COLORADO
Department of Public Health & Environment

COVID-19 GUIDANCE

Temporary Outdoor Structures for Restaurants and Events

As Colorado starts to experience colder months, the state is looking for ways to provide guidance for restaurants and events to safely provide temporary structures for people to eat outdoors. Depending on the erection or construction of these spaces, and the available ventilation, they will be considered an indoor or outdoor setting and must follow the appropriate capacity requirements. This document outlines the guidance restaurants must follow to provide a safe environment for their customers to eat in these temporary structures. The charts below explain the criteria the state uses to classify a setting as indoors or outdoors and the capacity requirements for each.

In the table below, a wall is defined as any material type that can reasonably restrict aerosols from passing through may be considered a "wall." For example, a loose, mesh mosquito net is not finely-knit enough to reduce airflow and will not stop any particles or aerosols. A fabric sheet curtain and a tarp or plastic barrier are considered a wall because the material would prevent aerosols from passing through.

Temporary outdoor structures classification

Features	Classification	Description
4 walls with ceiling	Indoor	Having 3-4 walls obstructs air flow, and will confine air.
3 walls closed, 1 side open	Indoor	
2 *non-adjacent* sides open enough to provide air flow through the space	Outdoor	With outdoor scenarios, open-air ventilation that lacks the confinement created by wall structures allows air movement. Air movement allows droplets/aerosols containing the COVID-19 virus to disperse rapidly to low concentrations, and move "out" of the space. When there is no air movement, as is the case in most indoor environments, virus particles are trapped inside the space. The virus then recirculates and the concentration of the virus increases as people continue to breathe out the virus.
2 adjacent walls closed and 2 adjacent sides open	Indoor	Unlike the scenario described above, air circulation is likely to decrease in the corner where the two “closed” adjacent walls meet.
2 adjacent walls closed and 2 adjacent sides open - *without* a roof	Outdoors	If there is no roof or canopy, air can circulate in a manner that is akin to typical circulation outdoors.
Ceilings, roofs, umbrellas, or canopies with no walls	Outdoor	This allows open-air ventilation and rapid dispersal of droplets/aerosols.
Single party structures that allow for ventilation between uses (e.g., igloos or bubbles)	Outdoor	Regardless of the number of walls, if the structure can be aired out in between parties it is considered an outdoor setting. This functions as a private room for a single party outdoors.

How does the state determine if a setting is outdoor or indoor?

The state and your local health department makes these determinations based on the typical level of ventilation for the setting. Settings that provide air flow comparable to levels of being outdoors, allowing the virus to disperse rapidly and move out of the space are considered outdoor settings. If a setting does not have adequate ventilation, the air will become trapped inside and the virus will recirculate and become more concentrated. Those are considered indoor settings.

Outdoor settings have open-air ventilation that allows air movement. Air movement allows droplets and aerosols containing the COVID-19 virus to disperse rapidly to low concentrations, and move "out" of the space. When there is no air movement, as is the case in most indoor environments, virus particles are trapped inside the space. The virus then recirculates and the concentration of the virus increases as people continue to breathe out the virus.

At what point does a temporary structure disrupt or confine natural ventilation such that the structure no longer has the outdoor air circulation described above? Here are two examples:

- A structure with a roof, three “closed” sides, or walls, and one “open” side is considered an indoor setting. This structure would have limited air flow and the virus particles would remain concentrated, particularly for people farthest away from the “open” side of the structure.
- A structure with a roof, two *non-adjacent* “closed” walls, and two *non-adjacent* “open” sides, like a tunnel, is considered an outdoor setting. This space has much higher levels of natural ventilation than an indoor space, allowing the virus to disperse and move out of the space more rapidly.

What are the capacity allowances?

Capacity allowances should follow levels for indoor and outdoor settings as listed in the Colorado’s dial framework. These capacity allowances apply to both temporary (pop-up) or permanent structures. For example, if a restaurant sets up a canopy outdoors, then that location may have the capacity allowed per local zoning, and must achieve 6 feet between parties.

Reopening Level	Indoor Capacity	Outdoor Capacity
Protect Our Neighbors	50% capacity with additional increases over time, 500 people	6ft between parties outdoors, unlimited capacity per local zoning
Safer at Home Level 1: Cautious	50% capacity, 175 people	6ft between parties outdoors, unlimited capacity per local zoning
Safer at Home Level 2: Concern	50% capacity, 50 people (or up to 100 with calculator)	6ft between parties outdoors, unlimited capacity per local zoning
Safer at Home Level 3: High Risk	25% capacity, 50 people	6ft between parties outdoors, unlimited capacity per local zoning
Stay at Home	Take out or delivery only	Take out or delivery only

How are fire codes and regulations for heating elements defined?

Please follow your local fire codes and regulations. All local codes, permits, or other regulations apply.

In any setting, how do you optimize ventilation?

Please use this guidance from CDPHE to optimize your ventilation in any setting. Increasing ventilation reduces the concentration of any viruses that may be in the air. It's important to note that, by itself, increasing ventilation is not enough to protect people from COVID-19. You should increase ventilation and follow other best practices recommended by CDC and others, including disinfecting, wearing masks, and social distancing. Increasing ventilation can be part of a plan to protect people indoors.