



Brewery Reopening FAQ & Best Practices

CALIFORNIA CRAFT BREWERS ASSOCIATION

Last Updated: June 11, 2020 (change made to FAQ on live music)

Below is a list of frequently asked questions for the reopening of your brewery. The [California Craft Brewers Association \(CCBA\)](#) developed this document to assist your business in planning for the new era of hospitality during COVID-19 mitigation efforts across the state.

The CCBA provides information to help California brewers comply with statewide regulations and is intended only as general guidance. The FAQ below is not legal advice and does not replace the advice or representation of a licensed attorney. The CCBA highly recommends that all licensed beer manufacturers have an attorney or consultant review matters pertaining to compliance.

REOPENING TIMELINE

Am I allowed to re-open my brewery tasting room? Do I still need to serve a meal?

The state of California is allowing regional variance in the reopening timeline. This means some counties will move through the stages of re-opening more quickly than others. It is important to understand what stage your county is currently at to answer this question.

As of June 9, the majority of counties have moved into stage 2, which includes the reopening of onsite or “dine in” sales for restaurants and breweries with the requirement to serve meals in conjunction with all alcohol sales. If your county is open for stage 2, your brewery must comply with [the state’s “dine-in” requirements](#). There may be additional county-level requirements in place. For example, Bay Area counties are allowing only patio “dine in” in stage 2 but no indoor dining.

To open your brewery tasting room without the requirement to serve a meal, your county will need to be approved for stage 3 opening of bars, tasting rooms. [You can check your county’s re-opening progress and sign-up for alerts via the state’s COVID-19 website here.](#)

In addition to your county order, it is very important to carefully review [the stage 3 statewide guidelines for the reopening of bars, restaurants and tasting rooms applicable to your brewery](#). There are many requirements on employee training and workplace planning that are mandatory for compliance.

Which guidelines should I follow, the county or statewide requirements? What if my county does not have any local “stay in place” orders?

While the state has issued specific requirements for your business to follow, your county health department may have additional guidance and requirements. Your business needs to comply with both state and county orders. If the state and local guidance conflict, your business needs to comply with the stricter requirement.

If your county has no additional requirements or restrictions on businesses, then your brewery only needs to comply with the statewide guidance. This means that your county is deferring to whatever the state is requiring and not adding any additional guidance or restrictions.

CHECKLIST FOR REOPENING

The following is a brief checklist of common signage, protocols and procedures to have in place, according to statewide requirements. There are many requirements for these items detailed in the [state's guidance document here](#).

Your brewery should have:

- A written plan for how each tasting room location will mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among employees and patrons.
- Internal communications plan for employee training around mitigation protocols & workplace policies, including communication with patrons.
- Protocols for investigating COVID-19 cases in the workplace and evaluating workplace specific risk factors.
- Self-screening protocols for employees and clear direction on using sick time or avoiding the workplace if certain symptoms are detected. If you are doing well checks at works, ensure that your business has appropriate privacy requirements in place in compliance with civil rights and HIPPA. In addition, your brewery should provide a privacy notice to employees and retain a copy on file.
- Internal policy on face coverings, including how and when to wear coverings in the workplace, re-use & washing protocols.
- Clear staffing plan and guidance on cleaning and disinfection timelines, products used, and common touch points that need cleaning after every guest interaction.
- Guidance, signage or training on proper hand washing or personal hygiene requirements for both employees and patrons.
- Additional signage leading up to and within the brewery tasting room to clearly communicate to patrons the requirements from the state and county level on distancing, face coverings, group size, avoiding unnecessary contact, local health department contract info, etc. Signage should also be created for tabletops and on or with menus for clear communication in accordance with state requirements.
- Communications training and guidance for employees communicating directly with patrons on state or county requirements, including but not limited to encouraging the use of hand sanitizer and screening patrons for symptoms, requiring customers to wait in cars or in specified distanced areas for a table.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING STAGE 3 RE-OPENING

The following is an ongoing and frequently updated list of questions the CCBA is hearing from breweries across the state of California. If your question is not answered by the following FAQ, please send it to info@californiacraftbeer.com and CCBA staff will provide guidance or resources to assist you.

Q: For stage 3 do I need to serve a meal or have a food option offered onsite?

No. You are no longer required to serve meals in conjunction with alcohol sales. You are also not required to have a food option onsite.

Q: If my county has moved into stage 3 am I still required to serve a meal on my “expanded” premise covered by the temporary caterers permit through the California ABC?

No. The ABC will not require the meal service once your county is approved and has moved into stage 3 opening of bars and tasting rooms.

Q: Are there capacity limits overall?

There are currently no statewide capacity limits as long as 6 ft of social distance can be maintained throughout the workplace and among guests. However, some counties have set occupancy limits in their local health orders, so double check for regional requirements.

Q: Is there a limit to group size?

The statewide order does not have a limit to group size; however, it is highly likely your county health department will set a limit. In some counties this limit is “individuals from the same household.” Your brewery should have a policy in place for employees to communicate this limit and restrictions to guests upon arrival.

Q: Am I allowed to have a private party as long as they keep social distance?

No. All events or gatherings that would bring together persons from different households, such as private parties, are not allowed.

Q: Do I have to setup physical barriers in my brewery tasting room to separate tables or guests?

You are required to clearly direct groups to an area that is 6 feet apart from other guests and ensure lines and other areas of exit/entry have space for individuals to maintain social distance. Where that is not possible (for example: a host stand), you may need to install a barrier to minimize exposure.

Q: Am I required to offer chairs/table seating for all patrons at my tasting room?

You are required to ensure groups maintain six feet of social distance from other groups and employees in the tasting room. The easiest way to ensure this is to provide tables/chairs that are situated a minimum of 6 feet apart. It may be possible to also use floor markings, barriers or other partitions to separate out spaces. The responsibility is on the business owner to keep this distance/order in place per statewide guidelines.

One important thing to note: the statewide guidance requires you to discontinue “open seating” so a host or employee stationed at the door of the tasting room must guide full parties to their individual table or area and seat whole groups at one time to minimize individual exposure and limit group size in accordance with state and local guidelines.

Q: Am I required to have a host?

Open seating is not allowed. You are required to direct people to their individual “seating” area or area separated by a minimum of six feet from other guests. You are required to direct entire groups to this area at the same time. You could consider assigning a designated greeter or host to manage customer flow and monitor distancing while customers are waiting to be seated and during the entering and exiting process. While there may be alternative ways to direct traffic, the guidance of guests to ensure distancing throughout their experience is required.

Q: Am I allowed to re-open my bar?

You are allowed to seat groups or individuals at the bar as long as six feet of social distance can be maintained between groups.

Q: How am I supposed to screen guests for COVID-19 symptoms?

While there are many possible ways to do this, one option would be to have a wellness question that your host asks all guests upon arrival.

You could also consider posting CDC recommend signage in strategic and highly-visible locations, listing common COVID-19 symptoms and reminding the public that they should use face coverings and practice physical distancing while waiting for service and take-out. You can use these signs to help educate your consumers about the requirements your business must comply with well before they enter your premise.

Q: Are staff required to wear face coverings?

Employees are required to wear coverings only when they are unable to maintain six feet of distance, which likely includes employees taking orders and delivering beer to patrons over the bar or to their table. There may be additional face covering requirements at the local level.

Q: Am I allowed to host a musician at the brewery?

While the state is not currently allowing concert, performance or entertainment venues to re-open, you are allowed to host a musician to provide background music as long as:

- Your county health department and local county order allows it
- You are able to maintain physical distancing for customers and musicians
- The music volume allows for “normal conversation levels” among customers

Q: Are we allowed to have games onsite, such as cornhole?

CA’s statewide guidance requires proper cleaning and disinfecting of all items and 6 feet of distance at minimum between patrons of separate groups. If you are able to properly clean your cornhole set between games in compliance with statewide standards, this may be allowed unless your county determines otherwise. Shared items such as books or games are likely hard or impossible to properly clean between use and should not be available to patrons.

Q: Am I allowed to host trivia if I can maintain social distancing?

Trivia is not allowed according to statewide guidelines.

Q: Can we have patrons fill their own water glasses at the tasting room?

Statewide guidance directs hospitality businesses to discontinue all “self-serve” areas because of the common touch points, which includes water and silverware stations and other self-service items. Utensils, water and other common table items should be handed to individual patrons upon arrival or order or brought directly to tables.

Q: Can we re-fill growlers brought in by patrons?

While the statewide guidance does not specifically address reusable containers brought in by patrons, the generally regarded best practice is to discontinue refilling used growlers due to employee risk. Some county health departments have specifically banned reusable containers such as growlers. If your brewery is filling growlers, in accordance with local orders, consider posting signage on the sanitation procedures for refill and minimize any bare-hand contact with growler or dispensing equipment.

Q: Am I allowed to offer tastings to patrons?

Yes, but you are required to provide a clean tasting glass for each taste and continue to maintain social distance or face coverings when six feet of separation cannot be maintained between employees and patrons.

Q: Am I allowed to offer tours of the brewery?

Tours must be limited to local group size restrictions and employees must maintain six feet of distance from tour group. Tastings on the tour must also comply with all other restrictions around cleanliness.

Q: Who has the authority to enforce the state or local health orders at my brewery?

State and local health departments regulate all breweries. The county health department has broad enforcement powers and may set stricter rules than the state. Local health departments have the authority to close your business for not meeting their requirements. The ABC has the authority to revoke your alcohol license for not complying with either state or local public safety orders.

Q: Do I still need to comply with other laws relevant to my employees, business or brewery during reopening?

Yes. These guidelines do not change current ABC regulations, employment law, and existing health and safety requirements. It is important to stay current on changes to public health guidance and state/local orders as the COVID-19 situation continues. These guidelines could change. In addition, Cal/OSHA has more comprehensive guidance on their [Cal/OSHA Interim General Guidelines on Protecting Workers from COVID-19 webpage](#). The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration has guidance for restaurants](#) and the CDC has additional requirements in their [guidance for restaurants](#).

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA CRAFT BREWERS ASSOCIATION (CCBA)

The CCBA is the nonprofit trade association representing the craft brewing industry in California. Its mission is to connect and empower the craft brewers of California through education, advocacy and communication. For more information about the CCBA visit www.californiacraftbeer.com or email info@californiacraftbeer.com. The CCBA provides information to help California brewers comply with statewide regulations and is intended only as general guidance. The FAQ below is not legal advice and does not replace the advice or representation of a licensed attorney. The CCBA highly recommends that all licensed beer manufacturers have an attorney or consultant review matters pertaining to compliance.

