



Questions & Answers Related to Covid-19 Protocols

What Covid-19 precautions are you taking at the Concrete Theatre?

We've been playing the same movies for two weekends instead of one, to keep our audience smaller and make sure everyone has more room. We've taken extra care with cleaning and disinfecting. Since August 23, 2021, we've complied with the Washington state mask mandate, requiring customers and staff to wear masks inside our business whenever they aren't eating or drinking. The mask rule applies throughout our building, not just inside the movie theatre.

Effective September 24, 2021, we're limiting our theatre audiences to those who've been fully vaccinated. We're asking movie-goers to show their original vaccination card, a copy of it on paper, or a digital copy on their mobile device. The vaccination policy *does not apply* to the ice cream parlor or Cinema Two; it only relates to movie-goers in our Main Auditorium.

Why have you taken this extra step?

Because the Covid-19 rates in Skagit County have continued to rise. Our loyal, longtime customers have told us they're not comfortable attending a movie right now. We don't blame them. Indoor gatherings that last two to three hours are not safe for everyone, especially those who are older or at risk for complications from Covid-19. While Fred and I are very healthy, we are 68 and 72 years old, respectively. We're doing what we can to protect our family – and as importantly -- our audience and community.

Some people are angry about your decision to require proof of vaccination. What do you say about that?

We understand that not everyone agrees with this protocol, and we certainly don't like "policing it." We realize that some people believe their rights are being taken away from them. Some have claimed discrimination. Some have threatened to boycott all our businesses. Others have called us Nazis and communists. More than a few have said they hope we go bankrupt, ("I hope you lose the shirt off your back," one Facebook user proclaimed). It is very disturbing and disappointing to see this level of vitriol being directed at us, but we are confident we're acting in the best interest of our customers.

If people are vocally objecting to it, why are you going ahead with the new policy?

We did not make this decision lightly. We have always been staunch advocates for Concrete and East County residents. But as private business owners, we bear the responsibility and the right to protect ourselves and our clientele. Whether people agree or disagree with our decision, it's up to us to determine the best course of action at any given time. We are aware that nothing we can do will completely eliminate

the risk of someone getting infected with Covid-19 from being in our theatre, but we believe vaccines can reduce that risk.

Are some people expressing their support of the new protocol?

Yes, absolutely. We asked our regular customers in advance for their thoughts and ideas. We've received countless messages, calls and in-person expressions of support and thanking us for trying to keep them safe. We've appreciated those who've been respectful, whether they agree with the policy or not: "Isn't this an excellent example of a private business setting standards for their establishment? Nobody is forcing anyone to do, or not do anything. If you don't want to get a vaccination, no one is arresting you or compelling you in anyway. Simply no longer allowing you access to a privately owned for-profit business. You are free to go somewhere that doesn't have these restrictions or not go out to a movie at all." Please keep in mind it's quite common to see more negative comments on social media than positive ones. And not everyone feels comfortable voicing any opinion, since the backlash can be vicious.

Will this new vaccination requirement be in place forever?

We fervently hope not. The Covid-19 landscape is constantly changing and much about the disease is not yet known. We'll be following the Skagit County Health Department statistics and guidelines and will adjust our policies accordingly.

Aren't you worried that people who are opposed to your policies will boycott your business?

We have never been in this for the money. Fred West and I have owned and operated the Concrete Theatre since 2009 and have never taken a paycheck. In fact, because there is almost no profit in movie exhibition, over the years we have regularly subsidized the movie business with our savings and other resources. For 12 years we've been here as a community service, hosting fundraisers and free events and hundreds upon hundreds of movies, whether we have two people in the audience or 20. We've donated tickets and cash to support your nonprofits, and sponsored free holiday events every year. And we spent countless hours staffing popcorn parades and drive-through events during this pandemic.

We were closed for more than 14 months due to Covid-19. We continued to pay all the overhead, maintenance and utilities bills on an empty building. If movie-goers are uncomfortable coming back to movies during this pandemic – and we don't blame them -- we will very likely close again.

Whether there's a "boycott" has very little to do with our future success. We cannot and will not let outsiders make decisions about the health and safety of our customers, our family, or our business.

WE SINCERELY APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING.

Valerie Stafford
September 17, 2021