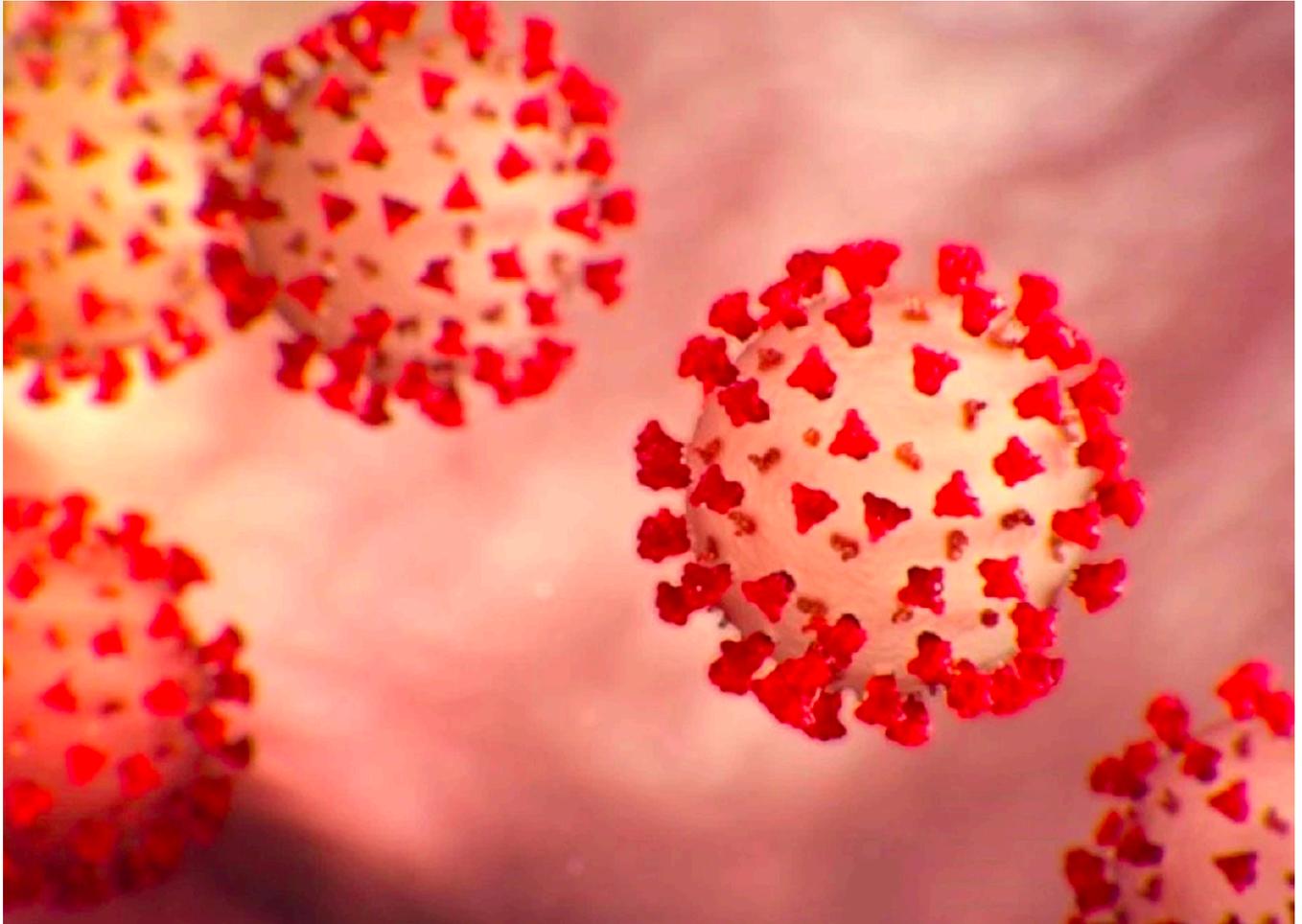


# How To Clean Your Facilities To Fight COVID-19



COVID-19, the novel coronavirus, has fallen on the world like a hammer, swift and hard, and facilities need to be prepared to fight the spread by adapting their maintenance rounds. The situation is ever-evolving, but experts are learning more every day about how to fight the spread of the virus.

[We've put together a comprehensive guide of best practices for cleaning your facilities to fight the spread of COVID-19.](#)

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# Maximize your cleaning and disinfecting workflows

You need to develop a workflow that works for your team and the buildings you're in charge of. This includes figuring out what needs to be done, when, and by whom.

**First, create a COVID-19 response plan.** You can do this in five steps:

## 1. Perform a risk assessment.

Risk assessments are crucial to maintaining a safe and healthy work environment even in the best of times. Develop a separate assessment specific to COVID-19.

- ✓ Identify weak points/possible risks. In order to identify your risks, ask the following questions:
- ✓ What is your current cleaning and disinfecting protocol?
- ✓ What surfaces are frequently touched?
- ✓ Where are people most likely to spend their time?
- ✓ Who is going to be in your facilities—tenants, staff, contractors, short- or long-term patients (for health care facilities)?
- ✓ Who is in charge of cleaning and sanitizing?
- ✓ How many people do you have on staff, and how many are contractors?
- ✓ What will happen if at least one person gets sick (with COVID or another illness)?
- ✓ What will happen if your contractors cannot work?

Use the answers to these questions to pinpoint weaknesses in your ability to effectively carry out a COVID-specific response plan, whether it's in the implementation (if you have the right tools and chemicals), the manpower (what

would happen if an employee called out sick), or something similar.

- ✓ **Document all identified risks. Create a spreadsheet with all identified risks, and color code by how serious the risk is.** Seriousness can be gauged individually based on company needs, but factors to consider are likelihood of occurring and the repercussions if they occurred.
- ✓ **Develop a plan for mitigating identified risks.** This will consist of two parts: a preparedness checklist and a response plan. Using input from the members of your team who will be directly affected by a COVID cleaning and disinfecting process (whether by sharing a Google doc everyone can add to or holding a virtual meeting on a platform like Zoom), determine how best to tackle all the identified risks which you have documented.

Everyone's bandwidth is understandably limited as we all respond to this global threat, so if you already have a cleaning and disinfecting plan in place, use that as the foundation for your COVID plan.

We will discuss how to develop your two-part plan in the next step.

## 2. Develop a preparedness checklist and a response plan.

For the preparedness checklist, you can use a resource like the Building Owners and Managers Association International's [Coronavirus Preparedness Checklist](#) or the International Facility Management Association's [pandemic preparedness manual](#). The checklist should be digital and should include the following:

- ✓ **A list of all supplies on hand.** This will allow staff to track what they need before they go into a potentially contaminated space; it will also make taking inventory easier.
- ✓ **A list of cleaning best practices.** Make sure staff has access to a digital copy of these practices.
- ✓ **A list outlining the order of operations for all cleaning tasks.** Make it as uniform as possible. E.g. The first wave will be cleaning: floors, work tops, windows, and walls, then smaller frequently touched areas like doorknobs, light switches, etc. The second wave will be disinfecting, which will follow the same order.
- ✓ **An easily updatable digital checklist, so your employees can check off tasks as they go.** This will maintain accountability and guarantee that nothing gets missed, especially given how granular your new cleaning plan is going to be.

For your response plan, you should include the following:

- ✓ Names and contact information for all people in charge of your team's COVID response plan
- ✓ The preparedness checklist
- ✓ Plans for identifying alternate suppliers if your chief cleaning supply company can no longer provide the products you need to execute your plan
- ✓ Plans for alternative transportation if public options are halted and employees cannot get to work
- ✓ Plans for what happens if several employees call out at the same time
- ✓ Plans for if outside contractors can no longer provide services
- ✓ Your sick leave policy (encourage sick employees to stay home)
- ✓ Best practices for sneezing/coughing (into the elbow, never into the hand)
- ✓ Information on how to recognize signs of COVID-19. Per the IFMA, this will "promote knowledge to fight fear."



### 3. Train your team, then communicate with staff as your plans develop and change.

The pandemic has put everyone in a unique situation; where risk assessment plans are traditionally set and re-assessed once a year or once every few years, you'll need to keep up-to-date on all COVID news and continue to reassess your response plan. This includes an initial training (via video conferencing or other remote method deemed acceptable by your team) where you go through the response plan and outline new cleaning and disinfecting expectations.

Whenever you change any part of your COVID plan, inform staff. This keeps them safe and healthy, ensures your plan is executed as necessary, and it also has the added benefit of creating trust and good faith between you and your employees.

Think it's tricky to maintain open communication? Not if you have the right tools. For instance, **Vitralogy's SmartRounds** allows you to assign tasks and send push notifications to all members of your team, including outside contractors. That means you can update your team in real time, keeping them in the loop.

### 4. Minimize how often you and your employees are in public spaces.change.

When it comes to completing sanitation rounds, that means optimizing your workflows so your employees can do their job quickly and accurately, and completing as much work remotely as possible.

Make sure your workflows allow staff to prepare for rounds somewhere safe (wherever they'll have minimal contact with the public), conduct inventory remotely, and communicate their needs and to-dos via a communication tool that doesn't require touching paperwork that others have touched or having any unnecessary contact with public or shared surfaces.

Once your risk assessment and COVID plan are in place, you're ready to get to work cleaning and disinfecting your facilities. Here's how to do it properly.

### 5. Practice social distancing in your plan deployment.

**Social distancing** in facility management means that you shouldn't put two employees in a confined space together; individuals should maintain at least six feet of distance between them at all times. Where employees have to be around other people (even while maintaining proper distance), provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer, plenty of hand soap available at all sinks, and other tools (masks, gloves, protective eyewear, etc.) to help them protect themselves from exposure. Further, consider increasing "the number of shifts to decrease the proximity between employees."

### Maintain open communication with anyone who lives in or uses your facility.

The **COVID-19 pandemic is ever-changing, and so are best practices for fighting the virus.** That means it is essential that you be open and honest with not only your employees but anyone who lives in or uses your facility.

Create an email list for anyone whose well-being is impacted by your facility's cleaning and disinfecting plan, and keep it on hand to send updates as necessary.

## Cleaning and disinfecting best practices

Now more than ever, it's important to thoroughly clean and disinfect the spaces for which your team is responsible. Disinfecting these areas can help stop the spread of COVID-19. But that also means ramping up your cleaning practices.

**Here's what to do.**

### 1. Make sure you have the right supplies to properly disinfect.

There's no shortage of disinfectants options out there, but not all disinfectants, and not even all virucides, will kill COVID-19. To make sure you're able to properly tackle COVID-19, use the [Environmental Protection Agency's recently released List N](#).

It's a list of disinfectants and cleaners that are believed to kill SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). It includes

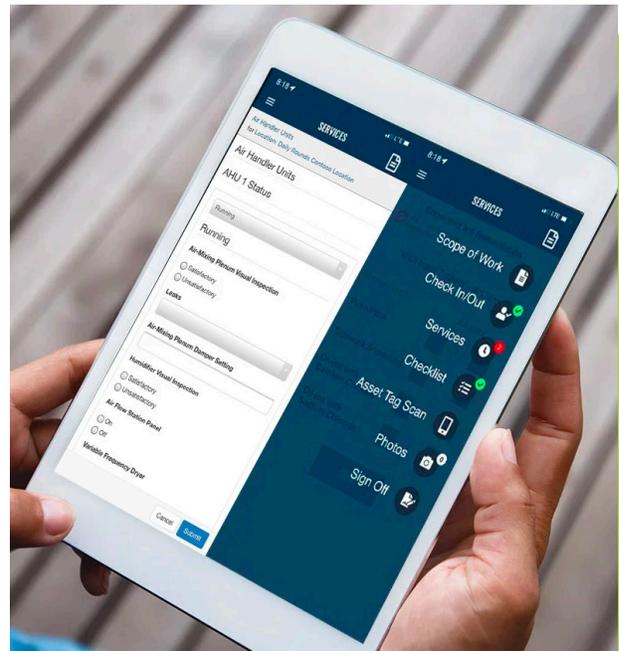
both commercial and consumer cleaners in dilutable form, ready-to-use, and wipes, and you can organize by active ingredient. The EPA updates the list as necessary.

If you already have a supply of virucidal disinfectants, you can also look up its EPA registration number to determine if it's on List N and is able to kill the virus which causes COVID-19.

### 2. Perform your tasks in a safe manner.

A cleaning and disinfecting process that effectively fights COVID-19 will inevitably include harsh, possibly even dangerous, chemicals. That means that anyone who is doing this must do the following in order to protect their own health:

- ✓ Wear gloves while cleaning to avoid exposure to both the virus and harsh chemicals
- ✓ Never mix chemicals with one another. Doing so could create dangerous (even deadly) gases.
- ✓ Work in well-ventilated areas; wear a protective mask and eyewear when you're cleaning in an area with poor ventilation.
- ✓ Handle materials used for cleaning and disinfecting as little as possible.
- ✓ If you make skin contact with contaminated surfaces or chemicals, immediately rinse with warm water for at least 15 seconds, then wash the exposed area with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds.



### 3. Clean before disinfecting.

There's a difference between cleaning and disinfecting. Cleaning is the removal of foreign material like dust and some germs. Disinfecting, on the other hand, is the process of chemically removing germs, including bacteria and viruses. (And sanitizing is also separate from disinfecting: sanitizing removes some bacteria and viruses and lowers the number of germs "to a safe level," while disinfecting outright kills germs. So in this instance, you want to disinfect, not sanitize.)

According to the CDC, **"Thorough cleaning is required** before high-level disinfection and sterilization because inorganic and organic materials that remain on the surfaces of instruments interfere with the effectiveness of these processes."

In other words: you need to clean (remove foreign material such as dust) in order to disinfect properly.

## 4. How to clean:

- ✓ Use soap and water.
- ✓ Clean Top to Bottom; start at the top and work down
- ✓ Apply friction to surfaces, whether with a towel, sponge, or other material; the friction is what aids the soap in cleaning.
- ✓ Never reuse dirty towels or sponges; this can spread germs around and make the cleaning and disinfecting process less effective.
- ✓ Wipe up remaining fluids and dry so you can disinfect properly.

## 5. Use an EPA-approved COVID-19-killing disinfectant.

After you've properly cleaned all necessary surfaces, you need to disinfect. Using the information provided by the EPA's List N about your chosen disinfectant, here's how:

- ✓ If you're using a dilutable disinfectant, make sure you've mixed the right ratio of chemical to water.
- ✓ Wipe down all surfaces with your disinfectant using clean fibers (towels, mops, paper towels, etc). Replace the materials you're using to wipe down surfaces as necessary.
- ✓ Wait the "dwell time" (the allotted time it takes for the disinfectant to work) and then remove the disinfectant according to directions. (Some disinfectants don't require this, so you may be able to skip this step.)
- ✓ Replace disinfectant if it gets cloudy/dirty to avoid contamination.

## 6. Always disinfect frequently touched surfaces and shared spaces.

When you created your response plan, you should have recorded all frequently touched surfaces in your building and created an order of operations for cleaning and disinfecting.

### Examples of frequently touched areas:

- ✓ Door knobs
- ✓ Countertops and/or work stations
- ✓ Faucets
- ✓ Elevator buttons
- ✓ Toilets
- ✓ Stair and escalator railings
- ✓ Toilet paper holders
- ✓ Security card readers
- ✓ Light switches

### Examples of shared spaces:

- ✓ Bathrooms
- ✓ Hallways
- ✓ Laundry rooms
- ✓ Elevators
- ✓ Lobby/atrium
- ✓ Staircases

Finally, don't forget to disinfect floors, windows, and any other surface area that humans could conceivably reach.

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