



Coronavirus and your Building: Deep Clean and Disinfect

Stepping up your cleaning and disinfecting practices can help minimize the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19 in your church or school. The coronavirus can be spread by touching a contaminated surface – it may be viable for hours to days on chairs, desks, pews, counters, door handles, phones, computer keys, microphones, and more. Experts say that cleaning of surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in community settings.

If you are in a state that is urging ministries or schools to suspend in-person worship services or classes, use this downtime to perform a deep clean and disinfection of your facility, especially in high-touch, high traffic areas.

Be sure to review the CDC guidance with your employees and volunteers about proper procedures for cleaning and disinfecting your facilities.

Cleaning Products

Using the right disinfecting product is important. While there hasn't been testing of specific products against the virus that causes COVID-19, it is expected that many existing disinfectants will be effective against the virus. The EPA publishes a list of products for use against COVID-19.

CDC Guidance* on Cleaning and Disinfecting Surfaces:

If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

- Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
- Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Advice from an Expert

To reduce surface contamination, it's important to follow a two-step process of cleaning and then disinfecting. "This means being a little more diligent with your procedures. For example, making sure to disinfect high-touch surfaces like light switches, doorknobs, touchscreens, and tablets," said Tim Cool, chief solutions officer with Cool Solutions Group LLC. He reminds everyone that preventing the spread of COVID-19 in your work or gathering place takes a combination of every

day precautions (washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer, disposing of used tissues properly, and following cough etiquette) and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces frequently.

Update Your Cleaning Procedures

As you plan to improve your cleaning and disinfecting procedures, ask your team questions to develop a robust process. The following questions were provided courtesy of Northshore Church in Kirkland, Washington, at the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak:

What does our cleaning/sanitation process currently look like?

- Are all our frequently touched surfaces involved in the cleaning process (i.e. doors, handles, water fountains, tables, sinks, check-in stations, touchscreens)?
- Do we need to take extra cleaning measures?

What does our cleaning/sanitation process look like for kids' rooms?

- Are all our frequently touched surfaces involved in the cleaning process (i.e. toys, doors, handles, water fountains, tables, sinks, check-in stations, touchscreens)?
- Do we need to take extra cleaning measures?

Cleaning Communicates Care

It's a good idea to communicate your updated cleaning procedures. "It's not going to cost much more to take your cleaning to the next level, but it will help give people peace of mind and communicates care," said Cool. Make sure to clearly communicate the steps you've taken to protect and care for your people.

When communicating with your congregants, students, or families, include information about what you're doing to clean and disinfect your facilities. Here's a sample of what Northshore adopted and communicated to its attendees:

- We will sanitize highly touched surfaces before and after every service such as doors, handles, tables, water fountains, check-in stations, and sinks.
- Our staff and volunteer teams will wash their hands frequently and stay home if they are sick. In addition, our Brew Crew will wear gloves when they serve coffee.
- We will provide additional hand sanitizer stations around campus for everyone to use.
- Offering buckets will be relocated to the back of the auditorium, so you don't need to pass them down the row. Remember, you can also give online.

Additional Resources:

The Coronavirus and Your Church Facility: <https://www.smartchurchsolutions.com/blog/the-coronavirus-and-your-church-facility>

IBHS – 6 Ways to Prevent a Virus from Disrupting Your Business:

https://ibhs.org/wp-content/uploads/wpmembers/files/Business-Protection_Virus-Preparedness_IBHS.pdf

Used with Permission CDC.gov

Posted March 13, 2020

The information provided in this article is intended to be helpful, but it does not constitute legal advice and is not a substitute for the advice from a licensed attorney in your area. We strongly encourage you to regularly consult with a local attorney as part of your risk management program.