



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 8, 2020**

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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Statewide Rollback to Phase Three, Step One, Additional Restrictions Effective December 13th

Governor Baker Announces New Restrictions Statewide for Capacity, Mask Compliance and Distancing Due to Increased Cases, Hospitalizations

BOSTON – Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that effective Sunday, December 13th, all communities in Massachusetts will return to Step 1 of Phase 3, of the Commonwealth’s reopening plan. This will reduce indoor capacities across a broad range of sectors of the economy and tighten several other workplace restrictions. The Administration announced the roll-back to respond to an increase in new COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations since the Thanksgiving holiday that is straining the health care system in Massachusetts.

The return to Step 1 will also require the closure of certain businesses designated as Step 2 industries. These include indoor performance venues and certain high-contact indoor recreational businesses. In addition, capacity limits will be reduced to 40% statewide for most industries, and the limit on outdoor gatherings will be reduced statewide from 100 persons to 50 persons. Additional safety measures will be applied to restaurant dining as well.

These new measures are designed to prevent infection and viral spread, especially in indoor settings. They will create stronger mask compliance, more social distancing, and limits to the time spent with people outside of your immediate household.

The Administration also announced additional guidance for certain sectors including restaurants, office spaces and gyms, to address activities where mask wearing is not possible at all times.

Phase III, Step I:

Effective December 13, all communities will roll back to Phase 3, Step 1 of Massachusetts’ reopening plan, including the following restrictions:

- Outdoor gatherings at event venues will be limited to no more than 50 people

- Hosts of outdoor gatherings of greater than 25 people will be required to provide advance notice of the gathering their local board of health
- Indoor theaters and performance venues and higher contact indoor recreation businesses will be required to close to the public
- Outdoor theaters and performance venues will be limited to 25% capacity, and no more than 50 people

In all communities, capacity will be reduced from 50% to 40% for the following sectors:

- Arcades/Indoor and Outdoor Recreational Businesses
- Driving and Flight Schools
- Gyms/Health Clubs
- Libraries
- Museums
- Retail
- Offices
- Places of Worship
- Lodging (common areas)
- Golf facilities
- Movie Theaters (Maximum 50 people per theater)

This new capacity limit will not apply to sectors that do not currently have a percentage-based capacity limit, including restaurants, laboratories and close contact personal services.

[Click here to read the revised gatherings order.](#)

[Click here to read the order rolling Massachusetts back to Phase III, Step 1.](#)

Restaurants and Venues

The Administration also announced new guidelines for restaurants and other venues with seated dining, including:

- Patrons must wear masks at all times except when eating and drinking

- Restaurants must seat no more than six patrons per table
- Restaurants must impose a 90-minute time limit on tables
- Musical performances at restaurants will no longer be permitted
- Food court seating must be closed in malls

Customers are encouraged to dine only with members of the same household.

Offices and Gyms

The Administration announced new guidelines for workplaces and gyms, including:

- In offices, employees must wear masks at their place of work when not in their own workspace and alone
- Employers are encouraged to close or limit the use of break rooms
- Patrons must wear masks at all times in gyms

The Administration continues to encourage all employers to offer teleworking to their employees when possible.

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