



HeritageRail Alliance
Recommended Practices for Reopening
Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums
Approved 4-8-20

Although museums and tourist railroads may differ greatly from one another, they share certain environments and logistical situations. This paper will attempt to describe those situations and HRA members can select those that apply.

Assumptions

1. Covid-19 will remain a danger to the public for the remainder of 2020 and likely beyond.
2. In order to resume operations and serve the public, railway museums and tourist railroads must for the foreseeable future adapt to the new normal of minimizing exposure to the virus.

Disclaimers

It is impossible to guarantee no risk of infection. The purpose of this paper is to recommend measures to minimize the risk for HRA members who feel they must reopen. Please note that preferred measures are suggested first. If they are not feasible, secondary measures are proposed that will still help.

Railway museums and tourist railroads may be subject to local laws; emergency rules or other restrictions imposed by states, local governments or others that supersede these recommendations.

The information provided in this document does not and is not intended to constitute legal or public health advice. All information, content and materials available in this document are for general informational purposes only.

Behind the scenes

Before opening for the public, railroads/museums will want to reopen their offices, shops, stores, archives and other behind the scenes facilities to staff. This is the opportunity to put in place many of the measures listed below, including infrared thermometer checks, social distancing, masks and sanitation stations.

Before opening behind the scenes, a plan should be in place to monitor the health of all staff, paid or volunteer. There should also be a plan in place that covers all the precautions necessary to minimize the virus risk. Staff should receive training before resuming work.

Each staff member should fill out the Mayo Clinic self-assessment or comparable and be checked with an infrared thermometer before being admitted to the workplace.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/covid-19-self-assessment-tool>

Whoever uses a work station, piece of equipment or tool should sanitize it when finished with it.

It is necessary for management to know if a staff member contracts the virus, so that person can quarantine off-site.

Opening for the public

Universal recommendations

1. Social distancing is required in all situations.
2. All staff and visitors should wear masks. If visitors have no mask, one should be made available either free or for sale.
3. Sanitation stations (bottles of sanitizer, paper towels, wastebaskets and appropriate signage) shall be placed at all locations where sanitizing is recommended. These must be kept stocked to avoid the perception of an unsanitary facility. Where sanitation stations are not available, staff should wash hands frequently as needed.
4. All staff should be screened with an infrared thermometer before starting work. All visitors should be screened with an infrared thermometer before admission.
5. Make sure your visitors understand why you are taking the precautions related to Covid-19.

Indoor situations

Admissions

- Preferred: No face-to-face transactions. Admissions and tickets should be sold online and combined with seating reservations. Tokens, badges, tickets or other proofs of payment should not be issued by hand, only printed out by the customer or displayed on a cell phone.
- If face to face transactions are permitted, Plexiglas screens should be installed at the admissions counter.
- Preferred: No cash sales should be permitted. If cash is permitted, wear gloves and change them frequently.
- Preferred: If lobby space is limited, the admissions counter should be moved to the building entrance to reduce the number of people inside. If there are groups of any kind including families, only a single member should approach the admissions counter.
- Preferred: 6-foot distance markings or signs should be installed in the admissions line.
- If the admissions counter or credit card reader are touched by a customer, they should be sanitized immediately.
- If tokens, badges or tickets are issued at the admissions counter, they should be self service at the counter, having been sanitized in advance.

- Have a flexible cancellation policy for pre-sold tickets, recognizing that the virus could intervene to prevent attendance.

Viewing indoor displays

- If the indoor display area is limited and social distancing is difficult, the number of people entering the area should be monitored and controlled.
- If barriers around displays such as railings are likely to be touched, they should be roped off to prevent it.
- If displays are interactive, such as with push buttons or levers, either the display should be roped off to prevent touching, or there should be a sanitation station. Another option is to disable the interactive features that require touching.
- If indoor guided tours are given, group size should be limited to encourage social distancing.
- Within the exhibit area, signage should direct the flow of traffic to minimize congregating and remind visitors not to congregate outside their family group.

Libraries and archives

- Seating and access limited should be limited by social distancing.
- There should be a sanitation station.
- Tables and chairs should be sanitized after each use.
- Librarians and visitors should wear gloves when handling archive materials.
- Items examined by a visitor should be placed in a special bin afterwards for several days so the virus can wear off.

Museum stores

- Limit access to the store to achieve social distancing.
- Preferred: Customers should not be allowed to handle the merchandise.
- Reduce the number of porous merchandise items.

Refer to guidance from the Museum Store Association.

Restrooms

- Preferred: Install touchless toilets, faucets, soap dispensers, and paper towel dispensers.
- If touchless appliances are not available, instruct users to use paper towels when touching faucets, soap dispensers and toilet flushing valves.
- Provide a sanitation station, including trash cans outside the restroom entrance.
- Preferred: Staff should control access and sanitize frequently touched surfaces after each use.

Food services

Preferred: No food service. If food service is provided, follow applicable health codes.

Outdoor situations

Parking: No special measures are required, although parking capacity could be reduced if necessary to spread out admissions.

Exploring the grounds

- Preferred: Sanitation stations should be located by benches or anywhere that touching of objects is likely.
- Preferred: Eliminate access to the interior of rolling stock displays such as engine cabs and passenger cars.
- Preferred: Eliminate access to children's playground equipment.

Train/Trolley rides

- Preferred: 6-foot distance markings or signs should be installed in the boarding area, along with ropes or barriers directing the one-way flow of boarding and alighting.
- Preferred: Sanitation station in the boarding area, with passengers encouraged to use a wipe or towel to grasp handrails, or Crew members should wipe down handrails after every group boards.
- Preferred: Assign seats as needed to ensure social distancing, recognizing that family groups will sit together.
- Preferred: Ventilation inside the rail car should be maximized. Avoid operating sealed window coaches with no ventilation.
- Crew members should wipe down frequently touched on-board areas between trips. Be aware that sanitizers can damage some upholstery and wood finishes.
- If a passenger needs physical assistance when boarding or alighting, crew members should first ask a family member to do it. If that is not possible, the crew member must wear gloves when touching the passenger or a wheelchair. If the person is in a wheelchair, the handles or other parts touched should be wiped down before and after assistance is rendered.
- For crew safety, crew members should maintain social distance while passengers board and alight. Do not "hand" passengers down the steps.

Special events

Most special events involve many of the situations described above, so act accordingly.