

## FAQ FOR SHORT-TERM RENTAL BUSINESSES

### **What are the requirements for a vacation rental to re-open?**

Under the Full Phase I re-opening across the State of Florida, Okaloosa County presented Governor DeSantis and the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) with a Short-Term Vacation Rental Safety Plan outlining additional measures to enable vacation rentals to begin taking reservations and accepting check-ins.

Please review the plan found [here](#) and ensure your rental business is compliant with all measures. There are no additional re-opening requirements.

### **Does the re-opening apply to VRBO and Airbnb?**

Yes, VRBO and Airbnb can now rent properties as long as they abide by the Short-Term Vacation Rental Safety Plan outlined by the County.

### **Is there a time requirement between rentals?**

The County Safety Plan does not mandate a specific time period between rentals. However, owners and managers must allow for flexible time between stays based upon the use of CDC cleaning and sanitization procedures. Rentals are all different, and some will take more time or less time, depending upon the size of the unit being sanitized.

### **Am I allowed to accept reservations from Louisiana, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut?**

While vacation rental reservations can be accepted from high-risk areas the County advises against it. Guests from high-risk areas will need to quarantine for a period of 14 days from the time of entry into the State of Florida or the duration of the person's presence in the State of Florida, whichever is shorter. Guests occupying those vacation rentals must adhere to the quarantine restrictions or be subject to established criminal and civil penalties.

### **What are the out of state travel restrictions for visitors staying with family and friends, in hotels or resorts or vacation rentals?**

For all visitors, whether staying with family and friends, in hotels or in short term vacation rentals, the Governor's Executive Orders specific to travelers entering the state of Florida from areas with substantial community spread apply as follows:

- Executive Order 20-82 directs all visitors arriving from the New York Tri-State Area (Connecticut, New Jersey and New York) to isolate or quarantine for a period of 14 days from the time of entry into the state or the duration of the person's presence, whichever is shorter.
- Executive Order 20-86 directs all visitors who enter from an area with substantial community spread, to include the State of Louisiana, inclusive of those entering by roadways, to isolate or



quarantine for a period of 14 days from the time of entry or the duration of the person's presence, whichever is shorter.

Per the State of Florida's Office of the Governor's executive order 20-80, any person who violates any isolation or quarantine directed by the Department of Health commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, which is punishable by imprisonment not to exceed 60 days, a fine not to exceed \$500, or both.

**Are guests required to stay/book for 14 days?**

No, vacation rental reservations for guests are not required to stay/book for 14 days. However, even if the stay is shorter, if the guest has entered the state of Florida from a high-risk area they must adhere to the quarantine requirements as stated above which means they would need to quarantine for their entire stay.

**How long is this in place for?**

Guidance and restrictions will remain in effect, and be enforced, until further notice is given by the Governor. The duration of the Governor's applicable Executive Orders and Full Phase I re-opening of the state is not known at this time.

**Are there screenings in place at the airport and state borders?**

Screenings are taking place at both Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) and via roadside checkpoints that are installed along I-10 and I-95. When a traveler arrives, each passenger or responsible family member (if traveling as a family) will be required to complete a traveler form with key information, including each traveler's contact information and trip details. They will also be given a traveler card, which has contact information and guidance in case the traveler begins exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Failure to complete the form and follow any isolation or quarantine order from DOH are violations of Florida law.

**Is the order limited to New Orleans or is it all of Louisiana?**

The order applies to all Louisiana residents.

**Will vacation rentals be notified if a visitor who is screened provides their property's address as their accommodations?**

No, it is the responsibility of the traveler to inform accommodations where they are arriving from.

**Are vacation rentals required to give people from the identified states a refund?**

While there is no requirement in place that specifies you must refund guests who are arriving from states that fall under the mandated quarantine, we do encourage you to make every effort to refund or rebook guests during this difficult time.

**Will vacation rentals be provided with the materials specified in the guidance including signage or will we be required to create our own?**



You will be responsible for posting signage that highlights your property's cleaning protocols between stays. Additionally, the guidance states that owners share the following resources with confirmed guests:

- [County Updates and Resources](#)
- [CDC Resources](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Animals](#) (as necessary)

**If a vacation rental has a guest coming from a state that falls under the quarantine rule what responsibility do they have?**

The primary responsibility is to follow all guidelines set forth by the County's Approved Safety Plan, including adhering to the following recommendation, "For the safety of all residents and visitors, we will encourage our tourism partners not to rent to guests from high-risk areas."

Outlined responsibilities to uphold the Safety Plan include the following:

- Provide COVID-19 guidance of any local restrictions that are in place during the guest stay and other related local information. All current information related to such restrictions are posted on the County's website and is easily accessible to lodging operators and guests 24/7 (<http://www.co.okaloosa.fl.us/bcc/covid-19>).
- Adhere to all Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) sanitation guidelines already in place as addressed under [61C-3.001 Sanitation and Safety Requirements of the transient lodging statutes](#). Additionally, the May 1<sup>st</sup> COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Vacation Rental Housekeeping Professionals (VRHP) and the Vacation Rental Management Association (VRMA) <https://www.vrma.org/page/vrhp/vrma-cleaning-guidelines-for-covid-19> shall be adhered to and are included herein by reference.
- Follow the [CDC related guidelines applicable to public spaces, businesses, schools and homes](#) which expand upon the State of Florida & DBPR requirements already in place for safety and sanitation for all lodging.
- Allow flexible time between stays based upon the use of CDC cleaning and sanitization procedures.
- Place signage at each property highlighting the cleaning protocols between stays.
- Supply any and all employees or contractors with [CDC related safety guidance](#).
- Supply guests with [CDC guidance for guests traveling with pets and service/assistance animals](#) if the property is pet friendly.
- Share [CDC resources](#) to any guest while staying in their units.

However, the responsibility to self-isolate or quarantine is the responsibility of the individual(s) coming in from the high-risk areas. At any time, if you believe an individual is in violation of the quarantine requirements, please notify law enforcement.

**What does it mean to self-isolate or quarantine?**



Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been *exposed* to COVID-19 away from others. Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are *sick* with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected.

People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from the Florida Department of Health. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others.

Both quarantine and isolation:

- protect the public
- help limit further spread of COVID-19
- can be done voluntarily or be required by health authorities

Guests arriving from high risk areas are required to self-quarantine or isolate when arriving in the state of Florida per Executive Orders. In both instances this means limiting any out-of-home activity to medical care. You must also avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, and taxis. In the event you require groceries, the recommendation is to utilize meal or grocery delivery service where deliveries can be left outside of the door. Recreation inclusive of beaches, attractions and dining out is not permitted. For more information please see the CDC Guidance [here](#).

**Do vacation rentals have a responsibility to communicate with other guests if they have a guest coming in from one of the identified states?**

With regards to responsibilities and liabilities as it relates to guest services and relations, our recommendation is to consult a legal advisor to confirm the language within rental agreements and communication that addresses the topic.

**What's the responsibility of restaurateurs if they know someone is in the restaurant is visiting from an identified state?**

We recommend restaurateurs review the DBPR mandatory and recommended guidance and FAQ for restaurants and food establishments. Additionally, they should consult with their legal advisors to ensure all potential issues have been addressed for both guests and employees.

**Are vacation rentals required to notify guests who are already booked that they will be required to self-quarantine?**

The County strongly recommends property owners and managers notify guests from high risk areas in advance of their arrival that they will be required to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days. The County Safety Plan states, "Property owners and managers will provide COVID-19 guidance of any local restrictions that are in place during the guest stay and other related local information." All current information related to such restrictions are posted on the County's website and is easily accessible [here](#). Additionally, it's advisable to consult with your legal advisor to ensure verbiage in your rental agreement addresses concerns.

**Do these rules also apply to the hotels?**



Hotels, motels and inns are not affected by Vacation Rental Orders or subject to the County's Safety Plan. However, the guidance within specifies good business practices to be engaged and should be reviewed by lodging management and legal advisors.

**Legally are vacation rentals expected to report instances where a guest is not self-quarantining?**

We recommend seeking clarification from a legal advisor to ensure rental agreements address guest responsibility. A guest's violation of the Executive Order is a Second-Degree Misdemeanor which carries a penalty of 60 days imprisonment, a \$500 fine, or both. DBPR may also take action against the vacation rental license if the owner/management is found to be operating outside the scope of the order or in a way that is contrary to the County's Safety Plan.

**Are vacation rentals required to have the names and destination origins of all guests within a rental? For example, in a larger home with guests gathering from multiple locations will everyone present identification?**

Please remember to follow the guidance set forth in the Safety Plan and the resources cited within. We also advise you seek counsel from your legal advisor to determine ways in which you can best protect your business and employees.