

Playground & Athletic Fields / Courts Best Practices During the COVID-19 Outbreak

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy's Emergency Declaration of March 16, 2020 placed a limit of 50 people for all social functions and "gatherings" due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has since lowered the number of persons to 10. The purpose of the Governor's action is to limit social contact in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus.

Consistent with the Governor's Declaration, the Safety Director's office recommends that playgrounds, athletic fields and courts, and similar park facilities that encourage group activities should be closed and stay closed until the Governor lifts the Emergency Declaration. We believe there are significant challenges for a municipal or county playground owner to implement the controls necessary to restrict the "gathering" to less than 50 people at any play area, especially at the large, numerous, and remote parks and playgrounds that many of our clients have. The Safety Director's recommendation for closure of these facilities does not apply to passive recreation areas.

Signs should be posted at the major points of entry to the park and playground, and a notice placed predominately on the park owner's and Recreation Department's websites.

If an owner of a public park or playground chooses not to close their recreational facilities and play areas, the Safety Director recommends the following best practices:

1. Sanitizing play surfaces, railings, gates, and other areas frequently touched by park visitors several times daily. Document person, time, location, and cleaner / sanitizer used. Consider making the Safety Data Sheet available for the sanitizing agent utilized in the event a resident asks.
2. Consider monitoring play and athletic areas to limit occupancy
3. Place signage at points of entry with the following
 - a. Do not use the park and facilities if you are not feeling well
 - b. Groups of more than 10 persons are prohibited
 - c. Maintain at least 6 feet social distance between users
 - d. Wash your hands as soon as possible. Do not touch your face.
 - e. Park hours are 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Governor's curfew)

As noted above, passive areas such as nature walks and peripheral jogging / walking paths do not tend to attract 'groups' and can, at least for now, be left open.

The Safety Director will closely monitor the situation and provide additional guidance as is warranted.

This bulletin is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.