



Interim Guidance for Fourth of July Observance and Celebrations During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

July 2, 2020

Purpose

The following State guidance must be adhered to for the upcoming observance of the Fourth of July holiday. In response to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has implemented a strategic, phased reopening of New York State, and as a component of that reopening, the Department of Health (DOH) urges Fourth of July celebrants to follow these protocols to reduce the transmission of the virus. Further, New Yorkers must avoid large in-person gatherings in excess of the social gathering restrictions that are currently in effect and take the additional necessary precautions to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission, consistent with DOH guidance and Governor Cuomo's Executive Orders.

Background

Under Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's leadership, New York State has successfully slowed the transmission of COVID-19 to a rate that is unprecedented within the country. New York previously had the highest infection rate in the nation due, in part, to the density of our population. After strict adherence to data-driven, evidence-based protocols, including required social distancing and mandatory face coverings, New Yorkers have successfully reduced the spread of COVID-19 to one of the lowest rates among all states.

While the celebration of the Fourth of July is encouraged, it must be done while maintaining public health precautions that will allow New York's phased reopening to continue. COVID-19 is thought to primarily spread person-to-person via respiratory droplets through close contact. As a result, large in-person gatherings present a significant risk to individuals and communities. Therefore, DOH offers these alternative or modified celebrations for communities across New York:

Guidance

Nothing in this guidance would prohibit delaying a Fourth of July ceremony, such as a parade or fireworks display, until later in the summer; and delays in the interest of public health are encouraged. DOH will continue to monitor public health data and may revise this guidance to reflect any changes to the situation (e.g. change in restrictions on non-essential gatherings).

Celebrations that Maintain Social Distancing

- **Virtual or remote celebrations are strongly encouraged** in lieu of any in-person gathering.

- For example, celebration organizers can host an online virtual celebration and consider broadcasting live, if possible; or pre-record a video and make it available through traditional or social media.
- **Any in-person event must be limited to the non-essential social gathering limit** that is currently in effect for the region, consistent with the applicable Executive Orders.
 - Pursuant to Executive Order 202.42 and 202.45, all non-essential gatherings of individuals of any size for any reasons (e.g., parties, celebrations, or other social events) are limited to no more than twenty-five (25) or fewer people in regions that have reached Phase Three of reopening, and no more than fifty (50) people in regions that have reached Phase Four of reopening, so long as appropriate social distancing and face covering requirements are followed.
 - Under Executive Order 202.41, any region that has not yet entered Phase Three of reopening, non-essential gatherings cannot exceed ten (10) people, and social distancing and face covering requirements must be adhered to.
- Any in-person celebration should occur outdoors or in a well-ventilated, covered area. All participants should remain outdoors or under cover at all times, with the exception of restroom use.
 - Open-air rain tarps, tents, and other temporary outdoor structures are allowed for the purpose of protecting against adverse weather or for shade.
- There should be no sharing of food or beverages between individuals, unless they are members of the same household.
- All celebrants must wear a face mask or face covering in public when ever and wherever appropriate social distancing (i.e., staying at least 6 feet apart) is not able to be maintained, unless an individual is unable to medically tolerate a face covering or an individual is under 3 years of age.
 - To the extent possible, all participants must remain 6 feet apart from other attendees at all times, excluding immediate family members or household members.
- All celebrants must stay home if sick.
- All celebrants should practice and encourage proper hand and respiratory hygiene, which is an effective preventative measure against COVID-19 spread.
 - Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:
 - Before and after eating.

- After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing.
 - After using the restroom.
 - Before handling food.
 - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated.
 - After using shared equipment and supplies.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers by children should always be supervised by adults.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the bend of elbow.
 - Dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use.

Parades

- Vehicle caravans are permitted provided that all participants remain in their vehicles for the entirety of the event or display, with the exception of restroom use, if such facilities are made available.
 - Single-direction flow should be clearly marked for cars entering/exiting any celebration area.
- Broadcasting events is encouraged, rather than in-person attendance.

Fireworks Displays

- Fireworks displays must not be promoted or advertised in advance, in order to prevent any unplanned in-person congregation that would be in excess of the social gathering limit.
- However, fireworks display may occur for a drive-in or drive-thru audience, provided that all participants remain in their vehicles for the duration of the display.
 - Single-direction flow should be clearly marked for cars entering/exiting any celebration area.
- Any gathering of in-person spectators must adhere to the social gathering limit, as well as all social distancing protocols, including wearing a face mask or face covering when social distancing (i.e., staying at least 6 feet apart) is not possible, unless an individual is unable to medically tolerate a face covering or an individual is less than 3 years old.

- To the extent possible, all participants must remain 6 feet apart from other attendees at all times, excluding immediate family members or household members.
- Broadcasting events is encouraged, rather than in-person attendance.

DOH joins all New Yorkers in celebrating the Fourth of July and wishes everyone a safe, healthy celebration.

For additional information, please visit:

- [DOH COVID-19 Website](#)
- [NYS Local Health Department Directory](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) COVID-19 Website](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\) COVID-19 Website](#)