COVID-19 Guidance for Commercial or Residential Buildings

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a novel coronavirus that can result in acute respiratory illness. In general, these viruses are spread when a sick person coughs or sneezes. It may also be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their own mouth, nose, or their eyes. The majority of people with COVID-19 develop a mild illness, which may include fever, cough, or shortness of breath. For more general information about COVID-19, visit [www.toronto.ca/COVID19](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19).

The following are recommendations to help reduce the risk of exposures to acute respiratory illness, including COVID-19 in buildings such as hotels, condominiums, apartment buildings and other similar vertical living spaces. This document may be updated as the situation is rapidly changing, and new information becomes available. Refer to Toronto Public Health’s website for the latest updates.

COVID-19 is circulating in the community in Toronto. It is recommended that all non-essential common areas, including gyms, libraries, party rooms, playgrounds, pools, hot tubs and spas, be closed at this time. Infection prevention and control advice to help further reduce the risk of respiratory infection, including COVID-19, is provided below.

**General Infection Prevention Strategies**

*Building operators should encourage staff to do the following to prevent infection:*

- Stay home if sick. Employees or contracted workers who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to not come to work, and seek appropriate medical attention.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible. For example, relax requirements for sick notes, and allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.

*Staff should practice effective hand hygiene:*

- Wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 15 seconds – an alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching their faces, especially with unwashed hands.
- Cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve, not their hands.

**General Disinfection Guidance**

*Building operators and staff should follow these guidelines when cleaning and disinfecting the building environment:*

- Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
- Frequently touched surfaces are most likely to be contaminated. Ensure cleaning staff, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in common areas. In addition to routine cleaning, surfaces that have frequent contact with hands should be cleaned and disinfected twice per day and when visibly dirty.
- Examples include doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, toilet handles, counters, hand rails, touch screen surfaces and keypads.
• Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
• Check the expiry date of products you use and always follow manufacturer’s instructions.
• In addition to routine cleaning, check with your organization for any specific protocols for cleaning COVID-19.
• Staff should use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as gloves, according to existing policies and procedures, as well as following label directions for all cleaning products.
• Encourage and support proper handwashing by keeping washroom facilities stocked with soap and paper towels at all times, and ensure custodian staff keep hand washing sinks in a state of good repair.
• Consider having alcohol-based hand sanitizer in common areas, including but not limited to bathrooms, laundry rooms, gyms and playrooms, and other high traffic areas at all times.
• No evidence suggests that building waste needs any additional disinfection.
• Public health will advise if any special cleaning processes are recommended.

Providing Service to Tenants/Guests

Implement public health measures to protect staff and guests/tenants when providing services.

• Physical distancing of two metres or six feet between individuals should be exercised among individuals within a building, including between staff and tenants/guests during service:
  o Property management should assess whether an impending service request is essential, and to postpone the service if it is not urgent.
  o Property management should provide advanced notification to tenant of impending work.
  o Staff carrying out essential work should do so in a separate room if the tenant is home, or keeping a physical distance between the staff and guests/tenant.
  o In house food services preparing food for room service should use single-use containers and cutlery.
  o Room service staff should not interact with hotel guests and should leave food orders at the door and be picked up by the guests.
• After each visit, staff should wash hands with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, if soap and water are not available.
• Provide education by posting visual information advising staff and tenants/guests of the importance of physical distancing.
• Ensure residents can receive deliveries of essential goods, like medications and groceries/meals, at their unit door so they can avoid non-essential trips outside. Some residents may be self-isolating, and as a result will be unable to leave their units.

Moving to a New Place of Residence during a Pandemic

• Individuals should assess whether it is necessary to move from one place of residence to another at this time, and to consider delaying any impending move.
• If moving is necessary, precautionary measures such as maintaining physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette should be exercised at all times during the moving process.
Additional Considerations in Response to Current Cases of COVID-19

- Confirmed and suspect cases of COVID-19 are reported by health care providers and laboratories to public health.
- Public health performs a risk assessment for all exposures related to case reports.
- Unless advised by Toronto Public Health through the above assessment, there are no restrictions or special measures required for casual contacts of suspected cases of COVID-19 in the setting. There is no need to close the setting.

More Information
For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References