



# COVID-19 Best Practices as Amenities Re-Open at AOAOs

*At this time, property managers and boards are being advised to follow directions from state or federal health and government officials.* The rules about what you can and cannot do will vary depending on where you live.

## Best interests of the community

When deciding about whether to reopen a non-essential amenity, carefully consider if the pros outweigh the risks. If you manage a small HOA, you have the resources and tools to ensure the pool will be cleaned properly and frequently, and you are confident that owners will comply with all rules for the foreseeable future, then you can move forward with a concrete reopening plan. However, if you manage a very large community with hundreds of residents, is it reasonable to ask that only 20 people use the pool at a time? Will residents comply with these rules? And do you have the funds to invest in extra cleaning services and supplies? ***If you are doubtful about being able to safely manage non-essential amenities, then it is best to wait.***

## Rules and restrictions

- The reopening of non-essential amenities should be subject to strict guidelines and conditions, many of which will be addressed by local officials of the state of Hawaii.
  - For example, participating 1 on 1 sports with caution of reopening tennis and outdoor racquet facilities.
- The reopening of these recreational activities is subject to compliance with the guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and Hawaii has placed additional recommendations on each activity.
- Amenity use will need to be regulated, and it will not be possible for everyone to use the facilities whenever they please.
- Management may want to look at designing a signup schedule for amenities or shared outdoor spaces to establish a fair and organized process

- They will also need to ensure that every resident who uses a non-essential amenity understands and agrees to follow the rules.
- ***Temporary rules should be properly documented and stored somewhere that all members can read and review them.***
- Consider sharing the rules through email, on your community website, or through a communication feature available on your property management software.

## Best Practices to Reopen Amenities

### Clubhouse

- If your clubhouse has been unoccupied for seven or more days, it will only necessitate normal routine cleaning to reopen the area, as the virus that causes COVID-19 has not been shown to survive on surfaces longer than one week, according to the CDC.
- Because occupancy for resident events should be limited to fewer than 10 people at a time, it is recommended that virtual events are held instead until these restrictions are reduced or removed at the federal and state levels.
- Consider reducing operating hours so proper cleaning can take place.
- A strong focus by staff should be placed on sanitizing work areas, public areas and commonly touched places (door handles, elevator buttons, etc.) and placing hand sanitizers in common areas.
  - *The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a list of EPA-registered disinfectant products that are qualified for use against this strain of coronavirus through the agency's Emerging Viral Pathogen program.*
- The CDC recommends reducing the risk of exposure by making long-term changes to practices and procedures to include reducing the use of porous materials used for seating, leaving doors open to reduce touching by multiple people, opening windows to improve ventilation and removing objects in your common areas such as coffee-creamer containers.



- If food and/or drinks are offered as refreshments for residents and prospects, consider only offering prepackaged foods.
- Elevator button panels should be disinfected at regular intervals throughout the business day.

### Swimming Pools

- According to the CDC, there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in pools, hot tubs, spas or water-oriented play areas.
- Strict and frequent maintenance of these facilities should stop the coronavirus from surviving in the water.
- In addition to ensuring water safety and quality, owners and operators should follow the interim guidance for businesses and employers for cleaning and disinfecting their community facilities.
- The pool water is constantly being disinfected by chlorine, but there may be a need for extra disinfecting of items outside of the pool, such as:
  - Door handles inside and outside
  - Handrails and pool ladders
  - Restroom doors, faucets, sinks, soap and paper towel dispensers, toilet flush levers and baby changing stations
  - Drink dispensing equipment and water fountains
  - Light switches
  - Telephones and emergency shut-off buttons on spas, dials for spa jetsIn addition to posting notices that the social distance policy is to be observed at the pool, pool owners may want to limit the number of people allowed inside the pool area at any one time.
- Residents may be assigned specific days to use the pool and must stand or sit in spots marked out on the surrounding pool deck, maintaining safe distances.
- Limiting the length of time residents can stay at the pool increases the total number of people that can use the pool each day.

- The best way to execute this is to designate blocks of pool time available for people to visit the pool each day.
- An additional consideration is the removal of some deck furniture to further encourage social distancing.
  - Because pool furniture cannot be reliably disinfected between each user, consider having residents bring their own chairs each time they come to the pool.
  - If you choose this option, the pool furniture can be stacked and locked up with a coated cable and padlock.
- There has been discussion among owners in certain municipalities about needing to hire pool attendants to help monitor social distancing, so it is advised to check on all legal requirements ahead of any openings.
- Enforcing occupancy standards and social distancing regulations may be the most difficult aspect of operating a pool this year.
- There are several options to consider for handling this situation, depending on budget, available technology and staff time.
  - Use technology tools to offer residents access to an online scheduling platform to reserve time at the pool
  - Post occupancy limitations and allow residents to self-enforce this rule
  - Pool staff can limit the number of people on a first-come, first-served basis
  - Set hours or days for use by specific groups based on their address or last name
- Locker room and shower facilities shall remain closed.



- Restrooms shall be cleaned and disinfected regularly throughout the day.
- Soap and water or hand sanitizer and/or disinfectant wipes shall be provided in each restroom.
- Pool deck seating or lounging shall be restricted to ensure social distancing in accordance with CDC Guidelines.
- If possible, one or more facility staff or management must be present at each facility location to monitor and ensure compliance with the restrictions within this order.
- Experts also recommend implementing a no-guest policy this summer, as well as eliminating pool parties, games, swimming lessons, swim meets, and water fitness classes.
- If you are planning to hire a lifeguard, their main responsibility should be watching the people in the pool, not managing the behaviors of residents practicing social distancing.

#### **Tennis Courts**

- Similar precautions should be taken with tennis courts as with the pool area.
- Residents may need to sign up to play, and spectators should not be permitted on the courts.
- Only singles play is acceptable.
- Locker rooms and shower facilities should stay closed.
- Restrooms must be cleaned and disinfected multiple times throughout the day.
- Soap and water or hand sanitizer and/or disinfectant wipes shall be provided in each restroom.
- It is the responsibility of management to ensure residents comply with the rules.

#### **Fitness Center/Gym**

- The gym may be the most beloved amenity, but it will also be one of the hardest to reopen. Equipment is close together, and gyms are, well, kind of sweaty.
- Opening your fitness center should first address strength and cardio areas, where you can ensure

proper social distancing will be observed by staggering workout times.

- Gyms may need to be reconfigured to increase the space between equipment, and capacity limitations should be considered, as well as alternating machine use to maintain rigorous cleaning schedules.
  - Equipment will need to be wiped down between each use.
- Placing markers on the floor to indicate where residents can stand to remain six feet apart will assist in reinforcing the importance of social distancing, especially if your fitness center typically experiences high traffic.
- Condo and HOA gyms are seldom staffed, therefore residents would have to properly clean the equipment and cleaning supplies would always have to be available.
- Send an email to residents with new guidelines to include social distancing information, hours of operation, where to sign-up, if applicable, and guidance on sanitizing equipment after use.
- Increasing the frequency of daily cleanings is advised and can be achieved by scheduling gym closures throughout the day to allow cleaning crews or your maintenance team to thoroughly clean the equipment and floors.
- It may be best in the early stages to eliminate 24-hour gym availability to ensure that fitness centers receive a complete cleaning at the end of each day.
- To avoid risking your warranty coverage, be conscious of the guidance from your equipment manufacturer and their recommended procedures for cleaning and disinfecting.
- Following instructions ensures that the maintenance schedule is in line with maximizing product life.
- For the time being, gyms should stay closed.

#### **Party/Game Rooms**

- Residents generally must book party or game rooms anyway.
- Management should restrict or minimize available booking times.
- Limits on how many people can use the room at one time.



- Up to management to ensure that residents comply with the rules.
- These shared spaces will need to be thoroughly cleaned after every use.

### Outdoor Spaces

- Outdoor areas generally require normal routine cleaning and do not require disinfection.
  - The targeted use of disinfectants can be done effectively, efficiently and safely on outdoor hard surfaces and objects frequently touched by multiple people.
- The CDC recommends not using playground equipment because it is typically situated in lower traffic areas and is not regularly cleaned properly.
  - It may be best to resume opening outdoor spaces such as playgrounds by following local park openings in the local area.
- Community gardens are safe to open so long as social distancing rules are observed.

### Routine Maintenance

- Some communities will begin completing routine service requests again if they have not already started.
- Strengthened communication between office and maintenance teams is critical.
- The employee taking service requests should ask detailed questions about the issue in the resident's apartment.
- This will assist the maintenance team to bring only the tools and parts they need to complete a task, thus limiting the equipment they need to disinfect after each job.
- Prior to a member of the maintenance team entering an apartment, it is advised to ask the resident three questions as outlined in the COVID-19 protocol, to include:
  1. Has anyone in the apartment home traveled internationally?
  2. Does anyone in the apartment home have a fever?
  3. Is anyone in the apartment home taking care of someone has been sick?
    - If the answer to any of the above questions is "Yes," the team

member can politely refuse to enter the apartment home.

- The organization can decide if the work should be completed while the resident is not in the home or if it should be rescheduled for a later date after the isolation period has passed.
- Work orders should be prioritized based on the level of urgency with the understanding that there is a limit to the number of service requests the maintenance staff can safely handle daily.
- Management should communicate with residents when to realistically expect a member of the maintenance team to address their request.
  - The maintenance team should follow COVID-19 protocol regarding CDC guidelines while utilizing proper PPE.

### Signage

- Legible signage should be placed in all shared common spaces.
- Signage may include floor markings to assist with social distancing requirements.
- Fitness center signage should include who is responsible for cleaning equipment and, if residents are responsible, it should clearly state the location of the cleaning products and should be regularly replenished by onsite staff.
- There should be signage in all common areas outlining hours of operation and occupancy restrictions to include maximum occupancy allowed during this pandemic.
- If PPE such as face masks are required of all visitors, please note that on signage as well.
- Having signage that clearly communicates information assists with proper observance of protocol and enforcing consistent standards to all who enter

### Liability Waivers

- As you navigate what a soft reopening looks like at your property, you may want to consider proactively taking steps to protect against possible future liability for COVID-19 exposure claims from residents and their guests; these steps may include the use of liability waivers.



- A liability waiver is an agreement between two (or more) parties, where one party, in this case, your residents and/or their guests, acknowledge the potential risks associated with participating in an activity or agreeing to receive services.
- By signing a liability waiver, your residents and their guests will be voluntarily relinquishing their right to sue your company for any damages or injuries that arise from participating in an activity or receiving services, such as using amenities or participating in property events or services.
- Liability waivers are only meant to limit your company's exposure to lawsuits; they do not prevent claimants from filing lawsuits against you.

#### **Seek Legal or Board Assistance First**

- Before reopening any non-essential amenities, boards should consult legal counsel to confirm their ability to safely manage these facilities.
- The liability associated with reopening without being able to properly comply could be a costly and dangerous mistake.
- A lawyer can help you determine which amenities you can reopen, and which ones should remain closed.

#### **Get In Touch**

For more information about reopening your amenities, [speak with our Risk Control team](#) for needs specific to your situation or visit us on the web at [www.atlasinsurance.com](http://www.atlasinsurance.com).

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