

“Alaska’s Plan Forward”—The State Moves to Phase III in COVID-19 Reopening

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With only 404 total positive test results, 44 hospitalizations, and 10 deaths statewide during the pandemic as of May 22, 2020, Alaska took a big step forward in reopening its economy and lifting restrictions on social interaction. Accordingly, during a recent press conference, Governor Mike Dunleavy announced that phase III of the [Reopen Alaska Responsibly](#) plan would begin on May 22.

At the same time, the state issued a phase III/IV [general guidance](#) and [detailed guidance](#), and answers to [frequently asked questions](#) compiled from questions asked during press briefings. This phase III/IV announcement provided for the substantial reopening of businesses in the state, while giving individuals and businesses guidance to aid in preventing illness during these phases. Prior health mandates, including 9 (Personal Care Services and Gatherings), 11 (Social Distancing), 12 (Intrastate Travel), 13 (K-12 Public and Private Schools), and 16 (Reopen Alaska Responsibly Plan Phase I and II), were rescinded if not already expired or superseded by subsequent mandates.

Under phase III, all businesses, houses of worship, libraries, museums, recreational sites, and sports activity sites may open effective May 22, 2020. Under phases III and IV of the governor’s reopening plan, bars, restaurants, gyms, retail stores, and all other businesses can welcome in-person customers with social distancing and other hygiene, cleaning, and sanitizing protocols in place.

However, several exceptions to reopening remain:

- “[The] 14-day quarantine for interstate and international travel to Alaska remains in place. This will be reevaluated by June 2, 2020, but will be reviewed weekly.
- All senior centers, prisons, and institutions will continue to have restricted access.
- Any proposed large public gatherings such as festivals and concerts need to consult first with public health before scheduling.
- The [s]tate will continue to work with large industries to protect their workforce and the communities in which they operate.
- Communities may still elect to keep in place travel restrictions.

- Some Alaskan communities may wish to extend restrictions on non-essential travel into their communities for health reasons. Check with your local community.
- Health Mandates 15 (Elective Medical/Dental), 17 (Commercial Fishing), and 18 (Intrastate Travel) remain in effect.”

The [phase III/IV detailed guidance](#) for reopening issued on May 21, 2020, urges businesses to continue enforcing the policies required under earlier phases such as requiring face coverings, supplying hand sanitizer, and practicing social distancing. The guidance also reminds individuals to practice safe hygiene and cleaning, and to take preventive measures in accordance with U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance if they are experiencing any symptoms.

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National Law Review, Volume X, Number 148

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/alaska-s-plan-forward-state-moves-to-phase-iii-covid-19-reopening>