL CLOSED: Schools

Note: this is only a brief summary. For more details on these businesses and information on other businesses like farmers markets, [please click here to read the full Phase One guidelines for easing business restrictions from the Governor’s office.](#)

Any type of business not listed in Section A of the document linked above must still adhere to the Virginia state government’s general guidelines for businesses. [Please click here to read those guidelines.](#)

When does Phase Two begin?

For most of Virginia, Phase Two began at 12:00 am, Friday, June 5, 2020. The executive order that put Phase One rules into effect expires at 11:59 pm, Thursday, June 4, 2020.

This does not apply to the Northern Virginia Region or the City of Richmond. Those two localities will remain in Phase One for the time being, due to less positive health data and a continued need to sharply curb the spread of new cases.

Why are we moving on to Phase Two?

Temporary restrictions were introduced in March 2020 to address the growing severity of the COVID-19 public health crisis. Since then, Virginia state government officials and public health experts have been monitoring health data metrics like testing availability, personal protective equipment supply, hospital bed capacity, percentage of positive tests, and hospitalizations.

State officials have seen improvement in those metrics in recent weeks – however, this improvement has been uneven in places. That is why not every county of Virginia is proceeding through the reopening plan at the same pace. Keeping our seniors, immunocompromised individuals, and other high-risk neighbors safe is still everyone’s top priority.

During the past three weeks, when the majority of the state has been in Phase One, those metrics have continued to indicate positive progress. Our Commonwealth’s testing capacity has increased, the number of available hospital beds has held steady, and hospitalizations have a slight downward trend. All these factors have led state leaders to conclude that it is now safe for many parts of Virginia to begin Phase Two.

What are the restrictions on businesses during Phase Two?

Note: this is only a summary. [Please click here to review the full Phase Two executive order.](#)

Any business not described in Section A of the executive order must still adhere to the Virginia state government’s general guidelines for businesses. [Please click here to review those guidelines and best practices.](#)

RESTAURANTS, FOOD COURTS, WINERIES, BREWERIES, DISTILLERIES

Dining and beverage establishments may open for delivery, take-out, indoor, and outdoor seating. While open, they still must adhere to Virginia’s guidelines for all businesses, which include **but are not limited to:**

- Occupancy cannot exceed 50%
- Tables must be positioned at least six feet apart and if tables are not movable, parties of customers must be seated at least six feet apart
- No self-service of food (except beverages), including condiments and buffets
- Bar seating, lounge areas, and any other area where customers might congregate must be closed except for through-traffic
- Employees working with customers must wear a covering over their nose and mouth at all times

- Businesses must thoroughly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces every 60 minutes during operation
- Tabletops, chairs, and credit card folders must be cleaned and disinfected between every party of customers

BRICK AND MORTAR RETAIL

- Occupancy cannot exceed 50%
- Employees working with customers must wear a covering over their nose and mouth at all times

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

- Occupancy cannot exceed 50%
- Attendees must remain at least six feet apart (exception: members of the same household)
- Attendees may not pass items between groups of different households. Any items used to distribute food or beverages must be disposable, single-use, and discarded.
- Frequently touched surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to and following each service

GYMS AND FITNESS STUDIOS

- Customers and employees must remain at least ten feet apart, including during group classes
- Occupancy cannot exceed 30% and regardless of maximum occupancy, total number of people in facility cannot exceed 50
- Hot tubs, spas, splash pads, and spray pools must be closed
- Outdoor and indoor swimming pools may be open for lap swimming, exercise, and instruction, but swimmers must maintain ten feet of distance and there can be no more than three people per lane
- Employees working with customers must wear a covering over their nose and mouth at all times
- Businesses must clean and disinfect shared equipment after each use. Any equipment that cannot be thoroughly disinfected between uses (ex. climbing wall or rope, exercise bands, etc.) cannot be used.
- Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations must be provided for customers

HAIR SALONS, BARBERSHOPS, NAIL SALONS, MASSAGE SPAS

- Occupancy cannot exceed 50%
- Employees and service providers working with customers must wear a covering over their nose and mouth at all times
- Businesses must provide face coverings for customers or ask that all customers wear their own face covering at all times. Services must be limited to those that can be completed without removing a face covering.
- All tools must be cleaned and disinfected after each use

- All frequently touched surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected every 60 minutes during operation

PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS

- Private campgrounds must maintain at least 20 feet between units for all lots not owned by individuals and rented on a short-term basis (fewer than 14 nights)
- Employees and service providers working with customers must wear a covering over their nose and mouth at all times

PUBLIC BEACHES

- Visitors must maintain at least six feet of distance
- Gatherings may not exceed 50 people
- Alcohol, concerts, group sports, tents, and other forms of entertainment that generate a gathering of people are prohibited
- Common areas like gazebos and playgrounds must remain closed (exception: fishing piers)
- Frequently touched surfaces made of plastic or metal (ex. benches, tables) must be cleaned and disinfected at least every two hours between 9am-6pm
- Public restrooms must be cleaned and disinfected every two hours
- Equipment rental vendors must position groups of customers at least six feet apart and clean items between parties

RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT [OUTDOOR ONLY]

- Occupancy cannot exceed 30% and regardless of maximum occupancy, total number of people in facility cannot exceed 50
- Businesses must install visible markers to separate people standing in line six feet apart and create a flow plan to keep people moving and avoid bottlenecks
- Frequently touched surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected every 60 minutes during operation
- Whenever possible, sneeze guards must be installed at cash registers and customer service stations
- Employees and service providers working with customers must wear a covering over their nose and mouth at all times

SCHOOLS

- Provided institutions of higher learning comply with the general guidelines for all businesses, they may hold in-person classes, trainings, and labs. However, they are strongly encouraged to continue using distance learning wherever possible.

What types of businesses are still closed under Phase Two?

Any indoor recreation and entertainment venue (indoor movie theaters, performing arts venues, bowling alleys, arcades, etc.) are still closed. Social gatherings of more than 50 people are still prohibited, even if they are occurring outdoors. Overnight summer camps remain closed.

Are masks still necessary?

Governor Northam issued an executive order on May 29 requiring all patrons of personal care and beauty businesses, retail stores, restaurants and beverage venues, entertainment and recreation businesses, train stations, bus stations, public transportation stations, and government buildings to **wear a face covering over their nose and mouth while spending time inside.**

There are exceptions to this rule, most notably:

- Children under the age of nine are not required to wear face coverings in the aforementioned public spaces
- Face coverings may be removed to participate in religious rituals

For full details on the face covering rule, [please click here to review the Governor's executive order](#). No end date has been announced yet regarding this rule.

This pandemic is not over, and the same commonsense measures that protected you in the first week are still prudent now. Health experts strongly encourage Virginians to continue teleworking if they are able and to maintain six feet of distance from people who are not members of your household. These are sensible steps we can continue taking to keep ourselves, our families, and vulnerable members of our communities safe.

When does Phase Three begin?

Virginia will move to Phase Three of reopening at 12:00 am, Wednesday, July 1, 2020.

Governor Northam [announced on June 23](#) that he anticipates all parts of the Commonwealth – including Northern Virginia and the City of Richmond – will begin Phase Three simultaneously.

What restrictions are lifting?

Many of the rules and capacity restrictions that allowed businesses to safely move through Phase Two are now easing. Teleworking is still strongly encouraged when possible, and social gatherings are limited to 250 people or fewer.

OPEN

- Retail (essential and nonessential)
- Restaurants, food courts, wineries, breweries, distilleries
- Entertainment venues (indoor and outdoor) open at 50% capacity
- Gyms and fitness studios open at 75% capacity
- Beaches
- Daycares and childcare centers
- Hair salons, barbershop, nail salons
- Private campgrounds
- State parks

CLOSED

- Overnight summer camps

Are masks still required?

Face coverings are still required while visiting any indoor establishment. There are exceptions to this rule, most notably:

- Children under the age of nine are not required to wear face coverings in the aforementioned public spaces
- Face coverings may be removed to participate in religious rituals

For full details on the face covering rule, [please click here to review the Governor's executive order](#). No end date has been announced yet regarding this rule.

UPDATE: Governor Northam announced on June 30, 2020 that bars will not be included in Phase 3 reopening.