



BEST PRACTICES FOR SAFELY REOPENING FACILITIES AND BUSINESSES

COVID-19 Guidance and Tips





INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the state of our surroundings tells the condition of our soul.¹ The health, safety, and cleanliness of the environment is of paramount importance to humans. While this has always been true, it has only been further reinforced and amplified by the onset of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and resulting worldwide health crisis. Today, cleanliness, health, and safety are high-profile topics that continuously stream in the collective consciousness of people reemerging into the public.

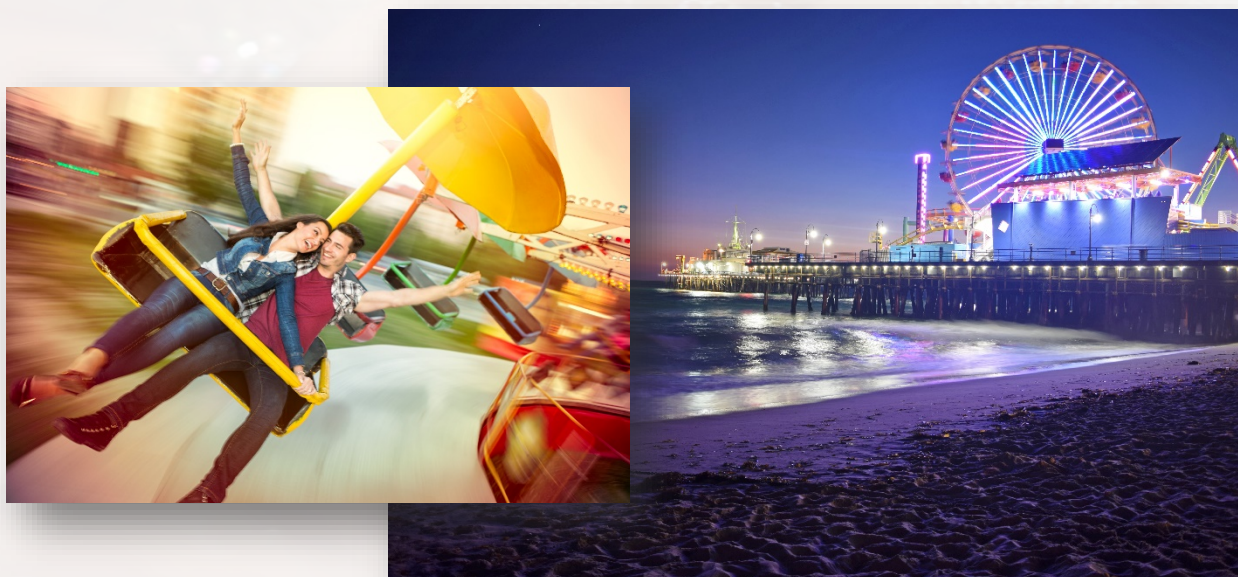
When the pandemic quickly spread to many countries, including the United States, it caused a massive upheaval to a largely unprepared world that had not planned for addressing a public health crisis of this magnitude. Almost overnight, non-essential facilities and businesses were shuttered to prevent exposure risks as well as to provide for immediate safety during the initial waves of COVID-19 in the United States.



¹ Attributed to a quote by Lailah Gifty Akita, a Ghanaian author known for empowering the minds of young people to make a great difference.

Now, in the wake of the pandemic, these facilities and businesses are gradually reopening to a whole new world of cleanliness standards that directly affect public health and safety. So, what does this specifically mean for facility managers and purchasing executives² that bear the enormous responsibility of ensuring that procedures, equipment, and products are compliant to new public health standards?

This paper provides essential information for facilities on how to effectively maintain health, safety, and cleanliness. A general overview of important requirements and controls—both administrative and engineering—that need to be in place are explored. Specific advice is in accordance with the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).



² Facility managers and purchasing executives in an array of sectors and industries are faced with many choices on maintaining health, safety, and cleanliness in the wake of COVID-19. These include specific facilities such as schools, stadiums, theaters, gyms, hotels, convention centers, supermarkets, hospitals, assisted living facilities, restaurants, food processing plants, airport, bus/train stations, etc.

These organizations have provided extensive guidance and toolkits for preparing facilities, workplaces, and business operations.³ They recommend that facilities or organizations develop a full infectious disease preparedness and response plan. These plans should consider and address the levels of risk associated with particular facilities, workers, and patrons.⁴

The last part of this paper will introduce some highly-effective and affordable solutions/products for addressing a crucial component of any strategic plan for maintaining the health and safety of facilities: routine cleaning and disinfection.



³ See “Resuming Business Toolkit—Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19),” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/Resuming-Business-Toolkit.pdf>. Also see “Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19,” U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), OSHA 3990-03 2020 at <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>.

⁴ Another great resource for facility managers and purchasing executives is “Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Updated March 8, 2021 at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>



ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

Administrative controls are those that mainly require action by facility managers or workers for maintaining health, safety, and cleanliness. These typically include changes to facility or business policy or procedures to reduce or minimize exposure to a hazard such as COVID-19.

Communication Strategy

Facilities, businesses, or organizations should now have a formal communication strategy in place that addresses concerns as well as the practicalities of how to stay safe in a facility that has reopened for people to use. This communication program should ideally include staff/employee training—either virtually or in small groups—aimed at reducing the spread of the virus in the environment.

A COVID-19 coordinator should also be identified for any facility or office. This individual will be responsible for all COVID-19 issues and its impact on the environment. All staff/employees should be made aware of the presence of this person.

Screening

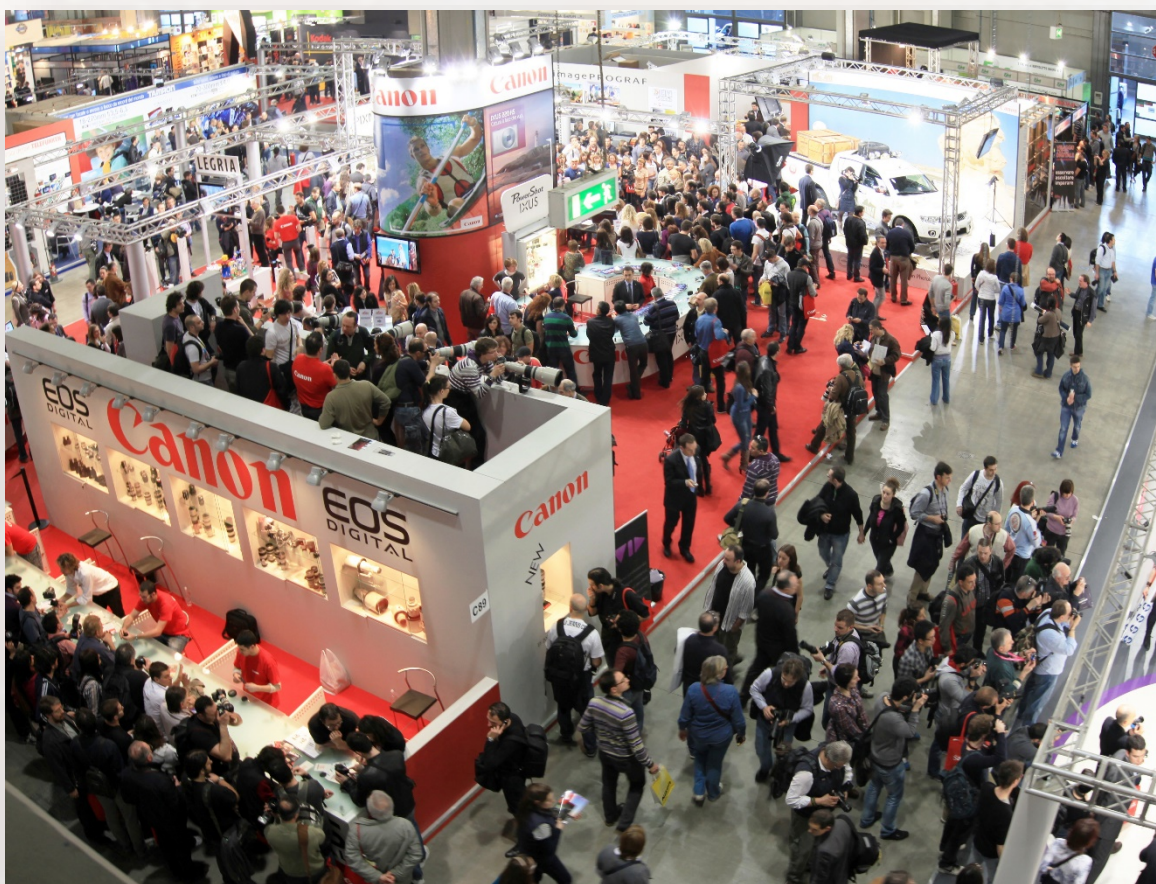
Where it makes sense to do so, an extremely proactive, but effective measure is to conduct screenings before people may enter a facility. These measures might include visual inspections for signs of illness as well as symptom and temperature screenings for patrons and staff.

If performing a temperature check on multiple individuals, the screener should change gloves and wash hands or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethyl alcohol between each person.⁵ Contactless thermometers should be

⁵ Ibid.

used. They should also be frequently cleaned or disinfected according to the manufacturer's instructions.

If a disposable or non-contact thermometer is used, gloves generally do not need to be changed before the next check; however, the same gloves should not be worn continuously for more than 4 hours. After removing gloves, screeners should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.⁶ Screeners should also wash their hands or disinfect upon arrival as well.



⁶ Ibid.



Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Facility staff, employees, and especially screeners should be provided with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Equipment might include face masks,⁷ goggles, face shields, and disposable gloves. As required by law and for safety, patrons should wear face masks when appropriate to do so at the facility until they are no longer needed. This is extremely important to prevent a superspreader event from originating within a facility.⁸

A facility should also consider providing disinfecting or handwashing stations at appropriate locations throughout the facility to encourage proper hand hygiene. This is especially true if there are many surfaces within the facility that might be touched by people. Surface spreading or fomite transmission potential must be considered to determine which surfaces are more “transfer-efficient”—making them capable of spreading germs and viruses faster. In addition to routinely encouraging the cleansing of hands, these surfaces should also be disinfected more frequently.⁹

⁷ Masks are a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from reaching others. Studies show that masks reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. A mask should be worn even if one does not feel sick. This is because several studies have found that people with COVID-19 who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic) and those who are not yet showing symptoms (pre-symptomatic) can still spread the virus to other people. Medical procedure masks with several layers are recommended. See “Guidance for Wearing Masks,” Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Updated February 18, 2021 at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>.

⁸ According to Penn Medicine, a “superspreader event” occurs when one highly contagious person infects an unusually high number of others. The “superspreader” is a generic term for an unusually contagious individual who has been infected with disease. In the context of the coronavirus, scientists have not narrowed down how many infections someone needs to cause to qualify as a superspreader, but generally speaking it far exceeds two to three individuals. See “Superspreader Events and Small Gatherings: COVID-19 Safety Tips,” Penn Medicine, December 10, 2020 at <https://www.pennmedicine.org/updates/blogs/health-and-wellness/2020/december/covid-super-spreader>. Also see “What’s a Coronavirus Superspreader?” MIT Technology Review, June 15, 2020 at <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/06/15/1003576/whats-a-coronavirus-superspreader/>.

⁹ Bacteria and viruses spread more readily on non-porous surfaces than porous ones. A study released by the American Society for Microbiology ranked the transfer efficiency of common surfaces and prioritized them from the most transferable to the least (non-porous to porous). For further details see “Transfer Efficiency of Bacteria and Viruses from Porous and Nonporous Fomites to Fingers under Different Relative Humidity Conditions,” Applied and Environmental Microbiology, September 2013 at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3754157/>.

Always provide employees, customers, and visitors what they need to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes. It is also suggested that organizations place posters at the entrance of a facility to encourage proper hand hygiene to help stop the spread of bacteria and disease.¹⁰

Phased Approach to Opening Facility

If it makes sense to do so, facilities that are reopening should also consider a phased or grouped approach to bringing staff back by prioritization based on necessity. It is very important that facilities consider putting together a sensible plan for bringing employees back in phases.

This same policy might also be applied to the number of guests or patrons allowed in the facility. A phased-in approach over time might work well. Of course, all capacity issues must be in full compliance with local laws and regulations.



¹⁰ See “Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Updated March 8, 2021 at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

Ramp Up Sanitizing and Disinfection

Facility cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing will need to be significantly ramped up. Written policies with specific cleaning protocols should be established for prioritizing and improving janitorial services—especially in the common areas and restrooms. Organizations should consider purchasing no-touch garbage receptacles.

Consider following the *Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection* prepared by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).¹¹ These guidelines can be used to develop, implement, and maintain a plan to perform regular cleanings to reduce the risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2. Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces such as workstations, kiosks, keyboards, telephones, handrails, faucets, and doorknobs.



¹¹ See generally “Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility – Every Day and When Someone is Sick,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Updated April 5, 2021 at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>.

If surfaces are dirty, clean them using a detergent or soap and water before disinfecting. For disinfection, the most common EPA-registered disinfectants should be effective. A list of all products—known as “List N”—that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA website.¹² Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products such as concentration, application method, and contact time (“kill time”).



In the same vein, there should also be limited equipment and tech sharing among employees at a facility or office. Each individual should have their own laptop, mouse, keyboard, headset, etc. to avoid the inadvertent transmission of disease. Discourage staff from using each other’s phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment when possible. Also provide disposable disinfecting liquid, sprays, and wipes so that staff can wipe down commonly used surfaces before each use.

¹² The EPA’s “List N” of disinfectant products is available for review at their website. See “List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus (COVID-19),” United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19>.



Lastly, be sure to perform appropriate cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility.

Procedure for Dealing with Ill People at Facility

Policies and procedures should also be put in place for what to do if a customer, guest, or member of the staff becomes ill at the facility. At a minimum that person must be immediately isolated from others in the environment and sent home. Moreover, there may also need to be a procedure for safely transporting an employee who becomes sick while at work. This employee may need to be transported home or to a healthcare provider.

An organization of facility might consider establishing a flexible sick leave policy that is non-punitive in nature. Sick leave policies and practices should be supportive and flexible for both the employee and fully take into account family members at home that might also be sick or showing symptoms that might be related to COVID-19. To protect the workplace, employees and staff should also be actively encouraged to stay home if they are feeling unwell or sick.



ENGINEERING CONTROLS

Protecting and isolating people from the transmission of COVID-19 in a facility or workplace environment predominately involves two major engineering controls: physically distancing people from one another and the use of a high-efficiency air filtration system.

Physical Distancing

Some of the specific actions that an organization can take to implement physical distancing of people in a facility or office includes de-densifying workstations or cubicles where it is possible to do so. A facility manager might also consider adding special partitions to block viruses that can be transmitted by talking, coughing, or sneezing. These physical barriers might even include clear plastic partitions or sneeze guards.

Facility managers and employers should also consider removing or rearranging common area furniture as well as closing or limiting the use of shared spaces such as lounges, kitchens, and conference rooms. For restrooms it would make sense to limit the number of people that can be in the space at any given time barring emergencies. The same is also true for elevators.

In congested or busy areas, facilities may have to organize to better control traffic flow by marking them "one way" with entry and exit points compliant with social distancing requirements. This is especially true if there are bottlenecks or queuing. Signage needs will have to be determined and posted including markers, tape, or visual cues that allow for the separation of people by a distance of six feet where appropriate to maintain a safe proximity.

If a facility is hosting an event, it should be configured in a manner that allows for the appropriate spacing requirements between people. This can be accomplished by blocking off rows of seats or sections to further maintain

social distancing. If possible, offer staggered attendance times as well. Excellent guidance for facility managers planning large gatherings is available for free from the World Health Organization (WHO) which provides a thorough risk assessment tool. This tool includes risk evaluation, risk mitigation, decision tree analysis, checklists, and forms for evaluating large gatherings at facilities.¹³



¹³ See "WHO Mass Gathering COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool – Generic Events," World Health Organization (WHO), July 10, 2020 at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/10665-333185>.

Ventilation and Air Filtration

Facilities also need to carefully evaluate their ventilation and air filtration systems. A facilities manager should assess whether the ventilation needs to be increased as well as how much circulation can be accessed from the outdoors.

Moreover, because the air is a shared resource within an office or facility it is highly recommended that organizations seeking to safely resume operations carefully review their current systems and consider making appropriate upgrades. Companies that are serious about air quality and safety should invest in a high-efficiency air-cleaning system designed to protect high-traffic environments.





The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) specifically recommends the installation of high-efficiency air filters along with increasing ventilation rates in the work environment.¹⁴ Always request information on a facility's air filtration system such as when was the last time it was changed. Also, find out whether it is certified HEPA ("high-efficiency particulate air") filtration.¹⁵

AN EFFECTIVE SOLUTION FOR HAND HYGIENE

While there is much to be done to ensure that facilities remain a safe and healthy environment for staff and patrons, one recurring measure emphasized throughout this paper has been the importance of maintaining proper hand hygiene.

To effectively make this happen—in both large and small facilities—purchasing executives and facility managers should give serious consideration to Dial Professional products and solutions. Brands do make a difference, especially those that are well known and trusted.

Dial Professional products provide a full line of solutions for effective hand hygiene. These include foaming hand soaps that kill 99.99% of pathogenic bacteria, liquid hand soaps that kill 99.9%, and hand sanitizers with over 60% ethyl alcohol that kill 99.999% in away-from-home settings. We carry dispensers and refills for restrooms and washing stations along with an array of other products and brands aimed at keeping facilities safe and clean.

¹⁴ See "Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19," U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), OSHA 3990-03 2020, pages 12-13 at <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>.

¹⁵ A HEPA filter generally uses a mat of dense fibers to trap particles moving through it. In order to meet the HEPA specification, an air filter must trap 99.97 percent of all particles that are 0.3 microns in diameter. It can trap smaller particles (and is generally very effective at trapping larger particles as well), but its effectiveness declines as the particles get smaller. See generally "True HEPA Filter: What It Is and What It Isn't," Molekule, March 30, 2019 at <https://molekule.science/true-hepa-filter-what-it-is-and-what-it-isnt/>.



Our website provides several **Dial Cost-in-Use Calculators** for purchasing executives and facility managers. These calculators will compare in cost the use of Dial Professional products compared to current or competitive soaps and sanitizers.

We encourage you to come to our website and see how much your facility can save today with Dial Professional products. Visit us at the below link:

<https://www.dialprofessional.com/cost-calculators/>.







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