



SMOKY HILL RIVER FESTIVAL

45 epic years!

HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES FOR SMOKY HILL RIVER FESTIVAL

(Salina, KS 08-21) Smoky Hill River Festival officials announced this week a number of changes in response to recent health directives as provided by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment on August 13. The KDHE amended its quarantine list and guidelines to include “anyone who attends an in-state or out-of-state mass gathering of 500 or more where individuals do not socially distance and wear a mask should follow quarantine guidelines.”

Those individuals who have been vaccinated are not recommended for quarantine, but are encouraged to practice social distancing and mask-wearing. At the River Festival, masks will be available at entryways and other areas throughout the park. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own mask.

“This latest directive will obviously have an impact on the Festival,” says SAH Executive Director Brad Anderson. “We have been making adjustments daily in preparation for the event, but this raised the bar considerably.” As a result of the KDHE directive and with support of the Salina City Commission on Monday, August 16, the Festival will continue to evaluate how to minimize risks to attendees without creating a highly restrictive atmosphere. “Our goal is to avoid high-congestion areas at the Festival and to make the event as safe as possible during the ongoing pandemic and the recent increase of cases,” says Anderson.

The SAH staff have spent hundreds of hours since October of 2020 trying to anticipate the challenges associated with the Festival, paying special attention to children’s activities. Anderson has consulted with local and state health and emergency management officials to aid adjustments to the event.

Numerous changes have been identified and will be implemented for Festival 2021, September 2-5, the most significant of which include:

- The concrete area in front of Eric Stein Stage will be for chair or blanket use only; i.e. all in area must be seated. No standing in front of the stage will be allowed. Backstage areas will be only for performers and stagehands.
- Artists in the Craft Demonstration area will offer unscheduled demonstrations throughout each day, instead of presenting to large groups at scheduled times.
- The 110 exhibiting visual artists may have occupancy limits for their tents. Watch for signage at art-show booths.
- The Food Tent behind Food Row will be eliminated. Picnic tables will be spread throughout the park. Disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be available.

NEWS RELEASE

RELEASE DATE:
Immediate

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DATE SUBMITTED:
August 21, 2021

- Bleachers will be removed from the stage areas. A limited number of seating benches will be provided. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own chairs or blankets.
- More than 25 signs will be added at entrance gates and throughout the park to highlight the KDHE directive and strongly encourage mask wearing and social distancing as much as possible.
- The Artyopolis children’s area will feature take-out bags of craft material for kids to work on with their families in a less congested space at the Festival or at home. Some activities will still take place under the Creation Crossing tent, but social distancing will be strongly encouraged.
- Masks will be REQUIRED for each person who enters Festival Headquarters, to get a henna tattoo, and within the First Treasures tent.
- The Festival will post clear occupancy or gathering guidelines at select locations across the park as necessary. Patrons will be expected to follow all posted guidelines.
- The River Festival website at riverfestival.com will have a complete list of food-vendor menu items and pricing, allowing some people to pre-select their items before standing in line. Online ordering of food is not available.
- Numerous announcements will be made from the stages and at selected activities on-site, to encourage social distancing and mask wearing.

Festival staff will work with the public to minimize “close contact” exposure, considered to be 15 minutes or more in close proximity, and encouraging those in attendance to be respectful of others. Anderson says, “The enduring spirit of the Smoky Hill River Festival is the beautiful way that a diverse community can come together to celebrate the arts and this place in such a unique way.” He says that these Festival modifications do not constitute a park-wide mandate, but serve to benefit a broad section of the community.

The Festival staff acknowledge that enforcement of mask wearing and social distancing would be impossible, but hope that attendees will appreciate the importance of following guidelines to help ensure the success of the event now and in the future.

“To be clear,” says Anderson, “the decision to attend and participate in the River Festival rests with each individual. Understanding the risks of participation is a personal decision. We hope each attendee will make responsible choices while considering themselves, their family, and the community.” He indicated that vaccines have been widely available and that patrons can enjoy every aspect of the Festival while social distancing and wearing a mask.

Festival management reserves the right to alter policies and procedures based on recommendations put forth by local, state, national health, and city officials as needed. For the most up-to-date information, visit riverfestival.com or [Facebook.com/SHRiverFestival](https://www.facebook.com/SHRiverFestival). For specific health and safety information, visit the Saline County, KDHE, or CDC websites to learn more about ensuring personal health and safety.

For needed accommodations, please call Amanda Morris at Salina Arts & Humanities at 785-309-5770 between 8:00 a.m. - Noon and 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. Every effort will be made to accommodate known disabilities. For material or speech access, please call at least five working days prior to the event.

Salina Arts & Humanities, a department of the City of Salina, has served a unique role as an arts advocate and resource partner since 1966. The Smoky Hill River Festival, Horizons Grants Program, Smoky Hill Museum, Arts Infusion Program in schools, Community Art & Design, and Creative Connections are among the programs of Salina Arts & Humanities, located at 211 W. Iron Avenue in Salina.

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