

AMC Theaters changes course and will require customers to wear face masks

In an abrupt about-face, the movie theater chain AMC said Friday it would require guests to wear face masks when its theaters reopen, after CEO Adam Aron earlier said it would not.

"This announcement prompted an intense and immediate outcry from our customers, and it is clear from this response that we did not go far enough on the usage of masks," Aron said in a statement. "Accordingly, and with the full support of our scientific advisors, we are reversing course and are changing our guest mask policy. As we reopen theatres, we now will require that all AMC guests nationwide wear masks as they enter and enjoy movies at our theatres."

On Thursday, Aron told *Variety* the chain would not require patrons to wear face masks because it "did not want to be drawn into a political controversy," saying he thought it would be "counterproductive if we forced mask wearing on those people who believe strongly that it is not necessary."

AMC, the largest theater chain in the world, plans to reopen in 450 of its 600 US locations on July 15th with limited capacity, after closing all of its theaters around the world in mid-March. The company posted a \$2.2 billion net loss in the first quarter and made "virtually no revenue" in the last two weeks of March, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. AMC also said in its 8-K filing earlier this month that unless it was able to restart operations in July that "substantial doubt exists about our ability to continue as a going concern for a

reasonable period of time.”

Several highly-anticipated movies are scheduled to debut in July, including Disney’s live-action *Mulan* and Christopher Nolan’s *Tenet* from Warner Bros. AMC competitors Regal Cinemas and Cinemark both announced plans to reopen in phases, with Cinemark beginning as early as this week.

Like AMC Theaters, Regal walked back its policy. Regal’s website about reopening now notes that guests will also “be required to wear masks,” with disposable masks made available as needed. Previously, chains like Regal noted that it will not require patrons to wear masks unless mandated by local governments. Cinemark still hasn’t changed its stance.

Alamo Drafthouse Cinemas on Friday said it will require patrons to wear face masks when it reopens. “When we open, the safety of our teammates and guests cannot be compromised. This is not political,” Alamo tweeted, adding it will provide masks to customers who don’t have them.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people in the US wear masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The World Health Organization (WHO) also updated its guidance June 5th, calling for people to wear masks “on public transport, in shops, or in other confined or crowded environments.”

Some states, including California, have mandated people wear masks in public as businesses begin reopening. But President Trump told the *WSJ* this week that he thought some Americans might be wearing face masks as a way to “signal disapproval” of him rather than as a protective measure.

Update, 1:45 ET June 19th: This story originally stated AMC would not require masks, however soon after publish AMC changed its policies in response to the backlash. The story has been changed to reflect its new position.

Update, 3:35 ET June 19th: This story originally stated that Regal would not require masks, but rules on its website state that's no longer the case. The story has been changed to reflect its new position.

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/19/21296698/amc-theaters-ceo-masks-coronavirus-covid-19-adam-aron-reopening>