



USA
FENCING

RETURN TO
FENCING

HEALTH & SAFETY BEST PRACTICES

FOR
THE RESUMPTION
OF LOCAL EVENTS

AUGUST 2020



OVERVIEW

USA Fencing (USFA) has developed these Best Practices for the Resumption of Local Events for tournament organizers, division leaders, administrators, fencers and their families to provide guidance as local events begin to resume across the country. The measures covered in this document have been developed based upon the recommendations given by accredited health authorities, including the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

USFA will resume the sanctioning of local tournaments August 1, 2020, once local and national health authorities have determined it is safe for group gatherings to take place, and clubs are permitted to operate or reopen by local and state laws, regulations, executive orders and other legal mandates regarding COVID-19. **USFA's sanction, and thus its insurance coverage, will apply only to tournaments in areas in which they can be operated legally.** It has been, and will remain, the responsibility of each tournament organizer to stay abreast of and comply with the state, local and other legal requirements governing its own location. USFA cannot, as a practical matter, oversee tournaments' compliance with applicable laws, which vary widely from place to place. Nor is it within our competence to provide legal advice.

The following are recommendations, not mandates. They are based in significant part upon current guidelines promulgated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) and other publicly available resources. The knowledge surrounding COVID-19 is constantly changing and tournament organizers' circumstances may differ depending on their geographic locations, facilities, event participants and other factors. Accordingly, USFA encourages organizers and participants to implement the following measures, to the extent reasonably possible, as minimum precautions.

At present, there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 infection. Additional precautions might be appropriate to the extent indicated by an organizer's specific circumstances. On the other hand, some measures may not be practicable for some tournaments, depending on their specific circumstances. The recommendations in this document are not intended and should not be taken to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, nor do USFA or any of its divisions assume any liability or responsibility for the efficacy of the recommendations provided herein.



RISK CATEGORIES

These guidelines apply to in-person club activities that take place during Phases 3 and/or 4 as generally defined by the USOPC and are modified slightly here to accommodate fencing-specific concerns.

PHASE 3 – Public health authorities allow small group activities (for example, less than 10 people) at clubs.

PHASE 4 – Public health authorities impose no limitations on group size at clubs. This assumes **PHASES 1** and **2** – in which individuals were required to shelter in place and/or clubs were required to remain fully closed – have passed in your club's location.

GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUALS

Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines before, during and after participating in a tournament or club activity. And:

BEFORE COMPETITION

- Self-monitor and be symptom free for at least 14 days prior to attending any tournament (See USOPC Self-Monitoring Instructions, below).
- Stay home if you have had close sustained contact in last 14 days with anyone who was sick or known or believed to have COVID-19.
- Stay home if you are sick or do not feel well.
- Provide a note from doctor stating that you are cleared to participate in and/or work a fencing competition if you have had a case of COVID-19.
- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Wash and sanitize all fencing equipment prior to your arrival at the competition venue. Consult the manufacturer for proper cleaning instructions to avoid possible damage to your equipment.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Practice social distancing where appropriate.
- Wear a face mask to reduce exposure to airborne contaminated particles and reduce exposure to others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.



GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUALS

DURING COMPETITION

- Refrain from attending any activity if experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Comply with all safety measures applicable to or prescribed by the tournament organizer.
- Athletes should consider bringing multiple face masks with them for use at tournaments, in the event that one mask gets dirty or becomes soiled.
- Come to the tournament already dressed in freshly washed clothing. Clothing should be suitable for public display and, if competing, to wear under fencing uniforms, such that uniforms can be put on at the venue without the need for private changing rooms. Uniforms should be taken home and washed after practice, not left in the venue.
- During Phase 3, do not share equipment such as weapons, body cords, fencing masks, gloves or uniforms, with others. During Phase 4 – share weapons and body cords only after disinfecting and disinfect it again before it is returned. Do not share masks, gloves or uniforms.
- Athletes should refrain from shouting and/or screaming after scoring a touch.
- Wear a surgical or cloth mask covering nose and mouth, even under fencing masks.
- Practice social distancing as directed and to the extent possible.
- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Refrain from contacting other participants and attendees (handshakes, body contact, etc.).
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.
- Bring and use hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes.
- Bring your own water, snacks, energy bars, etc. to the venue. Food and beverages should not be shared between individuals.

AFTER COMPETITION

- Wash and sanitize your hands often.
- Do not touch your face, eyes or mouth with unclean hands.
- Monitor your health and report any symptoms.
- Practice social distancing.
- Wear a face mask when possible to reduce exposure to airborne contaminated particles.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow if you cough or sneeze.
- Wash and sanitize all gear, uniforms and apparel used during the activity.



GUIDELINES FOR EVENT ORGANIZERS

Adhere to all federal, state and local guidelines applicable to club activities. And:

BEFORE COMPETITION

- Tournament organizers are responsible for advance communication of health and safety protocols to all attendees including: registered participants, coaches, referees, bout committee, armory and sport medicine staff. Any protocols to be implemented should be posted on the event registration page.
- Create and display signage clearly outlining the tournament's COVID-19 policies; post those policies around the venue to encourage social distancing, frequent hand washing, etc.
- Establish and enforce social distancing protocols.
- Establish processes for sale of merchandise or vending that minimize the use of cash as a form of payment.
- Confirm the maximum allowable number of individuals permitted in the venue at one time, according to local and national regulations, laws, executive orders and other mandates, on the dates of your tournament. Be sure the tournament schedule and registration caps for each event are set to remain in compliance with these regulations. Exclude non-athletes where possible.
- Secure adequate quantities of sanitization equipment (cleaning solutions, hand sanitizer, bleach wipes, etc.) to make sure you are able to regularly clean and disinfect surfaces around the venue throughout your competition.
- Disinfect the venue and all equipment where the tournament will take place.
- Close off all private changing rooms or locker rooms, and encourage athletes to come in clothing suitable for public display and to wear underneath their fencing uniforms.
- If your tournament is being held at a venue that you do not own, coordinate with venue management to ensure appropriate cleaning and sanitization procedures are in place.
- All persons must wear surgical or cloth masks covering the nose and mouth while present in the venue.
- Provide hand washing or sanitizing stations throughout the venue.
- Disable water fountains at the venue, except for the no-touch varieties for filling water bottles.



GUIDELINES FOR EVENT ORGANIZERS

DURING COMPETITION

- Continue to clean and disinfect the venue and equipment periodically where the tournament takes place.
- All athletes and coaches must wear surgical or cloth masks covering the nose and mouth (even under fencing masks).
- Conduct temperature checks and health screenings for all individuals prior to their entering the competition hall.
- Any individuals with a fever of greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, or other symptoms of COVID-19, should not be admitted into the venue and should be asked to leave the venue immediately and be directed to the closest hospital or doctor's office.
 - If an athlete tests positive for COVID-19 or has been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, the event organizer should notify other fencers and parents present at the tournament about a possible exposure.
 - The organizer should NOT share the sick athlete's name with other fencers and parents to protect the privacy of the athlete and that of their family.
 - Exposed individuals should consult their own healthcare providers.
- Regularly sanitize surfaces likely to be touched or otherwise infected during the tournament, including strips, reels and scoring machines.
- Avoid having participants stretch, sit or recline on or around fencing strips, where viruses exhaled during competition might settle.
- Remove anyone from the tournament immediately if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms, following the steps outlined in the preceding section.

AFTER COMPETITION

- Sanitize all surfaces and equipment that were used during the tournament.
- Be sure all uniforms and equipment are removed from the competition venue and cleaned appropriately before being used or disposed of appropriately.



GUIDELINES FOR VENDING/SALE MERCHANDISE

Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines before, during and after participating in club activity. And:

- Hand sanitizer pumps or stations should be made available for use at all booths.
- Use of cash as a form of payment should be eliminated or minimized wherever possible.
- Display signs on tables where items are laid out, instructing patrons not to touch the merchandise.
- Vendors must regularly sanitize and wipe down merchandise out for display.
- If equipment demos are to be permitted, an approved protocol for sanitization of demo products in between uses should be provided for approval by the event organizer.
- Monitor the number of shoppers within each booth to ensure sufficient spacing for social distancing.
- Monitor lines for checkout and shopping to ensure six feet of distance is maintained between all individuals in booth.
- Vendors should mark floors to indicate appropriate social distancing for lines whenever possible.



GUIDELINES FOR OPERATION OF BOUT COMMITTEE

Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:

- Require staff working bout committee, referee assignors, referee coordinators and IT to wear masks and latex/nitrile gloves.
- Place hand sanitizer at all tables where a tournament staff member is stationed.
- Periodically sanitize and wipe down frequently touched tables and surfaces in the bout committee area.
- The bout committee area should be set up with plexiglass shields to separate members of the bout committee from tournament participants.
- In cases where an event must be set up with multiple flights, communicate star times in advance to avoid gathering at monitors and usual waiting around in venue.
- Tape floor markings, showing six feet of space from the table each BC staff member is stationed at. No more than one fencer should be at the table with a BC staff member at a given time, and all other fencers for that event should wait behind the line until called by the staff member to come forward. Athletes should ensure six feet between themselves and any others waiting in line.
- Minimize the exchange of administrative supplies such as pens, pencils, clipboards, etc. between tournament staff.
- Sanitize shared clipboards and weapon testing equipment before being given from one staff member to another.
- Sanitize shared clipboards and weapon testing equipment at the end of the tournament day, before putting back in storage containers.

GUIDELINES FOR SHARED STAFF SPACES

Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:

- Maximize spacing between tables in rest and meal areas, and minimize the number of chairs stationed at each table to allow for social distancing as appropriate.
- During Phase 3, provide pre-packaged meal options that minimize the need for shared serving utensils and opportunities for food to be touched by multiple staff. During Phase 4, provide meal options that minimize the need for shared serving utensils.
- Provide pre-packaged sets of napkins and silverware.
- Provide bottled water for tournament staff or advise them to bring their own water in place of shared dispensers.



GUIDELINES FOR OVERSIGHT OF COMPETITION AREA AND STRIPS

Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:

- During Phase 3, remove all seating areas and encourage anyone watching the bouts to practice social distancing as appropriate. During Phase 4, seating areas may be permitted but should be set up to allow as much distance between seats as possible.
- Keep hand sanitizer and alcohol wipes available at all scoring tables.
- Require referees and pod captains to wear masks and latex/nitrile gloves.
- Do not have fencers touch or sign score sheets after each bout.
 - The referee may show each fencer the scoresheet after the bout for verification.
 - Once verified, the referee should sign or initial the sheet to acknowledge it as final for the athletes and send back to Bout Committee.
- Ensure that reel clips and other frequently touched equipment at the competition strips are frequently sanitized.
- Tape markings on floors along strips to show proper distance those watching the bout should remain away from the referee area and fencing strip.
- Designate separate entrance and exit points to the competition area.
- Clipboards, weights and shims must be sanitized before being given from one referee to another.
- When clipboards, weights and shims are brought back at the end of the day, they must be sanitized before being put back into the storage container.

GUIDELINES FOR SPORTS MEDICINE AREAS

Adhere to applicable federal, state and local guidelines. And:

- Expand space available for sports medicine area to allow for social distancing of athletes and training staff as appropriate.
- Require all sports medicine staff to wear masks and latex/nitrile gloves.
- During Phase 3, minimize manual/one-on-one therapies to avoid direct contact and longer periods of exposure for staff and athletes. During Phase 4, some manual/one-on-one therapies may be administered as appropriate.
- Cover training tables with exam table paper and change after every athlete that uses the table. Training tables should also be wiped down regularly with alcohol or bleach wipes.



GUIDELINES FOR SPORTS MEDICINE AREAS (cont.)

- Designate a secondary, isolated space for the quarantine of any individuals exhibiting potential symptoms of COVID-19.
 - This space should be as close to the regular sports medicine area as possible but should be physically and spatially separated from the regular sports medicine area to ensure minimal contact occurs between those in quarantine and others receiving treatment.
 - Individuals exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should be kept in this space until local health authorities have been contacted and appropriate course of action is determined.
- Utilize electronic documentation processes to minimize need for hard copies and exchange of paper, pens, etc. while ensuring compliance with all applicable healthcare laws, regulations and mandates.

GUIDELINES FOR OPERATIONS OF THE ARMORY

- Require all staff in armory to wear masks, a face shield and some type of protective glove to avoid direct contact with equipment and athletes.
 - NOTE: Tournament hosts may also elect to put up tabletop plexiglass walls at the armory tables. These should have a gap at the bottom, between the wall and the table, to allow for all equipment to be passed through. If this protective measure is implemented, individual face shields for armorers are optional.
- Require armorers to sanitize gloves after servicing each fencer's equipment.
- The armory should be set up with the following considerations:
 - A single line should lead to the armory, with markings taped on the floor to indicate six feet of spacing between each person in line.
 - At the front of the line, a mark should be taped on the floor that fencers will not cross until they are called forward. The first fencer in line should wait at this mark.
 - Space armorer stations at least six feet apart to ensure appropriate distancing for armorers and fencers standing in line.
- Markings should be taped on the floor, at least six feet in front of each armorer, where athletes should stand while their equipment is being checked. Only the fencer OR one family member should wait in line for equipment check. Any friends or other family members should wait in an area away from the armory and keep appropriate distance.



GUIDELINES FOR OPERATIONS OF THE ARMORY (cont.)

- The following guidelines are recommended for the process of checking each athlete's equipment:
 - Armorers will call the athlete in line up to drop their equipment. The athlete should then advance to the armorer that called them and drop their equipment for inspection.
 - While their equipment is being checked, the athlete should step back to the marking on the floor in front of the table, to allow for at least six feet of space between them and the armorer.
 - Once the check is complete, the athlete will be called back up to the table, retrieve their equipment and exit the line. The armorer will then call the next athlete forward.
- Schedule a "Pause" every 30 minutes for sanitization of tools and workspaces by the armorers. Equipment check should stop completely during this time.
- Event organizers should attempt to schedule a set time for weapons check for each event, in order to reduce wait time and crowds.

GUIDELINES FOR TOURNAMENT AWARDS CEREMONIES

- Require staff conducting awards ceremonies, athletes and presenters to wear masks and latex/nitrile gloves.
- Modify presentation processes to reduce direct contact between the athlete and staff as much as possible.
- Tape markings on the floor to indicate where the athletes will line up before the ceremony and ensure appropriate space between markings to allow for social distancing.
- No friends or family should be permitted to stand with the athlete while waiting.
- Discourage large gatherings of crowds for photos in the awards area.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

www.usafencing.org/coronavirus

DISCLAIMER

These guidelines are provided for general informational purposes only and are not intended as, nor should be relied upon as, specific medical or legal advice. All event organizers and participants are strongly encouraged to consult with qualified medical personnel and/or public health officials. Also, consult applicable federal, state and local laws, orders and/or guidelines. USFA and its divisions make no warranties or representations as to the completeness, reliability, and accuracy of the information contained herein.



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