

COVID-19 Precautions for Janitorial and Cleaning Services

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has presented new challenges to janitorial and cleaning contractors and in-house staff. Here are some issues and tips to consider:

- Avoid exposure to potentially infected individuals and respiratory droplets as much as possible. This advice is the same as for the general public – stay at least 6 feet away from others (social distancing), wash your hands frequently for 20 seconds, avoid touching your face, and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Check the CDC website for updated, detailed guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

- Consider how the services you provide to your clients may have changed due to COVID-19, or whether you may have added new clients with needs you may not be as familiar with. Consider how these changes might increase your employees' potential exposure to COVID-19 and what new protective measures might be required.

For instance, clients may request more frequent cleaning, and/or use of disinfectants. Are you aware of the precautions required for new, or more frequent use of, cleaners and disinfectants? Have you learned how to safely use any new equipment such as electrostatic disinfectant sprayers? Are you familiar with special procedures or chemicals that may be required for particular clients such as healthcare facilities, residential occupancies or food preparation areas?

- Confirm that any disinfectants used against COVID-19 are recommended by the CDC, are used per the label instructions, and will not damage surfaces being disinfected. The CDC recommends:
 - Disinfectants that meet the EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). See the link to "List N" below. As of this date, no products have been tested specifically against SARS-CoV-2 – the EPA recommends following the label directions for human coronavirus, or a harder-to-kill virus as noted in List N. Be sure to follow the "contact time" (or "dwell time"), which is the amount of time the surface should be visibly wet, as listed in the table. Disinfectants may need to be applied more than once to meet the required contact time.

Also note the types of surfaces and the types of occupancies (Use Sites) the disinfectant is recommended for. Not all brand names of approved products will be found on the list – compare the EPA Registration Number on the product container to List N.

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

- Household bleach at a dilution of 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) of bleach per gallon of water, or 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water. Leave the solution on the surface for at least 1 minute.
- Alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol.
- Ensure employees are trained in the changes to work procedures and protective measures your company implements in response to COVID-19. Ensure new employees who may be hired to handle increased demand are properly trained, especially employees without prior cleaning or janitorial experience.

Different procedures are recommended by the CDC for preventive cleaning, cleaning after persons suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility, cleaning of facilities that have housed ill persons overnight, and cleaning more than 7 days after an ill person has visited the facility. For further details, see these websites from the CDC and the ISSA:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

<https://www.issa.com/education/cleaning-for-infection-prevention/coronavirus-prevention-and-control-for-the-cleaning-industry>

- Ensure access to restrooms with soap and running water for handwashing. If this is not possible in high security or restricted access areas, employees should be provided with hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
- Check in frequently with employees working alone or in small crews by cell phone, radio and/or supervisor rounds. Ensure they are following the protective measures outlined in this document.
- Perform (or update) your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Hazard Assessment. This is an existing OSHA requirement for all types of companies, but you may need to update your assessment to address COVID-19. New tasks or disinfectant chemicals may require different protection. Check the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for cleaners and disinfectants to determine the appropriate PPE for the method of application (wiping vs spraying). Ensure employees are trained in how to use the PPE, including how to remove and dispose of/decontaminate it to avoid spreading the virus. Also provide updated Hazard Communication training as needed.
- Provide chemical splash goggles and/or a face shield for employees. Particles or droplets containing the virus may become airborne after surfaces are wiped or sprayed, so at least goggles are recommended. The SDS for the cleaner or disinfectant may recommend a face shield as well depending on the hazards of the chemicals.



- Provide gloves for employees. Per the CDC, for protection against COVID-19, non-sterile medical exam gloves made from nitrile, natural rubber (latex) or polychloroprene are appropriate. Employees with latex allergy will not be able to wear latex gloves. Check the SDS for the cleaner or disinfectant to determine if gloves of a different material, or gloves thicker than medical exam gloves, are required. Chemical compatibility information should also be available from the glove manufacturer. In some cases it may be necessary to wear two layers of gloves of different materials.

Employees must understand that wearing gloves should not replace washing your hands frequently. The outer surface of the gloves will become contaminated, so you still should avoid touching your face. When removing the gloves, avoid touching your skin as much as possible and then immediately wash your hands.

- Provide disposable gowns or coveralls for employees. Check the SDS for the cleaner or disinfectant, and the gown manufacturer's literature, for chemical compatibility.
- Develop respiratory protection procedures. Some considerations include:
 - OSHA requires respiratory protection to be addressed in the PPE Hazard Assessment described above. Recommendations for when respiratory protection should be worn for COVID-19, and the type of protection that should be worn, have been an evolving topic. The changing understanding of how COVID-19 is transmitted, and shortages of different types of masks, have affected these recommendations.
 - Check the SDS for the cleaner or disinfectant to determine if a respirator is required for the chemical ingredients and the method of application (wiping vs spraying). If a respirator is required for the chemicals, plus an employee has a potential exposure to COVID-19, a reusable cartridge style respirator may be needed with a combination type cartridge.
 - For instance, if the SDS for a disinfectant calls for an organic vapor respirator, and the exposure to COVID 19 calls for an N95 respirator, a combination organic vapor/N95 cartridge would be needed. (The following offer equivalent or greater protection than N95 and can be substituted for the N95 portion based on availability: R95, P95, N99, R99, P99, N100, R100, P100.)
 - If an employee may be exposed to COVID-19, respiratory protection for this exposure should be provided as well. As of this date, the ISSA recommends at least an N-95 respirator for cleaning areas where an infected person has been, but is no longer present, and there is a "high likelihood of generating aerosols during the cleaning process". See this link for details, under "Cleaning Industry Tip Sheets": <https://www.issa.com/education/cleaning-for-infection-prevention/coronavirus-prevention-and-control-for-the-cleaning-industry>



- Under normal circumstances, only NIOSH-approved respirators with at least an N95 rating would be recommended for protection against COVID-19. Other types of masks may provide limited protection against COVID-19, but they have not been tested or approved for this purpose.

Due to shortages of N95 respirators, you should check for updated CDC guidance on when other types of masks may be used in certain emergency situations. This could include FDA approved surgical masks (sometimes called “face masks”), non-approved masks (sometimes called “comfort masks” or “nuisance dust masks”), and even homemade cloth masks. The shortages have mainly affected filtering facepiece (disposable) respirators, so you may be able to obtain reusable respirators or respirators with a higher rating than N95 as described above.

- As of this date, public health officials have prioritized the limited supply of masks for: 1) healthcare workers, 2) those infected with COVID-19 and 3) those caring for COVID-19 patients in non-healthcare settings. Check frequently for updated guidance from the CDC and other reputable sources on the availability and prioritization of respiratory protection.
- OSHA requires employees who must wear respirators to be included in a Respiratory Protection Program. This includes elements such as preplacement and annual training, respirator fit testing and medical examinations. As of this date, OSHA has relaxed only some minor elements of their respiratory protection requirements due to COVID-19. Check frequently for updated guidance from OSHA. Their 4/3/2020 Enforcement Guidance on this topic can be found here:

<https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-04-03/enforcement-guidance-respiratory-protection-and-n95-shortage-due-coronavirus>

- If an employee has been exposed to an individual they believe has COVID-19, they should call a healthcare provider for guidance. If the exposure occurred while they were working, they should call a healthcare provider who is part of Everest’s workers’ compensation preferred provider network. Calling a healthcare provider rather than going to their office or to the emergency room will help prevent spreading the virus. If they feel the symptoms are life-threatening, call 911.
- The guidance from public health officials on COVID-19 is evolving quickly as we learn more about how the virus spreads, and as the availability of resources changes. You should frequently check for updates from the CDC, OSHA and other reputable organizations:

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Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/index.html>

Additional guidance for janitorial and cleaning services on COVID-19 is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association (ISSA):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

<https://www.issa.com/education/cleaning-for-infection-prevention/coronavirus-prevention-and-control-for-the-cleaning-industry>

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