



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 8, 2020

San Francisco's City Gyms Remain Open While Private Gyms Shuttered

Want to go to a gym in San Francisco while  the city is on lockdown? Get a job with the government.

Bay Area news outlets recently reported that while private gyms have been shuttered since March by order of Democratic Mayor London Breed, city-owned gyms for government employees have remained open and done brisk business. [Mission Local](#) learned that one San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) gym “serviced 468 gym-users in the month of May alone” and that “gyms are also open in the Hall of Justice and Medical Examiner’s office — as well as smaller, more informal gyms or weight rooms at police stations and firehouses throughout the city.”

“It’s shocking, it’s infuriating,” Crossfit Golden Gate owner Daniele Rabkin told [KNTV](#).

Rabkin discovered her local police department’s gym was still operating when she asked some officers if they needed a place to work out while their gym was supposedly closed only to be informed that it wasn’t.

“Even though they’re getting exposed, there are no repercussions, no ramifications?” Rabkin said. “It’s shocking.”

Not only are there no repercussions, but officials seem not even to be embarrassed by the revelations. The SFPD issued a statement saying, “The Department requires sworn members perform and pass a physical fitness exam every six months (twice annually). Because of these requirements and the periodic testing, the SFPD has private gym facilities at all locations throughout the city of San Francisco and they continue to operate in consultation with our Health partners.”

Their “Health partners,” however, were seemingly unaware of city employees’ gym usage until reporters questioned them about it. During an August 28 press conference, Health Department Director Dr. Grant Colfax said, “There are allowances in the Health Order for government services to deem what is essential, so there is at least a theoretical possibility that gyms could be open,” though he added it “goes against public health advice.”

In other words, the city can keep its own gyms open on the theory that its employees’ physical fitness is essential while denying similar exercise opportunities to the people who pay their salaries, even if doing so conflicts with health department recommendations.

“It just demonstrates that there seems to be some kind of a double standard between what city employees are allowed to do and what the residents of San Francisco are allowed to do,” Dave Karraker, co-owner of MX3 Fitness, told KNTV.

City gyms are operating under some restrictions. According to Mission Local, “At the Third Street police gym, no more than seven people are allowed in the room at one time, masks are mandatory at all times, and individuals are required to wipe down the machines both before and after use. Workouts of more than 45 minutes are discouraged, and heavy cardiovascular activity is recommended to be done outdoors.”

That’s still better than the rules under which private gyms will be allowed to operate — on an outdoors-



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only basis — beginning Wednesday, Karraker told Mission Local.

“If the city has established that there is a way for residents of San Francisco to be able to work out indoors safely, no matter who they are, that standard should be allowed for every person in the city,” he said.

Moreover, the city’s “permission” to operate outdoors, which it is also granting to beauty-salon owners, “is a hollow gesture,” noted Mission Local. Besides air pollution and the oncoming rainy season, business owners will also have to contend with a lack of space in which to operate. Karraker told the website “the number of city gyms with a sizable parking lot with an established fence that could be converted into an outdoor workout area could be counted on one hand — or even one finger.”

Still, he believes the city’s duplicity could help make the case for reopening private gyms, which are otherwise not scheduled to resume indoor service until at least the end of the month.

“If these SFPD fitness centers have been open the entire time, then they are the perfect case studies to prove that indoor fitness is safe,” he told Mission Local. “If none of them closed because of a covid outbreak, that suggests that other gyms could operate indoors with the exact same protocols and be safe.”

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Michael Tennant is a freelance writer and regular contributor to The New American.



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