

Special Event Organizers, Industry, and Community:

The City of Seattle remains in close coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), and Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC), and is following the guidance of these agencies, which are leading on the COVID-19 response. PHSKC issued new guidance on how to protect yourselves and your neighbors, colleagues, families and friends and help us limit the spread of COVID-19. While this is time of anxiety for many people, Public Health believes that Seattle can take steps now to slow the spread of this virus in our community.

This is a quickly evolving situation; please follow [public health](#) for the most up to date information.

The Special Events Committee is currently continuing to process all Special Event Permit applications as they are received, and **no event cancellations have been mandated by Public Health**. Currently Public Health is **recommending postponing public events** when possible. Also, Public Health recommends that residents who are at higher risk stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible and avoid public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. This includes concert venues, conventions, sporting events, and crowded social gatherings.

Short-term preparation

For cancellation or rescheduling inquiries, first contact the agency where your event is located for fee, refund, and availability information: If your event is in a City Park, contact the [Parks Event Scheduling Office](#); if at the Seattle Center, contact [Seattle Center Event Sales](#); if your event is on a City street, contact the [Special Events Office](#).

In the near-term, event professionals should consider taking the following measures (recommended by the [Events Industry Council](#)). Please also refer to the [International Festivals and Events Association](#) and [Washington Festivals and Events](#) information pages about COVID-19 planning:

- Stay informed. Monitor for changes in recommendations about events and travel; follow guidance from health and government offices.
- Prepare to address people's concerns.
 - Prepare a communication plan to keep participants and partners informed, especially in the case of an event postponement.
 - Provide resources updated in real-time from reliable sources about precautions for groups and travel.
 - Share recommendations on how to stay healthy, such as these [social media resources from the World Health Organization](#). These are standard recommendations for the general public to reduce exposure and transmission of a range of illnesses.
 - Provide education to destination partners on health, safety and communications protocols. As an example, see these [recommendations from Destinations International](#).
- Review protocols for sanitization and communication plans.
 - For example, see this article from [Smart Meetings](#) on how to protect your attendees from COVID-19.
 - Review lessons learned from the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2003, including those shared in this [MeetingsNet article](#).
- Consider and plan for disruptions.
 - Develop back up or contingency plans to implement should cancellations or adjustments to your event be required.

- Proactively communicate any cancellation policy changes, such as this statement regarding [airline cancellation policy changes](#).
- Anticipate travel delays for airport screenings and flight and/or registration cancellations from affected areas. Monitor government travel notices for additional information.
- Provide options for virtual participation.
- Consult with legal counsel about your responsibilities, and the impact on event insurance ([see this Skift article](#)), contracts and refund policies.

Long-term considerations

We recognize that this outbreak will impact the health of individuals. It will also hit regional economies that will need support and leadership. Both are why we need to ensure that event professionals are making informed decisions related to travel, public gatherings, and meetings. Prioritizing the health and safety of participants and workers is paramount. Supporting communities at risk is equally important.

If you find yourself in a position to cancel travel or meetings and events, consider instead a postponement. Perhaps you can find other ways to support the communities that have been affected. In doing so, make firm plans to return. Transparent and timely with your communications to partners and event stakeholders will be appreciated.

COVID-19 planning considerations

People who are considered high-risk include:

- 60 years of age and over
- Underlying health conditions including include heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes
- Weakened immune systems
- Pregnant

PHSKC will continue to evaluate the situation day-by-day and keep everyone up to date about any changes to these recommendations.

During this critical period in the outbreak, if it's feasible to avoid bringing large groups of people together, consider postponing events and gatherings.

If you can't avoid bringing groups of people together:

- Urge anyone who is sick to not attend
- Encourage those who are at higher risk for COVID-19 to not attend
- Try to find ways to give people more physical space so that they aren't in close contact as much as possible
- Encourage attendees to maintain good healthy habits, such as frequent hand washing
- Clean surfaces frequently. Standard cleaning products are effective against COVID-19

It's important that everyone take steps to reduce the spread of novel coronavirus, especially to protect those who are more vulnerable. Steps you can take to prevent spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent coronavirus:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands

- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- If you are traveling overseas, check for the latest COVID-19 Travel Alerts and follow the CDC's Travelers' Health guidance: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

All City facilities, including libraries, Seattle Center, and Seattle Parks and Recreations (SPR) facilities, are currently open. If a program or facility is closed, we will notify patrons via web, social media and media. For updated facility and scheduling information please check the following resources:

- Seattle Parks and Recreation [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)
- Seattle Center [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)
- The Seattle Public Library [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)

More recommendations about how to prevent the spread of illness in the home and in the community is available from PHSKC [here](#).

As a best practice to prevent the spread of viruses during this cold and flu season, and in response to general concerns over Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the City is increasing custodial cleaning efforts at our facilities, including libraries, Seattle Center, community centers, and pools.

Coronavirus doesn't recognize race, nationality nor ethnicity. Please help combat [discrimination](#) and stigma around coronavirus. Discrimination based on ethnicity or ancestry will make the situation worse. Having Chinese ancestry – or any other ancestry – does not make a person more vulnerable to this illness.

County and City events contacts

Your events point of contact with King County is Kate Becker, Creative Economy Strategist with King County Executive Office 206-669-4524, kate.becker@kingcounty.gov. Your events point of contact with City of Seattle is Chris Swenson, Special Events Committee Chair, 206-733-9245, chris.swenson@seattle.gov.

Please continue to monitor public health resources and City of Seattle announcements. You are welcome to contact the Special Events Office at any time if you have questions or concerns. We at the Special Events Office continue our mission to support and assist you with your event. We're here to help.

Sincerely,

Chris Swenson

Acting Director, Seattle Office of Film + Music
Special Events Committee Chair
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