

COVID-19 Mitigation Plan
Alaska Geographic Education Department
MSLC Denali Field Camp- Field Retreats and Courses.
Reviewed & Updated 2/15/2021

Alaska Geographic (Ak Geo) operates Denali education programs under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Policies and guidelines to mitigate community spread of COVID-19 in our programs were developed with the guidance of the National Park Service, the State of Alaska Department of Health, and the Center for Disease Control. These policies are subject to change as these State and Federal authorities adjust their 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, its symptoms, and how to implement Alaska Geographic's 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, mandates, and best practices. Staff will be updated regularly and trained on new procedures when necessary.
- COVID-19 mitigation information will be placed throughout education camps, vehicles and facilities, reminding instructors and 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 four adults and up to two additional youth under the age of 16.
- Participants will travel exclusively in their own vehicles to and from the field camp location and only enter their assigned social group tent cabin.
- A park road pass to Teklanika will be issued to each registered social group. Travel on the Park Road will be supervised by staff and restricted to arrival and departure from the field camp.
- The total program size will not exceed 25 individuals at the field camp for retreats and 12 for field courses.
- Each program will be assigned at least one AkGeo staff person to assist as camp host, helping participants and instructors maintain COVID-19 mitigation standards and protocols, as well as other duties as needed.
- The program groups will maintain social distancing in and around shared sites and avoid intermingling with other programs or park visitors when possible.
- The number of visiting NPS guests engaging with the program will be limited.

Physical Distancing (your individual role)

- Physical distancing (six feet or two meters) will be maintained at all times when possible.
- Masks are required when physical distancing is not possible (around camp, during presentations, in vehicles, etc.)
- Participants and staff stay 10 feet apart from each other when taking part in strenuous activities.
- All strenuous activities will take place outdoors.
- During activities involving physical exertion such as hiking steeper terrain, group members may remove their masks for easier breathing if they maintain a distance of at least 10 feet from others.
- The program schedule is designed to encourage group members to 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.

Prior to your AK Geo Course

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 register will be required to answer screen-out questions upon registration, on the day before the program, and again immediately prior to 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 and/or removal of 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 including illnesses that can jeopardize safety; and this includes communicable and other infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and other diseases caused by coronaviruses.
- If you are eligible, get fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Wait two weeks after getting your second vaccine dose to travel—it takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. (CDC)
- Get a viral COVID-19 test 1-3 days before you travel. Keep a copy of your test results with you during travel in case you are asked for them. Do NOT travel if you test positive. (CDC)
- If coming from out of state, submit a Travel Declaration through the State of Alaska [Travel Portal and Declaration](#) (AK State)

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.
- Staff are encouraged to have a COVID-19 test done on a regular basis during their employment. Frequency will vary based on location, risk assessment and availability. Staff are encouraged to test regularly, especially when working in the park, have children in school or daycare, or come in contact with others outside your household. AK Geo Staff may test during your workday. Testing is available at Denali Borough. Healy testing will be administered in the Parking Lot on the West Side of the Tri-Valley Community Center and will be available without an appointment or prescription through the summer.
- Participants and staff from high-risk COVID-19 groups or who live with high-risk individuals are strongly discouraged from attending. Please consult with your health care provider if you are at all concerned about your status.
- 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:
 - If you're sick, please do not attend.
 - Pre-program screen-out questions will be asked in the initial registration process, on the day before the program start and at arrival or upon meeting at the start of the program. Based on the answers to these questions, participants may be disqualified from participating.
 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?
 - Testing upon return to Alaska is recommended along with strict social distancing for 5 days.
 3. To the best of your knowledge have you been in direct contact with anyone who was presumptive positive or tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
 - If, yes, proof of a negative COVID-19
- 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

Pre-Course

- Know before you go. This is an evolving situation, and our practices may change as we gain new information or as recommendations change.
- AK Geographic strongly recommends that all participants have COVID test 4-5 days prior to your course.
- If you are traveling, follow the Alaska travel and CDC recommendations for your destination and get tested. Make sure you have documentation of the results of your negative test before you travel. Keep a copy of your results with you during travel; you might be asked to provide them.
- While traveling to your course wash your hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; keep six feet of distance from others; wear a mask when in public; carry and use sanitizing wipes to clean surfaces you come in contact with; cover coughs and sneezes.

Face Coverings

- All participants over the age of 9, and all staff must wear face coverings that cover their mouth and nose while within any shared space or within 6 feet 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 that will be demonstrated to participants.
- Participants and staff are to wash their hands before and after eating, when 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 soap and water are not available, alcohol-based sanitizer may be used. Participants will be asked to bring personal bottles of sanitizer, and staff will provide 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 & Food Preparation and service

- Outdoor serving and seating areas will be utilized as much as possible.
- Arrange tables and chairs to allow for social distancing. People from the same household can dine together and do not need to be 6 feet apart – just 6 feet away from other families.
- Additional signage and seating will encourage diners to remain at least 6 feet apart in food service lines and at tables while eating, and to wear masks over their nose and mouth between periods of eating and drinking. Staff will provide a clean place for diners to store mask when eating, for example a disposable paper bag.
- Staff and anyone preparing food is required to wear masks and gloves while handling food for consumption. (Safe-Serve standards)
- Proper hand hygiene is an important infection control measure. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

- Staff and Participants will practice routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, such as workstations, cash registers, touch screens, door handles, tables, and countertops, following the directions on the cleaning product's label.
- Participants are encouraged to bring easy-preparation meals to reduce their time in the cooking space and using the shared surfaces.
- The field camp will have assigned outdoor tables for each social groups. Some additional shared surfaces may be made available. All seating areas will be cleaned by staff regularly.
- To facilitate food preparation multiple stoves and works surfaces will be available (5-unit total) These field camp kitchen counter and stovetop will be a shared space (Family/ Social Bubble) or individually assigned as needed. Staff will supervise and designate a schedule of its use and ensure that surfaces are cleaned between use accordingly.
- Staff and participants will utilize a system to identify clean and dirty eating areas (e.g., red card for soiled and green card for clean).
- To assist groups with meals, staff will maintain and make available a large pot of boiling water throughout the designated mealtimes and to assist with general cleaning.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

- When cleaning and sanitizing, staff are to wash hands before and after, and will wear disposable gloves 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 be equipped with cleaning supplies.
- Regular inventories of cleaning supplies will be conducted and replenished regularly.
- All high touch surfaces are to be cleaned and sanitized several times throughout the day and at minimum on hourly based following the established program schedule.
- 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. Participants are encouraged to bring their own covering for the mattresses, along with a sleeping bag and pillow. Units will be cleaned between program use.

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 who 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.
- **Vehicle use w/ participants** we have established that motor coach operators will meet the below minimum standards:
 - Vent systems will be specially filtered and running at all times to continually refresh cabin air.
 - Fogger-mist systems will be used between group charters for sanitizing cabin and luggage compartments.
 - Drivers will sanitize all common areas each time guests are absent from vehicles.
 - Front seats behind the driver will be left vacant.
 - All seats will be assigned to minimize the sharing of surfaces.

Testing

- Upon Recommendations from local authority, weekly (Denali Borough and NPS policies)
- People who have symptoms of COVID-19.
- People who have had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone with confirmed COVID-19.
- People who have taken part in activities that put them at higher risk for COVID-19 because they cannot socially distance as needed, such as travel, attending large social or mass gatherings, or being in crowded indoor settings.
- People who have been asked or referred to get tested by their healthcare provider, local or state health department.

After your course

- Get tested again with a viral test 3-5 days after your trip and stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel, even if your test is negative. If you do not get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.
- You may have been exposed to COVID-19 on your travels. Regardless of where you traveled or what you did during your trip, take these actions to protect others from getting COVID-19 after travel:
 - Avoid crowds and stay at least 6 feet/2 meters (about 2 arm lengths) from anyone who did not travel with you. It's important to do this everywhere — both indoors and outdoors. Wear a mask over your nose and mouth when in public settings. Masks are required on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations.
 - If there are people in the household who did not travel with you, wear a mask and ask everyone in the household to wear masks in shared spaces inside your home for 14 days after travel.
 - Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness.
 - Watch your health: Look for symptoms of COVID-19.

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 isolated from the group. Staff will seek medical advice and follow our COVID-19 illness guidelines, which may include evacuation from the course. If a participant is evacuated, it is unlikely they will be able to rejoin their course due to remoteness and logistics and necessary quarantine timeline.
- 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.
- Trace and monitor contacts of infected people. Notify them of their exposure.

- Support the quarantine of contacts. Help ensure the safe, sustainable and effective quarantine of contacts to prevent additional transmission.

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 Education Director can be reached anytime at 907-538-9549.
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 who 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.**