



Covid-19 Technical Bulletin: What Public Parks and Recreation Facilities Need to Do to “Flatten the Curve”

Recreation Educational Services is providing this Technical Bulletin to provide resources, assistance, and recommendations associated with the continual evolving Covid-19 pandemic. Information included in this bulletin is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Tennessee Department of Health, National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) and practices currently in place at federal, state, and local public parks and recreation facilities. If a “Shelter-in-Place” or similar order is issued, all parks and recreation facilities must be closed and this information can be used once that order is lifted. We hope the information below provides guidance to assist in decision making for your facilities when determining best practices to “Flatten the Curve”.

Recommended Actions for Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

Parks can remain open to the public during daylight hours for passive recreation (hiking, walking, biking, etc.) that will allow for proper social distancing and only if usage meets CDC guidelines. Recommended hours are from 7am to 6pm.

Interior park areas should be closed based on the list below. Limiting availability to parking spaces may assist in lowering user numbers for passive park areas. If numbers are not reduced, the area will need to be closed.

Close all public gathering spaces to include:

- Offices
- Indoor Facilities
- Picnic Areas & Picnic Shelters
- Seasonal Operations (splashpads, pools, etc.)
- Playing courts and fields
- Playgrounds
- Pavilions and other open structures
- Dog Parks
- Skateparks

This list is not all inclusive and judgement for facilities/ park areas must be made with the best interest of public health and federal, state, and local orders and recommendations.

Public restrooms and bath houses: Closed except for those necessary to meet public and staff needs in compliance with Health Department regulations. (Seek guidance from local Health Department). All closed restrooms and bath house facilities will be posted with closed signage.

Trails and High Use Areas In Parks:

Parks with high visitation and High Use Areas (popular trails, scenic views, waterfalls) may experience large gatherings which impact the visitor’s ability to utilize social distancing as recommended by the CDC. Limiting availability to parking spaces may assist in lowering the numbers. If numbers are not reduced, the area will need to be closed.

Marinas:

All current leased boat slip guests will have access to their boat. Dry boat lessees may contact Marina and/ or Park Management for access.

Reserved Facilities:

Work with existing reservations to rebook to a date after April 30th, or to cancel reservation with full refund of all fees while providing information that rescheduled events may be cancelled based on future conditions.

Park sponsored Events and Programs: Postponed or cancelled through April 30th. Make all rescheduled reservations and events aware that this is a changing situation and even with rescheduling, things may necessitate an additional rescheduling or cancellation based on the evolving situation.

Overnight Accommodations: Work with existing reservations to rebook to a date after April 30th, or to cancel reservation with full refund of all fees while providing information that rescheduled events may be cancelled based on future conditions.

Recommended Options for Recuing or Elimination of Public Gatherings at Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

Offices: Close facilities to public with appropriate closure signage at all entrances that includes information on how to contact office and closure signage

Indoor Facilities: Close facilities to public with appropriate closure signage at all entrances.

Picnic Areas, Pavilions & Picnic Shelters: Close facilities with appropriate closure signage posted at facility. Reschedule or cancel with refund all reservations through April 30th.

Seasonal Operations (splashpads, pools, etc.): Post closure signage at facilities

Playing courts and fields: Post closure signage at playing courts and fields, lock ones that are enclosed with fencing, and remove items used for scoring (nets, goals, etc.). If needed due to continued usage, install closure structures (fencing, closed tape, etc.) around courts and fields.

Playground(s): Post closure signage at playground(s) and lock ones that are enclosed with fencing. If needed due to continued usage, install closure structures (fencing, closed tape, etc.) around courts and fields.

Pavilions and other open structures: Close facilities with appropriate closure signage posted at facility. Reschedule or cancel with refund all reservations through April 30th.

Dog Parks: Close facilities with appropriate closure signage posted at facility and lock gates.

Skateparks: Close facilities with appropriate closure signage posted at facility and lock ones that are in closed with fencing. If needed due to continued usage, install closure structures (fencing, closed tape, etc.) around skatepark.

Restrooms: Close facilities to public with appropriate closure signage.

Parking Facilities

For public parks and recreation facilities that remain open, these facilities should be limited to trails and open space areas only that allow appropriate social distancing guidelines to be followed. User numbers can be limited by reducing available parking spaces or closing parking areas. Many parks have multiple parking areas with some of those areas specifically situated to provide parking for playgrounds, fields, etc. These parking areas can be closed to assist with limiting group congregation. In other areas or park types, the number of parking spaces can be reduced to decrease the number of users in the park as a whole.

Grant Funded Site Compliance

Please be aware that during this time of uncertainty, grant funded public recreation facilities and/or areas will be allowed to be closed and grant compliance will not be impacted. Once the Federal government has determined that it is acceptable behavior to allow groups of people to congregate, grant facilities and requirements will be reinstated.

What's Next?

Promote "Safer at Home" practices.

Look for digital opportunities to conduct programs and events.

Continue to monitor Federal, State, and Local governmental information and adjust closure dates as needed to limit social distancing and "Flatten the Curve".

Steps taken now to increase social distancing and reduce group integrations will likely take two weeks, or more, to show the positive impacts on Covid-19 diagnosed cases. Hold the line, stay strong and focus on the future.

Webpages with additional information:

- [CDC Coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#)
- [Tennessee Department of Health Coronavirus Disease \(Covid-19\)](#)
- [Tennessee State Parks Covid-19 and TN State Parks](#)
- [NRPA Coronavirus Disease \(Covid-19\)](#)