

## El Paso County Site-Specific Variance Guidance

*Adapted for El Paso County from guidance created by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)*

### What is a site-specific variance?

These variances allow indoor and outdoor venues that meet specific criteria to operate at higher capacities after receiving approvals from the county's local public health agency, board of county commissioners, and local hospitals, and finally, CDPHE.

### Who can apply for a site-specific variance?

- Each county can apply with the state for up to 10 variances per 100,000 people. This means that El Paso County can apply for up to 70 site-specific variances.
- Venues that are 30,000 square feet or larger are eligible to apply. Other venues must operate within existing capacity limits.
- Counties that are in Level 1 on the Safer at Home dial may apply for **outdoor** and **indoor** site-specific variances.
- Counties that are in Level 2 on the Safer at Home dial may only apply for **outdoor** site-specific variances.

### What are the limitations of site-specific variances?

CDPHE will not grant any variances that:

- Seek a higher capacity than 50%.
- Seek to be removed from the requirements of the state's orders generally.
- Reduce or eliminate protections for people at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, as defined in the state's orders. These groups are specifically protected by the state's orders.
- Seek variances for Public Health Order 20-29: Voluntary and Elective Surgeries and Procedures or PHO 20-20: Restricting Visitors at all Colorado Skilled Nursing Facilities, Assisted Living Residences, and Intermediate Care Facilities.
- Seek variances from the mask order.

### How does a county apply for a site-specific variance?

Counties that have reviewed and support a request for a site-specific variance may have their local public health agency submit a complete variance form to CDPHE. The application must:

- Clearly indicate which site and capacity limitation the county is requesting a variance from.
- Describe preventive measures the county will require to meet the state's orders.
- Use the [social distancing space calculator](#) to determine capacity.
- Use the [outdoor](#) and [indoor](#) event guidance to create designated spaces within the site as well as develop necessary safety plan elements for all who will be on the site.

### What would cause a venue to lose its variance?

Two COVID-19 cases linked to a site automatically require a mitigation plan. The variance may be suspended at any time by CDPHE, if deemed necessary, to mitigate disease spread. If the county metrics on the "Dial" move to a more restrictive level, the variance may be suspended.

## Applying for a Variance for Your Site

**Elements needed to create a complete application include, but are not limited to, the checklist below. All elements in the CDPHE guidance as well as current Public Health and Executive Orders should be incorporated into the application. The Public Health Order can be viewed [here](#).**

- Square footage of venue – If indoor venues, use largest single room space
- Map of venue WITH occupied floor space depicted (such as furniture, equipment, and displays) - Indicate separately the square footage of space that cannot be occupied by people based on elements/items that will be at the venue based on the planned use of the site-specific variance.
- Increased capacity request, both % and total # of people
- Ventilation plan if indoors\*
- Sanitation schedule and consideration\*
- Handwashing stations and hand sanitizer\*
- Restrooms – Considerations such as access, social distancing, cleaning and disinfection
- Mask wearing for all participants\*
- Health exclusion considerations for staff AND participants\*
- Social distancing considerations\*
- Designated areas – Separate areas of different activities where people will congregate separately for the duration of the activity and may thus fall under different criteria, such as performers and spectators or different activities at an outdoor festival.
- Ensure six feet of social distancing at all times, except for those of the same household/group/cohort.\*
- Signage\*
- Pedestrian traffic flow map - Note ingress and egress for designated areas, one-way flow patterns, and other factors noted on the guidance pages.
- Parking and transportation plan – Overall ingress/egress as well as access to/from designated areas.
- COVID Safety Plan Coordinator – Staff member able to train staff on the COVID safety plan, respond to questions on the plan from the public, and work with El Paso County relative to all matters of the plan.
- Risk assessment analysis

\*See CDPHE Outdoor and Indoor Event Guidance as well as Social Distancing Calculator for more details.

**Complete the relevant form and submit all documents to El Paso County Public Health at:**  
[CovidBusinessRecovery@elpasoco.com](mailto:CovidBusinessRecovery@elpasoco.com)

If you have any questions call the Environmental Health COVID Call Line at (719) 578-3167.