

COVID-19 Mitigation Plan

Denali Field Camp Retreats - an adaptation to Alaska Geographic's field course programs

Revised 7/9/20

Alaska Geographic operates its Denali education programs under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Policies and guidelines herein have been guided by the National Park Service, the State of Alaska Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control. The following policies and guidelines have been designed to mitigate community spread of COVID-19 in our programs yet are subject to change as these State and Federal authorities adjust the recommendations and policies. This COVID-19 Mitigation Plan complements Alaska Geographic's overarching risk management strategy and plan, which is [outlined here on the Alaska Geographic website](#).

General Preparedness & Planning

COVID-19 Awareness & Education

- All staff are to be trained on the spread of COVID-19, symptoms, and the COVID-19 mitigation plan.
- Each employee will receive a copy of this COVID-19 Mitigation Plan as well as Alaska Geographic's complete Risk Management Plan and Field Camp Operations Manual.
- Policies and procedures will be updated weekly with the latest NPS, State, and CDC recommendations, state mandates, and best practices, and staff will be trained regularly on any updates.
- COVID-19 Mitigation information will be placed throughout the facility, reminding participants of the required precautions and practices.

Physical Distancing Strategies

Social Groups (Family or Social Bubble)

- Each social group in the program will not exceed 4 adults yet may also include up to two additional youth under the age of 16.
- Participants will only travel in their own vehicle and only enter their assigned social group tent cabin.
- A park road pass to Teklanika will be issued to each registered social group and travel will be supervised by staff and restricted to arrival and departure from the field camp.
- The total program size will not exceed 14 individuals at the field camp.
- Each program will be assigned one consistent AkGeo staff person to limit the number of staff interacting.
- The program groups will not mix or intermingle with other programs or park visitors.
- The number of visiting NPS guests engaging with the program will be limited.

Physical Distancing

- All social groups and staff are to remain 6 feet apart from one another.
- When participants and staff are taking part in strenuous activities, they will stay 10 feet apart.
- All physical activities are to only take place outdoors.
- During activities involving physical exertion (such as hiking steeper terrain), the group members have the option to remove their masks for easier breathing if they maintain a >10 ft. physical distancing from others.
- The program schedule is designed to have the group spend as much time outside as possible.
- Sharing of equipment and materials will be minimized. If equipment or materials must be shared, they will be cleaned and sanitized before they are used by another participant or staff person.

Health & Safety Registration and Paperwork

Registration and Paperwork

- All registration paperwork and payment will take place electronically before the programs begin.
- Potential participants will be presented with the screen-out questions before they decide to register.
- People who decide to register will be required to answer screen-out questions and be informed that these questions will be asked again the day before the program and at the start of the program.
- The signed Participant Agreement (risk form) and Health Information form clearly states the requirement of accurate and pertinent medical conditions for each participant attending.

- Alaska Geographic reserves the right to refuse admission or remove a participant from a program for any reason it deems is in the best interest of the participant group, or the organization.
- The Alaska Geographic Participant Agreement form outlines risks to include illnesses that can jeopardize safety; and this includes communicable and other infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and other diseases caused by coronaviruses.

Health Screenings

- Staff that present COVID-19 symptoms will not be permitted on any programming or in any facility until they meet NPS and CDC criteria for safely returning to the workplace.
- Participants and staff from high-risk COVID-19 groups or who live with high-risk individuals will be strongly discouraged from attending. Consulting with your health care provider is strongly encouraged.
- No individual that has traveled out of state within 14 days of the program start date is permitted to attend. (Note, due to the remote nature of our programs and the limited medical facilities in the area, Alaska Geographic is choosing a more conservative approach than the Alaska State mandates at this time.)
- Screening measures will be instituted based on mandates or guidance from the CDC, the State of Alaska, or the National Park Service. These will include the following:
 - Pre-program screen-out questions (asked in the initial registration process, the day before the program start and at the arrival/meeting of the start of the program):
 1. Have you or anyone in your household had any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days: Fever above 99.5, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, muscle or body aches, a new loss of taste or smell?
 - If, yes, clearance from a doctor will be required for attendance and this may include a COVID-19 test immediately before the program start date.
 2. Have you or anyone in your household traveled outside of Alaska in the past 14 days?
 - This is an automatic screen-out criterion. Please attend another program after the 14-day isolation period.
 3. To the best of your knowledge have you been in direct contact with anyone that was presumptive positive or tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
 - If, yes, clearance from a doctor will be required for attendance and this may include a COVID-19 test immediately before the program start date.
 - During the program, the following screening question will be asked each morning:
 1. Do you have any of the following symptoms: Fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, muscle or body aches, a new loss of taste or smell?
 - If yes, the participant and family-group will coordinate with the staff person on their departure from the field camp immediately.
 - If yes, the entire group will be briefed, and a determination will be made about the continuation of the program based on the symptoms and risk factors.
- The staff 1st aid kits will have a thermometer to assist with evaluations of possible fever symptoms.

Preventative

Face Coverings

- All participants (over the age of 9) and staff will be required to wear face coverings that cover their mouth and nose while using any shared space or within 6' of other people – this includes the shared restrooms, trashcans, common space in the field camp, and the shared trails within the field camp.

Handwashing

- Staff will be trained on proper preventative hand washing and demonstrated to participants.
- Participants and staff are to wash their hands before and after eating, transitioning from one space to another, whenever their hands become soiled, when handling food, after sneezing/coughing, when handling garbage, after using the restroom, and at minimum every hour based on the program schedule.

- Water and soap are the preferred handwashing method. When not available alcohol-based sanitizer may be used. Participants will be asked to bring personal bottles of sanitizer, and staff will have additional sanitizer as needed.
- Whenever possible, handwashing stations with water will be established at the field camp. When away from water sources individuals are encouraged to regularly use hand sanitizer.

Food

- To reduce COVID-19 transmission, no food will be provided by Alaska Geographic, and the sharing of food outside of a social group will be discouraged. Participants and staff will bring their own food.
- Participants will be encouraged to bring easy-preparation meals to reduce their time in the cooking space and the shared surfaces.
- The field camp will have assigned outdoor tables for each social groups. Some additional shared surfaces may be made available and cleaned by staff regularly.
- The Field camp kitchen counter and stovetop will be a shared space. Staff will supervise and designate a schedule of its use and clean the surfaces between use.
- To assist groups with meals, staff will maintain and make available a large pot of boiling water throughout the designated breakfast and dinner times.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

- When cleaning & sanitizing, staff are to wash hands before and after, and will have a supply of disposable gloves to wear if warranted.
- Each first aid kit (with a staff person and in each Alaska Geographic vehicle) will carry Personal Protective Equipment for a responder.
- The field camp and Alaska Geographic vehicles will have cleaning supplies.
- Regular inventories of cleaning supplies will be conducted and replaced regularly.
- All high touch surfaces are to be cleaned and sanitized several times throughout the day and at minimum hourly based on the established program schedule and use.
- Program supplies/equipment are to be cleaned and sanitized after every use.
- The use of soft surface materials will be avoided in education activities and at the field camp. An exception will be the tent cabin mattresses - these will be assigned to one individual/family group, not touched by anyone else and allowed at least 3-10 days between uses by another individual. Participants are encouraged to bring their own covering for the mattresses, along with their sleeping bag and pillow.

Activity Guidelines

- **Hiking:** Walks and hikes will be in single file or dispersed with a 6-10 feet space between each hiker.
- **Hands-on Activities (if used):** Each participant or social group will be assigned their own equipment for the activity. Supplies will be sanitized between groups or between sharing.
- **Campfires:** The area around the field campfire pit may have assigned seating, and participants will be encouraged to bring their own camp chairs to reduce shared surfaces.
- **Biking in the Campground or on the Park Road (this may be an option for some programs):** Participants that bring a bike are prohibited from sharing bikes outside of their social group. Social distancing of at least 10 feet will be encouraged while biking.

COVID-19 Exposure Response Plan

Below are the steps that will be followed by Alaska Geographic in response to actual or possible COVID-19 exposure within a program, based on CDC recommendations.

Actual Exposure: A participant or staff member reports testing positive for the COVID-19 virus within 14 days of being present in a program.

Possible Exposure: A participant or staff member reports that someone they have been in close contact with prior to the program has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.

Responding to illness during a Program

- Any staff or participants who become ill at work will be sent home immediately.
- When an individual has reported COVID-19 symptoms, staff will wear appropriate PPE in any proximity to the individual or areas they may have come into contact with.
- Any shared area that may have been exposed to COVID-19 will be closed and the program may need to be canceled immediately. NPS authorities will be notified and assist in this determination.

In the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case, the individual will take the following steps:

1. Immediately notify local health officials and Alaska Geographic. Health officials and the Alaska Department of Health Services will help Alaska Geographic determine a course of action.
 - a. Your medical provider or testing facility will assist in the reporting process for contact tracing.
 - b. Alaska Geographic's Denali Program Director can be reached anytime at 907-699-6044.
2. **Close all programs for a minimum of 2-5 days.** This initial short-term closure allows time for health officials and authorities to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting Alaska Geographic's programs. Health officials or local authorities will help determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended closure duration is needed.
 - a. Alaska Geographic will discourage all staff and participants in the suspected program from gathering or socializing anywhere outside their home.
3. **Communicate with staff and participants.** Alaska Geographic will coordinate with local authorities and health officials to communicate with any individual that may have had possible COVID-19 exposure.
4. **Clean and disinfect the facility thoroughly.** All cleaning and sanitation will be coordinated with National Park Service staff and Alaska Geographic staff. At a minimum, the following will be done:
 - Close all areas that may have been used by the individuals exposed to COVID-19 and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning to minimize the potential for exposure to cleaning staff.
 - No staff will enter the facility or area for a minimum of 24 hrs.
 - After 24 hours, thorough cleaning of the field camp will occur based on the best practices and guidelines of the CDC and the National Park Service.
5. **Alaska Geographic and NPS Leadership will assess all health and safety procedures, site operations, and the need for increased monitoring and/or training.**