



FAQs: Mass gatherings public health order

The public health order issued March 12 by Department of Health Secretary Kathy Kunkel temporarily prohibits mass gatherings to limit the spread of COVID 19 disease. Here is more information about that order, including subsequent updates:

Q: Why are mass gatherings a concern?

A: The Centers for Disease Control says the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person when an infected person coughs or sneezes, producing respiratory droplets that can reach others who are within about 6 feet. Canceling or postponing large gatherings is a prudent public health measure to prevent spread of the virus.

Q: What is a mass gathering?

A: The order defines a mass gathering as any public or private gathering of 100 or more individuals in a single room or connected space where they would be in close proximity to one another. Examples include sporting events, concerts and conferences. (The Centers for Disease Control on March 15 urged a nationwide halt to gatherings of more than 50 people for the next eight weeks.)

Q: What does that include?

A: That includes auditoriums, stadiums, arenas, large conference rooms or convention centers, meeting halls and theaters.

Q: Are there exemptions?

A: Yes. Exemptions from the order include family events like weddings and funerals; shelters; retail and grocery stores; typical office environments; businesses; courthouses; correctional and detention facilities; all educational institutions; hospitals and other health care facilities and places of worship – as long as they are operating under normal business hours. Airports and other places of transit are also exempt.

Q. What about bars and restaurants?

A: A March 16 amended order requires restaurants, bars, breweries, eateries and other food-service establishments to operate at no more than 50 percent of maximum capacity and no more than 50 percent seating capacity. No more than six people can sit at an individual table or booth,

and all occupied tables and booths must be at least 6 feet apart. Seating at bars is no longer allowed.

Q: Have other states done this in response to COVID-19?

A: Yes. As of March 12, Washington, Oregon and California all have similar measures.

Q: What if I'm unsure if an event falls under the order?

A: Start by reading the amended order, which is available [here](#). If it's still unclear, err on the side of caution.

Q: How long will this last?

A: The order is in effect until rescinded.

Q: Does this order close theaters?

A: No. The order does not require theaters to close – only to assure that no more than 100 people are in close proximity to one another. So, for example, a multiplex theater just has to make sure that no more than 100 people attend any single screening.

Q: What about casinos on tribal lands?

A: The amended order requires all casinos and horse racing facilities to close until April 10. This provision does not apply to casinos operating on tribal lands.