

# Pathway Back to Work

Commercial Real Estate,  
Coronavirus and Re-Entry

**November 10, 2020**  
**Version 3**

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BOMA Canada sincerely regrets any errors or omissions.

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	4	Hand Sanitization Stations	32
<b>Building Operations</b>	5	Acquiring Sanitization Products	33
Thermal Imaging	8	HVAC, Ventilation & Filters	34
Elevators, Escalators and Staircases	9	Cleaning Principles	36
Lobby Control & People Management	11	Security & Life Safety	43
Masks & Personal Protective Equipment	12	<b>Tenant &amp; Building Communications</b>	44
Fire & Emergency Drills	13	Tenant Communications	47
Washrooms	14	Signage to Consider	51
Food Courts	16	Protocol for Management of a Confirmed Case After Reopening	53
Courier Deliveries, Mailrooms & Food Deliveries	17	<b>Human Resources</b>	56
Parking Lots, Bicycle Storage & Loading Docks	18	Communication is Key	59
Water System Safety	19	Phased Approach to the Return	61
General Amenities	21	Office Management	62
Contact Tracing	22	New Policies and Practices	64
<b>Vendors &amp; Supplies</b>	24	<b>Appendix</b>	68
Roadmap to Cleaning	27		
Cleaning Plans	30		
Disposal of PPE	31		

## Legal

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# Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic spread quickly across Canada, forcing governments to impose a stay-at-home and shelter-in-place orders. Building operations and property management teams had to adjust, as non-essential personnel shifted to work from home.

After a period of “hibernating” commercial properties, the commercial real estate industry is now preparing for a phased re-entry over the coming months. To provide guidance on building operations and management, BOMA Canada and its volunteers from across Canada came together to help our members meet the challenge ahead.

This document provides recommended pathways for

the safe return of tenants, building personnel, visitors, vendors, contractors and others to commercial real estate across Canada.

No two properties are alike, so we cannot recommend a single one-size-fits-all approach nor can the approach below capture every single consideration. Instead, we have prepared a framework which individual property managers can both adapt and adopt. We also urge all BOMA members to consult with relevant local governmental authorities, including public health authorities. Information presented below represents suggested practices and procedures and identifies strategies to consider based on industry volunteer input.

This document will cover the following key considerations while preparing your building for re-entry:

<b>Building Operations</b> ↓	<b>Vendors &amp; Supplies</b> ↓	<b>Tenant &amp; Building Comms</b> ↓	<b>Human Resources</b> ↓
Guidance on getting buildings ready in terms of operational systems, personnel protocols and building maintenance as they return to occupancy.	Suggestions for managing the demand for supplies, supply chain strategies, cleaning protocols and security in preparation for return to work.	Techniques for managing work from home transitions, staggered shifts, maintaining positive health and more.	Best practices for easing tenants’, guests’ and employees’ transitions to your buildings, including physical distancing practices, behaviour in communal spaces and how best to address fears or concerns.

**We need your feedback!** Please email your comments to [info@bomacanada.ca](mailto:info@bomacanada.ca) and help us keep this document relevant and current. We already have dozens of coronavirus-related resources for you at [www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus) and will post updated versions of this document there too.

# Pathway Back to Work

**Building Operations**

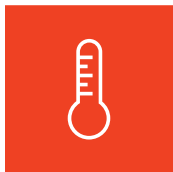
**November 10, 2020  
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# Building Operations

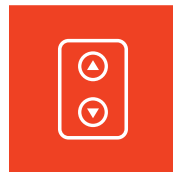
This section provides key guidance on building operations. It should be read in consultation with the other sections of the BOMA Canada Back to Work Pathway: Vendors and Supplies, Tenant & Building Communications, and Human Resources.

Every situation is different, and the individual recommendations below may or may not be applicable to every building. Instead, they are intended to help you create a plan to help you get your building ready for return to occupancy. We also urge all BOMA members to consult with relevant local governmental authorities, including public health authorities. Information presented below represents suggested practices and procedures and identifies strategies to consider based on industry volunteer input.

## The following areas will be covered in this section:



Thermal Imaging



Elevators, Escalators & Staircases



Lobby Control & People Management



Masks / PPE



Fire & Emergency Drills



Washrooms



Food Courts



Courier, Mailroom & Food Deliveries



Parking Lot, Bicycles, Loading Dock



Water Systems Safety



General Amenities



Contact Tracing

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# Thermal Imaging

**Why This Matters:** As fever is one indicator of coronavirus, thermal imaging (and possibly other temperature screening) is expected to be deployed in some public and commercial areas. However, the issue of thermal imaging is not thought to be straightforward and poses several challenges. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## **Building Operations**

- Generally, do not conduct thermal imaging on individuals entering commercial buildings because of the challenges facing property managers in doing so
- Cooperate with tenants where they implement thermal imaging in their tenant spaces
- Consider purchasing thermal imaging devices “just in case”
- Where property managers decide to conduct thermal imaging, proceed with care – solicit medical, public health, legal and other professional advice first
- Develop policies for your own employees in the event that tenants ask that these individuals submit to thermal imaging prior to entering into tenant spaces
- Consider having a nurse or public health professional in a common space to provide advice to property management teams and tenants
- Consider checking temperatures of employees and contractors (as opposed to tenants and guests), which some owner/managers are implementing

2

## **Signage**

- If conducting thermal imaging, display signage to explain the process



# Elevators, Escalators and Staircases



**Why This Matters:** Elevators and escalators face new pressures with respect to physical distancing, particularly as they are often designed for high density. By contrast, stairways are often designed for infrequent use, but may see tenants and visitors using them (or wishing to use them) more frequently than in the past. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Building Operations

- Enhance cleaning of elevators, e.g. hourly depending on usage and on any local Public Health direction
- Raise awareness on how tenants can safely travel in elevators and stairs while maintaining maximal physical distancing
- Determine if elevator lobbies and tight hallways need to be one-way or have stanchions or dividers to avoid cross traffic
- Install hand sanitizers for each elevator if possible
- Have security or concierge in lobby assist with traffic to assigned elevators
- Follow Public Health guidelines in determining maximum capacity for elevators – e.g. four for larger cabs, two for smaller
- Review designated elevator requirements for couriers and service calls
- Develop protocols for stairwells; where able, consider one staircase for upward travel and another for downward travel to avoid cross traffic but take care to abide by fire code
- Provide dedicated “enter” and “exit” doors. Leave doors open where possible but ensure compliance with fire code
- Consider those with disabilities – e.g. those in wheelchairs may not be able to travel in one quadrant of an elevator; those with vision challenges may need assistance in where to stand in elevator
- Utilize signage
- Masks are strongly recommended in elevators in particular and in the building in general
- Masks will be mandatory for building employees and third party e.g. cleaners, security
- Currently the use of masks is not mandated by public health so difficult to enforce
- Encourage a customer service/education approach

# Elevators, Escalators and Staircases cont'd



## 2

### Signage

- Install instructional signage displaying healthy elevator use protocols including passenger limits and respecting designated passenger areas in each elevator
- Mark area in elevator with signage/decals showing designated standing area if more than one person in car
- Review options to install clear plastic cover over buttons for ease of cleaning or remove regularly with peel and stick options (but take care not to cover braille numbering/lettering)
- Mark escalator spacing either indicated on steps or handrails
- Provide wayfinding signage for staircase use



# Lobby Control & People Management



**Why This Matters:** Lobbies and other common areas, which were formerly gathering points and even social destinations, now must be reconsidered in light of physical distancing. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Building Operations

- Remove or adjust group seating areas or designate physical distance parameters
- Remove any water coolers or other such items
- Concierge/security desk could provide spray bottle with disinfectant visible at all times
- Additional personnel including security and/or concierge could be helpful
- Install plexiglass shield at concierge desk to prevent droplet spread
- Clean door handles both on inside and outside on a regular basis
- In pinch points, consider stanchions to create an open space between lanes of pedestrian traffic moving in opposite directions
- Provide large bulk hand sanitizers for refill into smaller containers if supplies permit
- Decide how newspaper deliveries to concierge desk should be handled
- As always, meet the needs of those with disabilities

2

## Signage

- Communication in lobby – define expectations with brief, easily read and situated signage
- Deploy floor decals and signage to orient movement within lobbies and hallways with particular attention to pinch points
- Near elevators, post signs with respect to expectations of elevator use, number of people riding at same time, etc.

# Masks & Personal Protective Equipment



**Why This Matters:** Many people are using personal protective equipment (PPE) including facemasks and gloves to combat the spread of coronavirus. It can be expected that people will bring their own PPE and that, in some circumstances, property managers may supply it. However, it will be important to dispose of PPE properly inside commercial buildings. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## **Building Operations**

- Ensure a good inventory of masks and gloves for your employees and, if possible, for your tenants, should supplies permit
- Consider providing non-medical masks to tenants, if available
- Provide Health Canada-approved hand sanitizer dispensers at each entrance including parking garage and near elevators, restrooms, restaurants and/or food court, fitness facilities and in other high traffic areas of the building
- Provide separate touchless waste bins for PPE disposal (see Vendor & Supplies/disposal of PPE)
- Decide if you will use disinfectant mats in entrances for shoes and boots
- Consider the use of disposable daily paper place-mats on desks which can be discarded at end of day
- Promote the use of masks by tenants
- Have disinfectant wipes on hand
- Determine whether the building will supply disinfectant wipes and other cleaning and PPE materials

2

## **Signage**

- Consider placing signs on PPE disposal bins with instructions on proper disposal and etiquette
- Provide signage identifying where PPE are available
- Provide communication regarding proper use of disposal mats

# Fire & Emergency Drills



**Why This Matters:** Fire and emergency drills are normal course for buildings and are typically obligations imposed by code and/or insurance. However, it is extremely difficult to maintain physical distancing during an evacuation and upon re-entry after an evacuation. Moreover, given high levels of anxiety, there is also a risk of panic during a drill. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## **Building Operations**

- Your Local BOMA Association may have been in touch with local fire officials and may be able to provide you with guidance
- Consider if the relevant authorities (chief fire official, local fire marshal) would review fire drill requirements and reschedule as appropriate
- Some Fire Inspectors may consider property manager due diligence in related areas in the event of an inspection
- Refer to your provincial Fire Marshal's Technical Guideline for Fire Drills (or equivalent). The guideline may offer building managers a variety of fire drill options to comply with the fire code.
- Consider creative solutions to fire code obligations in consultation with relevant authorities and/or your insurer
- Establish a coordinated process for directly communicating to tenant employees; every person in the building is a point of risk and you need to be able to communicate with them directly
- As always, consider the needs of peoples of all physical ability levels in the event of a fire drill or an actual emergency

2

## **Signage**

- No suggested signage at this time



# Washrooms



**Why This Matters:** Washrooms are often designed for efficiency and heavy use and it can be difficult to maintain social distancing in them and at their entrances/exits. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Building Operations

- Ensure Cleaners have proper training and PPE
- Remove some urinals (out of service) to ensure safe distance is maintained
- Ensure wash basins have safe distance from next wash station and/or nearest stall
- Ensure bathroom stalls are safely spaced
- Ensure bathrooms are cleaned optimally
- Provide dedicated garbage bins for disposal of masks
- Install automatic door openers or keep doors open where possible to maintain no touch
- Consider opening dedicated handicap washrooms for all occupants
- Consider no-touch options for hand drying, including risks/benefits of “regular” air hand dryers vs. HEPA-filtered air hand dryers vs. paper towel dispensers.<sup>1</sup>
- Consider no-touch faucets and soap dispensers
- Remove drinking water fountains and bottle dispensers
- Consider individuals of all physical abilities (people who use wheelchairs and other mobility assistance devices, people who have limited or no vision, people who have limited or no hearing, etc.); ensure that handicap stalls etc. remain available for use and that code is met
- Ensure generous amounts of soap is dispensed from automatic soap dispensers where such amounts can be adjusted
- Where possible, provide warm water from taps
- Provide wipes where washroom door operation requires touch with receptacle bins for used wipes (though also consider fire code with respect to the placement of such bins)

2

## Signage

- Install signage to manage washroom line ups and/or encourage physical distancing
- Apply decals on the floor in front of sinks and urinals

---

<sup>1</sup> Should you choose Air Hand Dryers, they must be disinfected regularly. Note that the Public Health Agency of Canada advises, “Dry hands well with paper towel” while the World Health Organization advises to dry hands, “thoroughly by using paper towels or a warm air dryer.” [Government of Canada](#) and [WHO](#)



## Washrooms cont'd



- Apply decals on the mirrors demonstrating proper hand washing techniques (often provided by local public health authorities)
- Where there is a risk of close interaction at smaller washroom entrances, consider signage for occupied/unoccupied
- Where washrooms have two entries/exits, mark one for entry only and the other for exit only and consider directional floor stickers to move traffic in one direction



# Food Courts



**Why This Matters:** Food courts are often the busiest parts of office, enclosed retail, healthcare and other asset types, and they can be extremely crowded at meal and break times. Moreover, when people eat, they are likelier to expel droplets. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Building Operations

- Provide touchless hand sanitizer stations in close proximity
- Consider limiting, discouraging or even eliminating seated eating and encouraging take out
- Arrange tables and chairs to maintain physical distancing protocols
- Remove larger tables and encourage fewer diners per table
- Remove permanently affixed tables and chairs where possible to encourage physical distancing
- Stagger seating at high top benches and/or have all diners face the same direction
- Ensure appropriate levels of cleaning personnel (disposal and sanitation)
- Food Court Delivery
- Encourage delivery where possible versus pick-up or dine in
- Consider the use of food delivery apps
- Food Court Waste and Recycling
- All waste and recycling from both retail outlets and common areas picked up and transported to loading dock by building staff wearing PPE and taking all precautions
- Restrict access of non-essential personnel to service corridors and loading dock area

2

## Signage

- Provide clear signage where appropriate, e.g. “Line Starts Here” and floor decals to maintain physical distance for line-ups
- Consider using directional arrow decals to provide a system of one-way travel
- Use “restricted seating” signs on tables/seating to prevent use





# Courier Deliveries, Mailrooms & Food Deliveries



**Why This Matters:** Deliveries introduce new people and parcels into buildings. Mailrooms exist for the purpose of centralizing postal deliveries, but are often tight areas that make physical distancing challenging. All of this can increase the risk of viral spread. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Building Operations

- Develop routing instructions to avoid deliveries through employee or main entrances and instead route through areas that will minimize contact with the larger building population
- Encourage physical distancing in mailrooms
- Schedule or stagger mail pickup
- Separate shipping and receiving areas from the general population
- Require delivery personnel to check in at security/concierge/loading dock facilities prior to accessing upper levels
- Require personnel handling mail and parcels to wear PPE to receive parcels, mail and other deliveries, and train them in the proper use and disposal of PPE and in handwashing
- Sanitize the exterior of packaging where desired
- If appropriate, remove items from boxes and discard appropriately before final delivery at suite
- Consider implementation of internal courier operations and pick-up locations to reduce access requirements above common areas
- Implement contactless delivery for building-operated courier services
- Encourage tenants to pick up meals in food courts and/or otherwise bring food in themselves

2

## Signage

- Install signage/decals in/outside mailroom, loading docks and shipping explaining new behavior

# Parking Lots, Bicycle Storage & Loading Docks



**Why This Matters:** As tenants return to work and shoppers return to shopping centres, many will no longer be comfortable traveling by public transit. As a result, it is reasonable to expect there to be pressure on parking facilities and bicycle storage. There could be similar challenges in loading docks. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Building Operations

- Be prepared for increased motor vehicle and bicycle traffic in parking lots due to people not wanting to take public transit
- Provide sufficient and safe bicycle storage facilities
- Minimize touch points in parking systems where possible
- Consider new protocols for vehicles arriving on site – both personal and commercial parking garages
- Consider protocols for emergency vehicles and teams arriving to transport infected passengers
- Implement 24-hour delivery schedules to spread out deliveries while enabling adequate physical distancing
- Require loading dock workers and delivery personnel to wear PPE particularly when physical distancing is not possible
- Schedule tenant access to pick-up facilities in advance to maximize ability to maintain physical distancing protocols
- Deploy hand sanitizers at loading docks, pick-up facilities, bicycle cages, etc.
- Deploy specialized waste disposal receptacles for used PPE
- Consider opportunities to reduce/eliminate forms and close contact interactions in loading dock procedures

2

## Signage

- Install signage with physical distancing and personal hygiene messages at loading docks and pick-up facilities
- Appropriate signage for specialized PPE disposal bins with key messages at loading docks and pick-up facilities

The graphic features a close-up of white pipes on the left and a red-tinted image of pipes on the right with a white water drop icon. The title 'Water System Safety' is overlaid in white text on the left side.

# Water System Safety

**Why This Matters:** With limited numbers of building occupants as a result of “stay at home” measures, building systems, including water systems, are operating at lower capacities than normal. This raises certain risks, as stagnant water can lead to bacterial growth including Legionella. Stagnancy can also be an issue for potable water, which can lose its disinfectant residual and increase the possibility of lead in the water<sup>1</sup>. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## **Base Building Domestic Water System**

- Flush domestic water systems and clear the domestic water distribution system (pipes) of potentially stagnated water
- Continue heating domestic hot water tanks to ensure legionella growth does not occur
- Run cold and hot water on each floor separately for 5 minutes for all:
  - Washrooms: Flush all toilets, urinals and showers to ensure the trap seal primers are provided with water for the floor drains, preventing flies or sewer odours
  - Kitchen, slop sinks, etc.: Flush by running water for 5 minutes
  - Faucet aerators: Inspect for cleanliness and replace if damaged or plugged
  - Drinking fountains: Flush by running cold water for 5 minutes
- Track your flushing schedule<sup>2</sup>

2

## **Exterior/Interior Fountains/Swimming Pools/Hot Tubs and Cooling Tower**

- Continue to provide chemical treatment or drain water features (fountains, etc.) to prevent bacterial growth
- Periodically cycle any cooling towers that are temporarily shut down to ensure chemical treatment is maintained or drain sumps to mitigate Legionella and other bacterial growth. Note: Legionella grows best within a certain temperature range (25°C - 42°C) To keep water outside the range for Legionella growth, it is important to keep cold water cold and keep hot water hot
- Continue treatment of amenities such as swimming pools, hot tubs, etc.
- Contact water treatment service providers to inspect and perform necessary tests

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1 [Public Services and Procurement Canada \(PSPC\) - Building Water Systems Minimum Requirements – \(COVID-19\)](#)

2 [Potable Water Flushing Record Template - BOMA Canada](#)



# Water System Safety cont'd

3

## **Food service providers (specifically kitchens equipped with grease interceptors/kitchen hoods)**

- Clean grease interceptors
- Clean exhaust grease hood
  - Clean/replace the filters
  - Test operations for proper exhausting

4

## **Signage:**

- As appropriate, inform tenants to:
  - Replace filters on kitchen sinks equipped with drinking fountain filtration systems
  - Run instant hot water taps for five minutes
  - Run cold and hot water taps for five minutes separately
  - Flush all toilets and urinals to ensure the trap seal primers are provided with water for the floor drains, preventing flies or sewer odours
  - Replace filters and flush potable water drinking fountains connected to the building water system



# General Amenities

**Why This Matters:** Building amenities have risen in popularity over the past several years, but they are also often areas where tenants and others gather in close proximity. Special care needs to be paid to your building’s amenities. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Building Operations

- Consider closing all/some amenities, depending on risk profile
- Ensure locker rooms, showers, restrooms, conference rooms are disinfected regularly due to heavy usage
- Treat all surfaces with government approved disinfectant
- Sanitize all touch points
- Provide disinfectant wipes to wipe down gym equipment between users
- Determine a maximum number of people allowed in gym, conference rooms, etc.
- Provide wall-mounted hand sanitizers
- Rearrange chairs in conference/meeting rooms to promote physical distancing
- Remove whiteboard pens and erasers in conference rooms (as they are high touch surfaces) and encourage individuals to bring and manage their own
- Provide disposable wipes for the whiteboards
- Encourage the use of masks in gyms and limit numbers allowed into gyms at a given time
- Rearrange equipment to promote physical distancing in gyms
- Rearrange furniture in lobby and gathering areas to promote physical distancing

2

## Signage

- Signage on physical distancing and routing routes to follow to ensure a safe traffic flow
- Signage on queue areas indicating wait time disclaimers



# Contact Tracing

**Why This Matters:** Contact tracing is a process that helps identify, educate and monitor individuals who have had close contact with someone who is infected or suspected of being infected with coronavirus or other contagious and communicable diseases<sup>1</sup>. For commercial real estate, contact tracing brings particular challenges, as it puts two different public policy objectives in tension with each other: the need to join together collectively to fight the spread of coronavirus and the need to respect privacy of individuals. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Building Operations

- BOMA Canada's general advice is not to identify individuals in and around your properties unless there is a very solid legal and/or public policy basis for doing so
- At the same time, public support for/opposition to contact tracing may change throughout the duration of the coronavirus pandemic, so our recommended approach may change as well.
- You may or may not be able to help identify an individual as part of a contact tracing exercise through personal observations, relationships and interactions; through technology; or through other means
- Always follow the relevant legislation and regulation, which will vary from province to province/territory to territory – not all provinces and territories have robust privacy legislation
- Always consult with the terms of your tenant leases and abide by them
- Always take direction from your provincial/territorial public health authority
- There may be different tolerances for landlord-led contact tracing in different asset classes e.g. healthcare vs. office vs. retail vs. multi unit residential buildings.
- Tenants may wish to participate in contact tracing in their leased premises and should generally be free to do so on their own
- Voluntary disclosure of relevant information by tenants and other stakeholders should be approached differently than information obtained through other sources
- Encourage your tenants voluntarily to disclose relevant information about individuals who were (a) in your building and (b) who have or may have been in contact with someone who has coronavirus. Use that information to inform other tenants and stakeholders as necessary, in consultation with relevant public health authorities. Even in these circumstances, treat personal information with care.
- Consult with your legal, marketing and other departments as appropriate

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1 [Contact Tracing - WHO](#)



# Contact Tracing cont'd

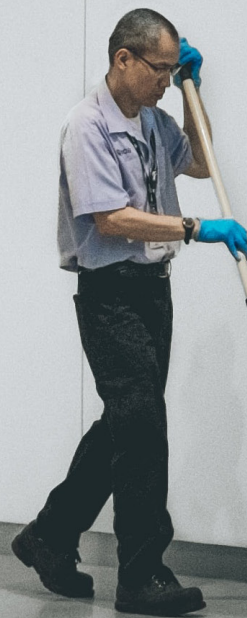
- Consider how you will respond with respect to contact tracing and your own employees in the event that one of your employees is suspected of/confirmed to have been in contact with someone who has coronavirus (or if they themselves have coronavirus). Consider sign-in sheets/digital sign-in to track which individuals were present at what times so that you can quickly respond if necessary.

## 2

### **Signage**

- If not participating in contact tracing, signage is likely unnecessary.
- If participating in contact tracing, post appropriate notices conspicuously and/or consider tenant communications in elevator screens, through emails, etc.

# Pathway Back to Work





# Vendors & Supplies

This section provides key guidance on vendors and supplies. It should be read in consultation with the other sections of the BOMA Canada Back to Work Pathway: Building Operations, Tenant & Building Communications, and Human Resources.

Every situation is different, and the individual recommendations below may or may not be applicable to every building. Instead, they are intended to help you create a plan to help you get your building ready for return to occupancy. We also urge all BOMA members to consult with relevant local governmental authorities, including public health authorities. Information presented below represents suggested practices and procedures and identifies strategies to consider based on industry volunteer input.

## The following areas will be covered in this section:



Roadmap to Cleaning



Cleaning Plans



Hand Sanitization Stations



PPE Disposal



Sanitization Products



Ventilation & Filters



Cleaning Principles



Security & Life Safety

Contact your local BOMA Association to help secure goods and services from local vendors

**We need your feedback!** Please email your comments to [info@bomacanada.ca](mailto:info@bomacanada.ca) and help us keep this document current. We already have dozens of coronavirus-related resources for you at [www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus) and will post updated versions of this document there too.

# Vendors & Supplies

## Acknowledgements

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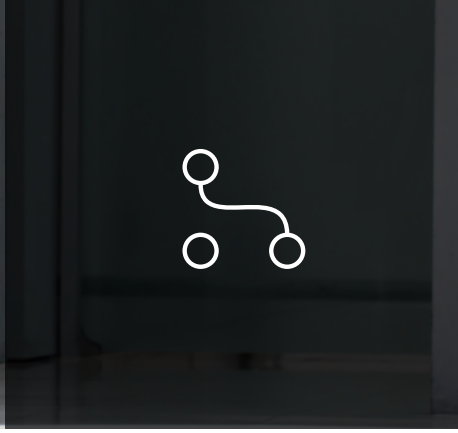
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BOMA Canada sincerely regrets any errors or omissions.

## Legal

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# Roadmap to Cleaning

**Why This Matters:** As work-from-home orders are lifted in stages, it's unclear what the "new normal" will look like, so it will be important to be flexible and adaptable. Office cleaning will have two primary elements going forward: visual cleaning and cleaning for health.

For most facilities, extra resources will be added to cleaning-for-health, with a focus on additional touch-point cleaning during the day, since "Contamination on surfaces touched by employees and customers is one of the main ways that COVID-19 spreads."<sup>1</sup>

## 1

### Prepare Now

- Now is the time to review your stacking plans and anticipate what your new traffic flow patterns and social distancing measures will be so you can adapt your cleaning program accordingly
- During pre-occupancy/early occupancy, walk your space with your senior team and your service provider to identify areas that need visual cleaning and cleaning-for-health, identifying risks and priorities
- Talk to your tenants about the new cleaning program to ensure that you understand their visual cleaning and cleaning for health requirements
- Draft a plan that captures your own priorities and those of your tenants
- Review and adjust your cleaning contract terms, specifications, quality assurance programs and costs with your cleaner

## 2

### Visual Cleaning

While visual cleaning is primarily important for tenant perception, it can still be deployed in a manner that can drive overall cost savings by adopting building-specific, performance-based cleaning objectives. Cleaners generally still spend too much time vacuuming and wiping already clean surfaces. Set visual cleaning standards, spot clean when required during the week (new work loading models) and do a periodic full-clean.

## 3

### Cleaning for Health

The major challenge with cleaning-for-health is that you can't see the results (without testing). The key to a successful COVID-19 surface-management cleaning program will therefore be verification of training, equipment & chemicals, process, frequency and especially test results.

<sup>1</sup> [World Health Organization, "Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19", March 3rd, 2020](#)



## Roadmap to Cleaning cont'd

Successful Cleaning for Health requires a detailed touchpoint checklist, including door handles, touch screens, push plates, light switches, elevator buttons/handrails, washrooms (faucet levers, towel dispensers), food court trays, vending machines and more. Many service providers are doing test runs with “sticky note” flags.

Once your checklist is created, check to ensure that your service provider has the right cleaning methodology for each surface. Dirty surfaces need to be cleaned before they are disinfected (the virus can survive under dust particles). For some surfaces, the disinfectant should be sprayed on a clean lint-free rag first (e.g. elevator buttons).

Ask your service provider for documentation confirming that frontline workers have received the proper COVID-19 training. No special PPE is generally required for normal cleaning tasks. However, face masks are recommended to help prevent virus spread. Cleaners also need to understand proper handwashing protocol (before putting on and removing gloves) and the correct methods of cleaning and disposing of materials. Poorly trained cleaning staff may increase the odds of spreading the virus across touchpoints.

Talk to your service provider to ensure the right chemicals and equipment are being used. For example, Health Canada now recommends that disposable cloths be used in cleaning any area potentially infected with COVID-19.

Public health considerations should always come first, but do not forget your commitment to sustainability. BOMA BEST has BEST practices around sustainable cleaning and gives points in this regard. As with anything you do, always try to approach this issue with sustainability in mind.

Touch-point cleaning frequency will be a function of traffic flow and risk-prone populations (e.g. entrances to medical offices may require more frequent touch-point cleaning than an infrequently used entrance to an office). You will need to determine frequency but, at a bare minimum, touch points should be cleaned daily, as coronavirus can live on hard surfaces for several days (or more). Some areas will require cleaning multiple times per day including before, during and after morning/lunch/evening rush hours.

Modify your quality assurance systems to add Cleaning for Health metrics, with a focus on measurement by exception. Consider asking for daily reports on suspected problem areas or locations that may have been missed.

### **Hygiene Testing**

Although there are no cost-effective ways to measure COVID-19 contamination in an active space, ATP swab and Pathfinder imaging test can show biomass concentrations. These tests demonstrate the effectiveness of your cleaning program in removing living organisms. Sample testing should be done after the first Cleaning for Health nighttime clean. Review the results



## Roadmap to Cleaning cont'd

with your service provider and if required, conduct a second test within a week of the review. Depending on these results, testing can be scaled back.

### **Suspected Case of Coronavirus**

If a case of COVID-19 is suspected or confirmed in your building, immediately contact your local Public Health Authority. It can take some time to get through, but from a public health perspective it is extremely important that you inform this authority so they can track the spread of the virus and so they can have an opportunity to provide you with any official guidance.

Do not use your regular cleaning crew to decontaminate a space that has had a case of coronavirus present. In addition to following the direction of your local public health authority, consider hiring a biohazard specialist. Your regular service provider may be able to provide such a specialist or refer you to one.

### **Communicate often**

In addition to the operational actions you take, be sure to assess tenant needs and develop a communications plan to build trust and comfort as people return to your facilities.

Your communications plan could include messaging that:

- Conveys care and concern about the health and safety of all tenants, employees, customers, third party contractors and anyone who visits the premises
- Discusses what you and your service provider are doing to clean and disinfect building and explains why you are taking these actions
- Describes your risk assessment and your plans to address those risks e.g. high risk areas, how you are cleaning them, how often you are cleaning them, why you have chosen these areas and this frequency, etc.
- Includes proof points from the Public Health Agency of Canada, your provincial/territorial and/or local public health agency, the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, etc.
- Reminds tenants and visitors of their personal responsibilities including hand washing, social distancing and care of their personal space
- Provides a contact number or email address for questions, concerns and comments

As discussed elsewhere in this Guide, communications should be disseminated across different distribution platforms (elevator screens, signage, email, etc.) and should be as specific to your building as possible. The presence of additional day staff (in masks and uniforms) disinfecting surfaces will also provide a level of reassurance. Hand sanitizer and signage should be placed in strategic locations throughout your building.

The combination of new Cleaning for Health specifications (work loading and frequencies), service provider training, equipment and chemical review and testing/audits should provide your facility with credible duty-of-care messaging.



# Cleaning Plans

**Why This Matters:** Cleaning has been at the forefront of the world’s response to coronavirus, but in commercial real estate this requires special thought and attention. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Reoccupation Plan

Create a cleaning protocol for getting the building ready for re-occupation. Consider:

- What are the key touchpoints in your building?
- What are typical pedestrian traffic flows? How might these flows be affected if certain entrances are closed and/or if direct-to-transit entrances see a decline as a result of fewer people taking public transit?
- Where should the focus be applied? (e.g. common areas)
- How can you create trust with occupants that the space has been cleaned effectively?

2

## Go Forward Plan

Develop a plan that identifies what the “new normal” cleaning protocol looks like. Consider:

- What is the frequency and scope you need with respect to cleaning?
- What planning must happen?
- What risks and hazards might be present?
- What changes in costs may arise as a result of your cleaning objectives?

3

## Verification of Work

Develop a process to demonstrate that the cleaning protocols have been respected. Consider:

- How can you effectively demonstrate your work to occupants?
- How can you create trust and comfort for occupants returning to work?

4

## Communication

Educate your occupants to facilitate trust and comfort in returning to work:

- Balance the recognition of the risk posed by coronavirus with the reassurance that you can bring through adjusted cleaning protocols
- Consider providing consistent messaging across your organization with respect to cleaning protocols and efforts, adjusted for each building’s unique profile



# Disposal of PPE

**Why This Matters:** Whether to protect yourself or others, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has emerged as one of the key items that can be helpful in limiting the spread of coronavirus. However, proper disposal of used PPE is also important, though sometimes overlooked. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## **Guidelines for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Disposal Service**

- Provide hands-free, sealed-lid PPE disposal units<sup>1</sup> near entrance/exit points (potential security check points), parking vestibules, if required near food courts, inside tenant spaces and washrooms
- Service and clean PPE disposal units onsite utilizing a bag liner
- Do not relocate units unless necessary in order to prevent cross-contamination
- Collect PPE waste in a safe fashion ensuring receptacles are sanitized and disinfected regularly
- Consider including a dry germicide that is DIN<sup>2</sup>-registered with Health Canada as an industrial and institutional disinfectant in each PPE disposal unit
- Disinfect each PPE disposal unit upon each service using a DIN-approved disinfectant registered with Health Canada which is effective against Poliovirus Type 1 and Canine Parvovirus and likely to kill the SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19)
- Provide proper labeling clearly visible on the PPE disposal unit to communicate to users what items qualify as personal protective equipment and reminding them to use it only to dispose of PPE (and dispose of their non-PPE waste as they normally would)

2

## **Recommended Locations: PPE Disposal Bins**

- Main lobby, all entrances and exits
- Management/operations offices
- Security desk
- Security change room
- Operations room
- Housekeeping change room
- Washrooms, all entrances and exists
- Retail/food court, selected areas
- Subway, all entrances and exits
- Fitness centres/shower rooms
- Conference centres
- Loading docks
- All main mechanical/electrical rooms
- Parking garage
- Elevator lobbies
- Bike storage lockers

1 [Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19 - World Health Organization](#)

2 [Drug Product Database - Health Canada](#)



# Hand Sanitization Stations

**Why This Matters:** Since coronavirus often enters the body when people touch their faces with hands that have come into contact with the virus, hand cleanliness is key to limiting viral spread. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

**Place Hand Sanitization Stations throughout your property, but particularly in and around:**

- Entrances/exits
- Lobbies
- Elevator banks
- Elevators (which require touch in the cab, unless destination dispatch)
- Security/concierge desks
- Property management office
- Tops and bottoms of escalators (but take care not to cause congestion at the bottoms of escalators)
- Washrooms
  - Each entrance/exit
  - Each sink
- Stairwells (but consider fire code obligations)
- Throughout retail areas
- Throughout food courts, including at each restaurant, at each tray deposit station, etc.
- At transit entrances/exits
- At and throughout fitness centres
- At and throughout loading docks
- Mailrooms
- Mechanical and electrical rooms
  - Consider blue-pharmaceutical floormats
- Supply rooms
- Bike cages
- Parking garages
- Conference centres and other building amenities





# Acquiring Sanitization Products

**Why This Matters:** Because of the sudden spike in demand for sanitation products, there can often be challenges in identifying and acquiring appropriate products. The following considerations, which should be contemplated in conjunction with cleaning and disinfection measures, will help you address this challenge:

1

## Hand Sanitizer Information

- Inventory your current supply of dispensers, noting their state/quality and check on them frequently
- Inventory your current supply of refills, keeping the inventory current
- Conduct an assessment to determine appropriate coverage points
- Purchase products approved by Health Canada<sup>1</sup>
- The Center for Disease Control recommends soap and water as a first choice for hand hygiene, but also recommends alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol<sup>2</sup>
- If using a sealed cartridge-based system, contact supplier to evaluate supply chain status; expect shortages
- If required, evaluate if current dispenser systems allow for bulk refill
- If not, contact current supplier to discuss alternate bulk refill friendly dispenser systems – note: bulk refill systems are simply taking bulk sanitizer and transporting to dispensers that allow for refill and filling them up by pouring more in
- Bulk alcohol hand sanitizer is readily available across supplier networks
- Contact current supplier and discuss service options and/or purchasing the product to self serve
- If the procurement of additional dispensers to refill is not an option, facilities should consider hand sanitizer bottle stations ideally with pump mechanisms measures that will be put in place

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1 [\*Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\): List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada\*](#)

2 [\*Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) How to Protect Yourself and Others - Centers for Disease Control\*](#)

# HVAC, Ventilation & Filters



**Why This Matters:** Air quality has long been a core focus inside commercial real estate, and coronavirus has only focused stakeholders on that issue all the more. As the demand for certain air filters in buildings increases, it is important to consider ventilation methods. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Things To Consider

- Filters may trap the virus, but will not kill it. Proper disposal of contaminated filters is required to contain the further spread of the virus and protect those who come into contact with the filter itself
- Not all ventilation systems are designed for higher MERV rated filters. Check with your HVAC contractor/engineer to confirm if you can still maintain the system's design performance with a higher MERV rated filter
- Building operators should receive COVID-19 training and supervision. Supervisors should check that operators wash hands before putting on and after taking off their PPE. Potentially contaminated clothes and materials must be properly cleaned or disposed

2

## Additional Steps You Might Take

Supply air is provided through air grills and diffusers located throughout occupied space. Velocity will vary depending on diffuser design and airflow characteristics. A higher velocity of air movement can propel contaminated droplets a further distance, resulting in these droplets staying in the air for a longer period

Occupants who practice recommended physical distancing may still be subject to droplet exposure under the above-mentioned circumstances. To identify this risk, consider:

- Speaking with building occupants and maintenance personnel to determine if there is drafty air (a sign of high velocity air movement)
- Discuss and review potential risks with your maintenance contractor
- Consult with your maintenance contractor on air balancing to ensure the system is operating as per original design
- Review of existing drawing and design with your engineer and contractor

# HVAC, Ventilation & Filters cont'd



## 3

### HEPA Filters

- HEPA is a type of pleated mechanical air filter. It is an acronym for “high-efficiency particulate air.” This type of air filter can theoretically remove at least 99.97% of dust, pollen, mold, bacteria, and any airborne particles with a size of 0.3 microns ( $\mu\text{m}$ )<sup>1</sup>
- The SARS-CoV-2 virus that caused the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has an average size of 0.06 microns to 0.15 micron in diameter. According to current evidence from the World Health Organisation, the COVID-19 virus is primarily transmitted through respiratory droplets at a size larger than 5-10  $\mu\text{m}$  in diameter, which is much larger than the naked virus itself<sup>2</sup>
- Technically, if these larger size droplets that contain viruses reach the return air stream HVAC filters, a significant portion can be captured depending on the filter’s MERV rating. If your building operates according to the minimum ASHRAE standard of MERV<sup>3</sup>, you may be able to improve filtration capability further. Discuss moving to a higher MERV rated filter, such as MERV 13, with your local HVAC contractor
- However, according to the WHO<sup>2</sup>, there is no evidence suggesting that contaminated droplets are circulating in ventilation systems, though further studies are underway which could cause this conclusion to be reassessed
- There are several key considerations when using higher rating filters including:
  - Higher rated filters may trap the virus, but will not kill it. It is important to dispose of contaminated filters properly to contain the further spread of COVID-19
  - Some ventilation systems may not be designed for higher rated filters. Consult with your local HVAC contractor to confirm if your HVAC system can maintain design performance with a higher rated filter

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1 [Indoor Air Quality \(IAQ\) - What is a MERV rating? - EPA](#)

2 [Modes of transmission of virus causing COVID-19: implications for IPC precaution recommendations - WHO](#)

3 [ASHRAE Standard 52.2](#)



# Cleaning Principles

**Why This Matters:** Managing cleaning protocols in the face of a pandemic event can require a different approach than what was used before. It is paramount for buildings to stay on top of cleaning and to take all reasonable steps to protect their occupants against the spread of the virus. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## **Crisis management and cleaning**

The three main mitigation strategies for COVID-19 based on CDC, WHO and Government of Canada guidelines are social distancing, personal hygiene (hand washing) and cleaning/disinfecting common touchpoints in your facility. Cleaning is a strategic resource and needs to be part of your crisis/pandemic management plan.

Top cleaning related objectives include:

- Taking proactive steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your facility
- Communicating to stakeholders on a regular basis:
  - Their health and welfare is your paramount concern
  - Explain the actions you are taking (e.g. increased disinfection) and provide proof thehehehehehe points
  - Solicit questions and feedback (understand their concerns and needs)
  - Express empathy – people are concerned and frightened
- Ensure that employees, tenants, suppliers and contractors are aware of the situation and help them take personal responsibility to protect themselves and mitigate the spread of the virus

Manage cleaning costs to account for higher vacancy rates and support your bottom line.

When using a third-party janitorial service provider, understand their crisis/pandemic continuity plans, their pinch points (and the potential risk to your operations) and stay in contact to keep them abreast of your issues.

Where there is in-house cleaning staff, ensure that someone senior is part of your crisis/pandemic team and that they understand your current objectives and priorities. Clear roles and responsibilities are essential in crisis management. Designate key personnel responsible for strategic/management issues, logistics (supplies, people), operations and communications.



# Cleaning Principles cont'd

2

## Consider the following:

- As occupancy rates and traffic patterns shift, cleaning crews will require more supervision, training, and flexibility. Put cleaning decisions in the hands of the right people on the ground
- Build in spare capacity. We do not know how long this situation will last, circumstances will change, and key people could get sick
- Set new cleaning priorities. You and your contractor need to be able to reallocate people to deal with urgent cleaning issues

And please take care of yourself during the crisis. Working 12-hour days to fill-in for absent colleagues may seem necessary in the moment, but you are no good to your organization or family if you fall ill.

3

## A fact-based (data driven) approach

In setting up a strategy, it is important to understand the nature of the crisis and mitigation factors to effectively deal with it. Taking advantage of available resources will save you significant time and effort. Please visit the BOMA pandemic page at [bomacanada.ca/coronavirus/](https://bomacanada.ca/coronavirus/)

- Understand the nature of the virus. Knowing how coronavirus is spread and how it can be contained will influence your cleaning tactics. This virus is more transmissible and deadlier than the flu and is spread through droplets. Coughing and sneezing carry the highest risk, but it can also be spread in everyday interactions. People with no visible signs (asymptomatic) can carry and spread COVID-19. The virus can survive on surfaces for varying periods of time (several hours, up to nine days) depending on conditions
- Understand and communicate personal hygiene protocols such as hand washing and social distancing. Every time someone touches an elevator button, handrail, or door handle, they should assume it is contaminated and wash their hands before touching their face
- Understand vulnerable populations within your facility and take additional precautions. People with underlying health conditions and the elderly are more susceptible to serious illness. Take steps to provide people in high traffic areas (reception, security) with the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and/or barriers such as plexiglass screens, with higher frequency contact point cleaning
- Cleaners must be trained in proper safety techniques (they are highly vulnerable) and to ensure they don't inadvertently spread contamination through poor practices or improper tools
- Understand your cleaning supply-chain dynamics, build a reasonable inventory and work with your cleaner to evaluate substitutes. There have been shortages of cleaning supplies and chemicals, in particular hand sanitizer and N95 masks (with priority use for health care workers)

We don't know how long the mandatory work from home orders will remain in place, so manage resources accordingly.



# Cleaning Principles cont'd

## 4

### **Triage cleaning - best practices**

Triage is a medical term relating to the setting of priorities in an emergency to tackle urgent/important situations first, maximizing the efficacy of the outcome. In cleaning, your priority is reducing the probability of spreading the virus via surface contamination (adopting a rigorous surface-management cleaning program).

The first step is an assessment of building occupancy, traffic patterns, high-risk populations and access/exit points. Use this data to prioritize cleaning tasks – in particular, cleaning/disinfecting common touchpoints in populated or high-traffic areas. Look at:

- Your building stacking plan, square feet/tenant/floor, special places
- Current vacancies, full floors, part floors
- Traffic flow and plans/support for social distancing (e.g. signage)
- Higher risk areas (lobby, washrooms, elevators...)

Lessen the frequency of routine daily and periodic tasks such as dusting and vacuuming. Vacant and low traffic areas will still need some cleaning. Clean and disinfect common touchpoints frequently depending on traffic volumes (high traffic areas may require hourly spot cleaning/disinfection).

Although the risk of COVID-19 contamination may be low, it takes just one infected person in your facility touching an elevator button. Create a touchpoint cleaning checklist (doorknobs, push plates, elevator buttons, faucet levers, paper towel dispensers...). Move from frequency-based cleaning to performance-based cleaning, increase spot checking and spot cleaning for routine tasks. This reallocation of labour will also ensure good value for your cleaning dollars at a time when your building is largely vacant.

Cleaners must receive COVID-19 training and supervision. Supervisors should check that cleaners wash hands before putting on and after taking off gloves. Potentially contaminated clothes and materials must be properly cleaned or disposed of.

Surfaces need to be cleaned first and then disinfected. The virus is small enough that it can survive hidden beneath dirt and dust. Be mindful of items that cannot follow a standard surface disinfection method such as fabric surfaces, surfaces sensitive to moisture/chemicals and some technology. Some spaces may need wide-area disinfection tools (foggers, electrostatic or UV systems).

Cleaners must use proper equipment. Microfiber cloths should be colour coded for appropriate use and handled and cleaned to ensure that they don't inadvertently spread contamination. There are no added PPE requirements for cleaners under normal circumstances. Cloth masks should be provided to day porters/matrons and evening staff, to help ensure asymptomatic cleaners don't spread the virus.



# Cleaning Principles cont'd

Health Canada has a list of approved chemicals for disinfection. If these are not available your janitorial service provider should work with their suppliers to find an effective substitute (with the right percentage of active ingredients e.g. alcohol, chlorine compounds, hydrogen peroxide etc.). If available, provide hand sanitizer at visible locations to reduce the risk of spreading the virus and add a sense of security.

Communications are vital. Tell your employees, contractors, and tenants what you are doing to change your cleaning routines and why. Remind them of the importance of personal hygiene (posters, electronic billboards, email etc.) and to disinfect their personal space (keyboards, phones etc.). Stakeholders need to know that you care about their wellbeing.

## 5

### Testing

Unfortunately, there is no cost-effective way to guarantee that surfaces are free of the virus, particularly in an environment where people are coming and going. The current best practice is to use ATP swabs and Pathfinder imaging. Both measure bio-mass colony forming units, testing the level of living organisms on surfaces where there shouldn't be any.

Typically, these tests are done before and after cleaning to show the gradient. Acceptable scores will help demonstrate that proper cleaning and sanitization practices have been put in place and are working. A record of these scores, along with cleaning specifications, a touchpoint cleaning/sanitization work program and training records will help property managers meet their duty of care.

Once testing demonstrates consistent/quality cleaning results, the frequency of the tests can be reduced.

## 6

### Dealing with a reported positive-case of COVID-19 in your building from a cleaning perspective

BOMA Canada's core advice when dealing with a case or a suspected case of coronavirus within your properties is to contact your local public health authorities immediately. You should also consult with your health, safety and environment department, if you have one. The regulatory and legal aspects of responding to such a situation are outside the scope of this document.

Do not attempt to deal with cleaning a contaminated site on your own.<sup>1</sup> We have adapted this section based on content by the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) guidelines on the ISSA website ([www.ISSA.com](http://www.ISSA.com)).

<sup>1</sup> [Global Biorisk Advisory Council \(GBAC\)](http://www.GBAC.org)



# Cleaning Principles cont'd

Do not ask your onsite cleaning staff to conduct decontamination activities as part of their daily routine. The decontamination team must have the necessary training and equipment and follow a site-specific decontamination protocol. The following guidelines will help you understand the process that the decontamination expert will take. A thorough risk-assessment could be done by the cleaning company in advance if qualified, including:

- Incident Site Risk-Assessment: Gathering as much information as possible prior to going to the site, developing risk-mitigation steps and strategies
- Pre-Disinfecting: In a situation with visible contamination, use sprayers, electrostatic sprayers, foggers or misters with the appropriate disinfectant
- Load Reduction: Visible biological contamination must be removed
- Detailed Forensic Cleaning: Prepare surfaces for disinfection, for example dust and grime must be removed prior to sanitization/disinfection
- Professional Disinfection: Determine the spray pattern and scope
- Post-Site Assessment: Complete a visual inspection, post operations documentation, properly dispose of waste, final client sign-off, and document lessons learned

7

## **In General, the Cleaning Steps Include:**

- Close off area(s) used by the ill person(s) and follow the isolation/waiting guidelines before cleaning and disinfection
- Proper PPE must be worn by the janitorial team to reduce the risk of secondary infection
- A germicidal disinfectant must be used
- Cleaning should occur from the outside edge of the space or room, moving inward to decrease the possibility of recontamination
- Properly clean and/or dispose of materials and equipment

8

## **Interim Cost Adjustments**

You should also be taking steps to work with your cleaner to adjust costs during this period, reflecting your current cleaning requirements, while planning for a number of re-occupancy scenarios. The janitorial cleaning companies each have their own unique challenges and opportunities. Most are trying to balance the surge in demand for biohazard and disinfection services against requests for significant price reductions from property managers. Some property managers are using vacancy credit mechanisms (which weren't designed for very low occupancy).

Property managers need to significantly reduce costs but maintain quality assurance and essential cleaning needs. Unfortunately, there is no cookie cutter approach. As discussed under triage cleaning, the individual occupancy and cleaning requirements of each building need to be evaluated on their own merit.





# Cleaning Principles cont'd

This will require an interim adjustment of your cleaning specifications to ensure that you and your contractor are on the same page in terms of objectives, tasks, and outcomes. Adjust your KPIs and quality control mechanisms, accordingly, don't assume that your cleaner understands these new requirements without the proper work scopes.

Give your contractor time to plan and schedule your new requirements. Most contractors are afraid of losing key personnel. In your negotiations help your contractor retain essential and highly skilled staff in your building:

- Supervisory staff that understand your building may be difficult to replace if laid off
- Consider adding in redundancy and flexibility for unforeseen situations
- Take advantage of the situation to conduct deep cleaning and annual maintenance. Your tenants expect to come back to a clean building
- Communicate these extra steps (especially increased cleaning-for-health) as part of your "Brand" Health Safety and Environment messaging
- Understand your current contract (hours, costs, specifications) with wages and the collective bargaining agreement (if applicable), as well as any staff incentives related to COVID-19

All of these steps preserve the ability of your cleaner to do a good job, maintain a partnership/trust and give them less incentive to cut costs – putting health and safety at risk. You want cleaning staff who aren't inadvertently spreading contamination in your building because they are untrained and overworked.

The reduction in costs should be a negotiated settlement, considering both fixed and variable costs.

- Adjusted costs will vary by the building and its needs, the percentage of cost savings should be greater for larger buildings with bigger floor templates.
- These interim agreements should include a flexible pricing schedule (similar to a bid cost document) itemizing:
  - Essential labour
  - Discretionary labour
  - Overheads and fixed costs
  - Supplies (higher costs due to special chemicals to disinfect, masks, gloves, PPE, etc.)
  - Bank hours for additional cleaning tasks, i.e. power washing, glass cleaning, etc.
  - Consider cleaning/disinfecting "mechanical rooms" from an air quality perspective (deployment of hours)
- Contractors have invested in equipment, training, and administrative support for your building, which will still be required when life returns to normal



# Cleaning Principles cont'd

Make this scalable depending on changes to occupancy and cleaning requirements. This needs a data driven, rational approach to negotiated prices. In anticipation of life returning to the “new normal”, consider:

- People and supplies maybe in high demand (they are an essential service), which may also impact your cleaning contractor. Work with them to ensure that they have contingencies in place for available supplies and labor
- Adjusting your cleaning standards from the traditional frequency-based approach to performance-based cleaning and add cleaning-for-health (sanitization) standards and testing. This will provide higher quality cleaning, real data on quality of cleaning and save money

There are two critical periods. What to do prior to the beginning of re-occupancy of the building and cleaning procedures to be set up and implemented for continuing occupancy:

## Preoccupancy:

- This is essentially a deep clean of all areas within a height of 6 feet in the building with additional emphasis on touch point disinfection
- COVID-19 is relatively easy to kill so normal cleaning with touch point disinfection procedures will be effective as long as appropriate protocols are followed
- A plan should be developed with your service provider complete with all details you would normally see in the janitorial contract start-up

## Re-occupancy:

- The procedures for re-occupancy cleaning with “the new normal” are under debate and development with a number of different organizations
- “All eyes” will be on the cleaners and tenants are going to need reassurance that the buildings are safe



# Security & Life Safety



**Why This Matters:** Security concerns are always central in any emergency, and tenants and visitors often turn to security guards as representatives of property managers. Moreover, security considerations change in an era of coronavirus. Property managers should not hesitate to contact police in the event of seeing any suspicious person or activity. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## **Working with Security Firms:**

- Concierges should not shake hands, carry parcels, open car doors, etc.
- Put a plexiglas partition on concierge desks to prevent spread of droplets
- Change security policy where it requires security guards to approach anyone wearing a mask
- Determine if security officers will respond to loss prevention officer requests for assistance during arrests (particularly in retail settings)
- Generally, instruct security to continue to respond to medical emergencies, while taking precautions with respect to coronavirus
- Ensure that firms are providing staff with PPE and that staff is trained in safe use and disposal of PPE
- Ensure that security staff review and comply with this guide and/or your own Back to Work guide
- Consult with your security provider with respect to how their employees should engage with non-compliant visitors, etc., ensuring that close contact be avoided and that, when unavoidable, it occur where security guards are properly outfitted with appropriate PPE
- Create a policy with your security provider with respect to how their employees should respond to those in need of first aid or medical attention, ensuring that first responders are properly outfitted with appropriate PPE
- Engage with your security provider with respect to how their employees should respond to life safety emergencies such as fires and floods, ensuring that firms balance the need to protect against the risks of COVID-19 with the need to respond to genuine emergencies.
- Rethink muster points with a view to maximizing physical distancing
- Create a policy with your security provider with respect to how their employees should respond to lost children (particularly in retail), ensuring that first responders are properly outfitted with appropriate PPE and that they take steps to put such children at ease.

2

## **Signage**

- No suggested signage at this time

# Pathway Back to Work



# Tenant & Building Communications

This section provides key guidance on Tenant and Building Communications. It should be read in consultation with the other sections of the BOMA Canada Back to Work Pathway: Building Operations, Vendors & Supplies, and Human Resources.

Every situation is different, and the individual recommendations below may or may not be applicable to every building. Instead, they are intended to help you create a plan to help you get your building ready for return to occupancy. We also urge all BOMA members to consult with relevant local governmental authorities, including public health authorities. Information presented below represents suggested practices and procedures and identifies strategies to consider based on industry volunteer input.

## The following will be outlined in detail:



Tenant Communications



Signage to Consider



Protocol for a Confirmed Case

**We need your feedback!** Please email your comments to [info@bomacanada.ca](mailto:info@bomacanada.ca) and help us keep this document current. We already have dozens of coronavirus-related resources for you at [www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus) and will post updated versions of this document there too.

# Tenant & Building Communications

## Acknowledgements

**BOMA Canada Return to Work Sub-Committee**

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# Tenant Communications

**Why This Matters:** Communicating the steps you are taking to address the risk of the spread of coronavirus in your building is critical to ensuring that individuals who enter it feel as comfortable as possible. By acknowledging the overall risks posed by coronavirus while also communicating the steps you have taken to mitigate, you will reduce stress, anxiety and other unwelcome mental health risks for those inside your property. This will make for an overall better experience. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## **Communication suggestions to consider sharing with your tenants before re-occupancy.**

Use this as a guide for ensuring your tenants are informed on various changes to your building before re-entering.

### **First, Talk to Your Tenants**

Early tenant coordination is paramount to helping you with your planning efforts to reopen your building. Reach out to your tenants to ask about their return to work plans (e.g. if they plan on returning to work gradually, implementing staggered shifts, providing employees with PPE, screening in their leased space with thermal imaging, etc.) Track their plans in a central document. By doing this, you will gain critical intelligence with respect to what to expect from your tenants, enable your team to prepare in the most efficient way for your tenants' return and build a deeper relationship of trust with your tenants.

### **Sample Tenant Communications – People**

This Sample Tenant Communications Document provides suggested language and a broad list of items for you to share with your tenants and others in your property, before, during and after re-occupancy begins. Please change it to capture your own priorities and your own voice, and share it with your marketing and communications department in advance, if you have one. You may wish to divide it into separate communications as well.

#### **General Letter to Tenants - Sample**

Dear Tenant (etc.)

The health and wellbeing of our tenants, guests and employees is our paramount concern. For the past several weeks, to contain the spread of coronavirus, many of you have remained at home and your buildings have been significantly emptier than usual. As a designated essential service, [Property Manager Name] has been maintaining the building throughout this period, taking various steps to ensure that [Building Name] continues to be available to you.

As some of our tenants begin to consider returning to the building, we want to inform you of some changes we have made in response to coronavirus. Of course, no steps exist which would allow our building to be free of coronavirus, but we have taken actions to minimize the risk that the illness poses inside this building.



# Tenant Communications cont'd



This means that, as you return to the building, you may see some new procedures in place to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. In implementing these changes, we have drawn on the guidance of the Building Owners and Managers Association of Canada and we always follow the direction of relevant governmental authorities. As this situation is dynamic, it is possible that we may implement further changes, which we will communicate to you. Please feel free to share this with your employees and, as always, we welcome your questions and comments.

Finally, we wish to thank you for your partnership and cooperation throughout this period. We also pay tribute to our own building operations employees, as well as to our contract cleaners, security guards and other brave frontline workers, who continue to work tirelessly to make this building the best it can be for you. We are all in this together.

## 2

### **Managing Your Employees - Before Returning - For Tenants**

It is always a good idea to stay home if you are feeling unwell, but as to coronavirus, please remind your employees and visitors to comply with your local, provincial/territorial and federal public health guidance and stay home if they have any of the following symptoms<sup>1</sup>:

- Cough
- Fever
- Difficulty Breathing
- Pneumonia in Both Lungs

Please also follow [Province/Territory]'s self-isolation directives, which can be found at [website address]. On top of our provincial/territorial directives, the Government of Canada asks that anyone self-isolate for fourteen days who has met the following criteria<sup>2</sup>:

- Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19, or who is waiting to hear the results of a lab test for COVID-19
- Anyone showing any symptoms of COVID-19, even if mild, and have
- been in contact with a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 been told by public health (directly, through public communications or through a self-assessment tool) that they may have been exposed to COVID-19
- Anyone who has returned from travel outside Canada with symptoms of COVID-19

Be sure to check relevant [municipality], [province/territory] and federal public health authority guidance frequently, as these symptoms and directives may be updated from time to time.

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1 [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Symptoms and treatment - Government of Canada](#)

2 [How to isolate at home when you may have COVID-19 - Government of Canada](#)





# Tenant Communications cont'd



## 3

### What You Should Know / Expect When You Arrive – For Tenants

We would like to share with you the following changes to our building operations, all of which we have undertaken to minimize the risk from coronavirus:

- The building operating hours are changed to [XX] to [XX], Monday to Friday and [XX] to [XX] on weekends and holidays
- The heating/cooling systems will operate during these new operating hours (or from [XX] to [XX])
- Security access cards will [identify changes, if any, e.g. operate the same hours / be required at all times / other]
- Stairwells will be un/available for general use but maintain your physical distance and take all normal precautions. They are always available in case of an emergency or a need to evacuate
- Building staff has been augmented to assist with physical distancing and address questions as people enter the building
- The following public entries will temporarily be closed to better manage traffic – [insert details]
- The following conveniences are affected [insert details e.g. drinking water fountains, removal of furniture from lobby, etc.]
- The [fitness centre / conference centre / other] will be [closed until further notice / have restricted hours / other]
- Restaurants and food courts will be [open /closed /opening progressively (list)]. [Encourage people to bring their lunch if closed and/or consume food back at their offices.]
- Retail tenants will be [open / closed / opening progressively (list)]
- The following additional cleaning efforts have been put in place [provide list]
- The following measures have been put in place for heating and cooling systems [provide list, ex. filter types, frequency of filter changes, added fresh air, etc.]
- All building personnel have been trained on new operating procedures, will be advised to stay home if they have any symptoms, and will be wearing masks around the building and other PPE as required in the performance of their work under the new operating procedures
- Visitors [changes should be noted, e.g. must check in with security / must wear a mask / other]
- Deliveries [changes should be noted e.g. will be limited / must be booked in advance / other] and courier service [changes should be noted e.g. must check in with security / are free to proceed to your office / other]. Note, all delivery personnel are required to wear masks [and will be screened by security with access denied should they not pass screening?]
- Bike racks [any changes should be noted]
- Parking garage [any changes should be noted]
- Any materials brought in by your employees [changes or protocols should be noted, if any]



# Tenant Communications cont'd



We would also like to share with you the following changes we have implemented to maximize physical distancing, which we also taken with a view to minimizing the risk from coronavirus:

## 4

### **Physical Distancing / Preventing the Spread**

We are preparing for the worst and hoping for the best. Although many tenants are staging employees' return to work and staggering hours of operations, lineups may be inevitable. It is important that we all follow the signage and rules. While building staff have been augmented, it is impossible for us to manage and monitor every potential interaction at a property. For example, people may be frustrated by having to let elevators go because of our new, reduced capacity rules. We ask for your patience as we work through the operating parameters and fine tune as we move into the new normal.

When you return to work, you will notice the following:

- Physical barriers (identify any changes e.g. plexiglass at security desk)
- In line with public health direction, we have implemented physical distancing measures. The following areas will be affected
  - [identify locations e.g. outside areas, building entrances, parking garages, main floor lobby, concourse level, elevator lobbies (ground floor / upper floors), elevators, escalators, stairwells, washrooms, other]. There will be appropriate signage in place at the building to manage these efforts
- In addition to social distancing efforts, guidelines and signs will be visible for safe handwashing, sneezing and coughing to promote preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Protocols for anyone with a disability or with a pre-existing condition [include any new process, e.g. tenant to provide a list of anyone who requires special consideration to building management, dedicated times/elevators/other]
- We have put in place special provisions for people with disabilities and welcome your feedback if we need to do more
- Screening for COVID19 [identify applicability e.g. tenants, visitors, couriers and delivery personnel, etc. and what measure are ex. questionnaire / denial of entry process / PPE / other]
- PPE expectations [identify expectations of tenants' employees, if any e.g. wearing a face mask, including disposal instructions]<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Non-medical masks and face coverings - Government of Canada](#)



# Signage to Consider



**Why This Matters:** One of the more important aspects of managing and informing people of the steps you have taken to respond to coronavirus is signage. It allows management to address certain issues, situations and convey expectations without actually having to be there. This will often help avoid confusion and reduce stress, anxiety and other unwelcome frustration for those inside your property. The following considerations will help you address this challenge:

1

## Contacting Building Management

It is vitally important that you inform us promptly if you are aware of/suspect that an employee or visitor to our building has coronavirus or has come into contact with coronavirus. We have protocols in place for such an eventuality and will always follow public health agency direction.

Please also contact us:

- If you are planning anything unusual in your leased space (e.g. renovations, special meetings, etc.)
- If you are aware of anything unusual in your leased space (e.g. damage to property, etc.)
- If you want to ask any questions, raise any concerns or provide any feedback to us at all

We can be reached at:

- Contact info (e.g. emergency, fire alarm, damage to property, reporting of any scheduled repairs, maintenance and/or planned renovations)

2

## Signage

- Signs outlining essential visits/or deliveries only to those who have not travelled outside the country, have symptoms or have been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case
- Posters regarding self-monitoring your health in lobbies and reception (see resources bellow)
- Signs for special building operation hours i.e. Extended hours, opening hours for vulnerable tenants etc. If you wish to have a “greeter” in your lobby directing people or giving verbal instructions, consider having a sign indicating their purpose
- Posters with graphics regarding coughing, sneezing and handwashing etiquette in common areas and washrooms
- Signs for any self-sanitation stations in common areas and instructions on proper use and etiquette
- If mask wearing is mandatory for your building, provide signs at entrances highlighting this requirement
- Signs for PPE disposal units outlining proper disposal instructions
- Floor decals to facilitate physical distancing in lobbies, line-ups and elevators e.g. “stand here”



## Signage to Consider cont'd

- Posters, banners or rotating electronic signage in lobbies outlining the cleaning/sanitation efforts for building touchpoints, generic HVAC & air circulation protocols, building staff protocols being done to keep tenants safe e.g. “what is being done to keep building clean”
- Post stickers, signs or electronic messaging inside and outside of elevators outlining maximum elevator capacities
- Floor or wall stickers providing disclaimers on wait times e.g. 15-minute wait at this point
- Signs or decals stating whether stairwells will be closed or one-way, and the required physical distance while using them
- Signs/stickers posted on any restricted seating in common areas e.g. “seat restricted” on every other seat to promote physical distancing
- Signs or stickers indicating maximum capacity of people in a common area – to limit workplace gatherings to a number in line with provincial requirements
- Signs stating any facilities or amenities are closed i.e. gyms, restaurants, conference facilities, bike racks, drinking fountains etc.
- Signs or decals stating whether stairwells will be closed or one-way, and the required physical distance while using them (with care to comply with fire code etc.)
- Signs/stickers posted on any restricted seating in common areas e.g. “seat restricted” on every other seat to promote physical distancing
- Signs or stickers indicating maximum capacity of people in a common area – to limit workplace gatherings to a number in line with provincial requirements
- Signs stating any facilities or amenities are closed i.e. gyms, restaurants, conference facilities, bike racks, drinking fountains etc.

### Resources

Click [here](#) for BOMA Canada signage

# Protocol for Management of a Confirmed Case after Reopening



**Why This Matters:** Once tenants resume occupancy of their office, it is highly likely that there will be incidences of COVID19 cases at the property. This guidance document summarizes recommended processes to be established at the property.

1

## **Upfront Considerations:**

When the pandemic started, common practice was to contact local Public Health Authorities, and they would make decisions on what was to be done. As the authorities became overwhelmed by case volume, they were no longer easily accessible to property owners. The below guidance is based upon the property managers' (PM) assumed responsibilities. BOMA Canada's core advice nonetheless remains to consult with your relevant public health authorities, despite this challenge.

- Communicate with tenants with respect to their responsibility (legal or otherwise) to report any suspected or confirmed cases of their employees or visitors to the PM office. Appoint someone (plus an alternate) to receive these calls.
- Larger companies may want to consider a regional / centralized approach for their property portfolio for reporting to health agencies to assist in enabling contact tracing and epicenter identification, where appropriate.
- Communicate with all tenants regularly on: (a) Occupancy Load (tracking occupancy is critical to assist in contact tracing, if participating) and (b) confirmed or suspected COVID cases in the building, including the general location(s) of case(s), without compromising confidentiality and privacy of individuals. Note: always check with legal and privacy experts before establishing sensitive communications protocols.

2

## **Procedures for Property Management:**

- Develop a standard form for the property team to ensure the right information is gathered from the reporting tenant/occupant (see Sample – Information Gathering below).
- Take immediate steps, if not already done, to safely remove the affected person from the site and make recommendations for self-isolation and/or testing as applicable. Consider quarantining the affected zone e.g. office, department/area to allow potential droplets to settle and minimize the potential for continued exposure.
- Designate a point of contact for Public Health officials
- Confirm requirement for a deep cleaning (enhanced cleaning and disinfection) and/or terminal cleaning with the tenant representative and ask if they would like PM to arrange this on their behalf.
- Determine the common areas to be disinfected (corridors, washrooms, elevators, lobbies, etc).

# Protocol for Management of a Confirmed Case after Reopening cont'd



- Inform security, cleaning, parking, and PM employees that a confirmed case has been identified at the property. Inform contractors and service providers that have worked in your building for the past two weeks, checking the building's log in system for accuracy and completeness.
- Check with property staff and service providers to determine who has been on the floor / in tenant space in the last two weeks and/or may have had close contact with the infected person(s), again referencing the log-in system for the list of contractors/service providers.
- Property staff and service providers should not be permitted on the floor until management confirms it is safe to do so.
- Call your janitorial company and request immediate specialized disinfecting cleaning. Advise them of the confirmed case and location of cleaning needs and be as specific as possible about the affected zone. In order of preference, first disinfect common elements, elevators, corridors, and washrooms. Then move to the tenant floor(s)/area(s), where requested by the tenant and lastly to the affected zone.
- Drawing on the guidance of public health authorities, advise the tenant on the requirement for the lockdown or other remedial actions, while taking care to respect lease obligations as well.
- PM should communicate in person and follow up by email with all tenants on the floor to inform them of the situation and advise them of the cleaning protocols that will be performed on the floor and common areas.
- Advise tenants how their occupants/employees are to exit the building (e.g. consider placing one elevator on service to remove occupants from the floor).
- Security and PM staff to manage inquiries of visitors and tenants (ensure they are properly trained and briefed on precisely what to communicate).
- Inform the tenant(s) representative(s) once space is disinfected and/or reopened.

## 3

### **COVID Presumptive or Confirmed Case – Information Gathering - Sample**

- Obtain applicable contact information from the affected person including alternate phone numbers and e-mails
- Is there a confirmed (through testing) or presumptive case?
- Confirm that the affected person has shared employer contact information with the testing centre or public health and verify the details shared to confirm a point of contact from Public Health
- Does the case involve a visitor or an employee of tenant?
- When did this person last visit the site?
- When did they start feeling ill?
- Is there any explanation for the case e.g. travel, exposure, etc.?
- What is the typical traffic pattern of the individual accessing their space? (e.g. elevators, stairs, parking, public transportation, etc.)

# Protocol for Management of a Confirmed Case after Reopening cont'd



- Has the tenant told their staff about the case? Is there an obligation for the tenant to do so?
- Is the individual in question in self quarantine?
- Have those that have been in close contact been notified? If so, what course of action was taken? (e.g. sent home to self-quarantine)
- What are the tenants' intentions i.e. wish to return to business as usual, closing office, working from home, etc.?
- Confirm deep clean (enhanced cleaning and disinfection) requirements. Ask if the tenant would like additional in-suite cleaning and advise pricing, availability, etc.
- If individual tested Positive for COVID-19:
  - Have the health authorities assigned a case worker?
  - Has the employer been contacted?
  - Has a risk assessment been implemented?

# Pathway Back to Work



# Human Resources

This section provides key guidance on Human Resources. It should be read in consultation with the other sections of the BOMA Canada Back to Work Pathway: Building Operations, Vendors and Supplies, and Tenant & Building Communications.

Every situation is different, and the individual recommendations below may or may not be applicable to every building. Instead, they are intended to help you create a plan to help you get your building ready for return to occupancy. We also urge all BOMA members to consult with relevant local governmental authorities, including public health authorities. Information presented below represents suggested practices and procedures and identifies strategies to consider based on industry volunteer input.

## The following will be outlined in detail:



**Communication is key**



**Phased approach to return**



**Office management**



**New policies and practices**

**We need your feedback!** Please email your comments to [info@bomacanada.ca](mailto:info@bomacanada.ca) and help us keep this document current. We already have dozens of coronavirus-related resources for you at [www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus) and will post updated versions of this document there too.

# Human Resources

## Acknowledgements

**BOMA Canada Return to Work Sub-Committee**

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**Chair: Louise Porthouse – Triovest**

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**Jon Douglas – Menkes**

**Benjamin Shinewald – BOMA Canada**

**Mike Parker – Citrus Creative**

**Suhaila Cappuccino – BOMA Canada**

**Victoria Papp – BOMA Canada**

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# Communication is Key

**Why This Matters:** In preparing your workforce for return, reengaging with them is key. Create a communications plan for your own staff that ensures clear, regular communication which addresses the following concerns:

1

### **Why Return to Work?**

For those returning to the workplace, note that this is important because their role requires them to be physically present (ease of access to equipment, data infrastructure and resources that are inaccessible remotely) but also celebrate that this returning to work allows for renewed connection to colleagues and the professional community and that it enables reconnection to a community built around shared purpose and camaraderie, albeit at a 6 foot distance, and that this is a first step to overcoming potential physical isolation after months of lock-down.

2

### **Why Stay Home?**

For those remaining working from home, note that their physical presence is not required because of the nature of their work. These individuals enjoy ease of working from home and help contribute to the communal fight against coronavirus at the same time. They also may stay at home for any number of other reasons, such as underlying health conditions, lack of childcare, etc.

3

### **Establishing two-way feedback:**

We can't assume to know what our employees are thinking and how they are feeling about the return to the physical work environment. Some may be excited, others nervous. Soliciting employee feedback through surveys is a good practice. Share the information you receive and let it guide you as you plan the return to work. Consider a weekly or bi-weekly digest of information on key initiatives via a digital newsletter.

Communicate with your employees frequently to let them know that plans are underway and that there will be changes and new rules in place when they return. Create a post COVID-19 communications plan focused on 'business as usual' and work stability. Use corporate screensavers, digital signage, and wall-mounted signage to inform your employees of the latest policies and safety protocols (e.g. clean desk policy for easier sanitization, minimizing contact and safe distancing in communal areas, etc).



## Communication is Key cont'd

Employers should be mindful that some employees may have “lost touch” with organizational goals and vision and may be concerned about the new direction their business may be taking in the coronavirus era, in addition to general anxiety that many people feel about the state of the economy, their family’s health, etc. To best respond to this issue, your company’s goals and vision, be they consistent or revised, must be reaffirmed with employees so they can understand their work purpose and the impact they have to their organization’s long-term recovery and success. Communication of goals and vision can be done at Town Halls led by the organizational leadership team, either virtually or in person, as appropriate.



# Phased Approach to the Return

**Why this matters?** There are a multitude of considerations unique to each individual business in planning the return to work. A phased return needs to focus on a gradual re-opening that is grounded in health and safety considerations and that follows guidelines established by federal and provincial governments. Please consider the following to incorporate into a phased return:

1

**Government Guidance:**

Be guided by municipal and provincial government directives and public health guidelines. Many employees want a date for when to return, but a firm date is hard to nail down. Larger organizations also need to consider that the timing of returning to workplaces will vary across different provinces and countries.

2

**Occupancy Caps:**

Since it is expected that workers will return in smaller proportions at first, consider what the occupancy level will be for your own offices and who will be in this first phase of “returnees.” Senior leaders and employees in critical roles will most likely be some of the first groups you want to return.

3

**Transportation and Vulnerable Employees:**

Consideration needs to be given to employees who are in vulnerable groups (including those with pre-existing health issues, age 65+, caregivers). A key risk factor for many employees will be the crowding of their public transit route, which by its nature is something that is unknown at this time and will vary as each city opens up. Accommodation plans should be established for these groups while we transition back to work.

4

**Tracking:**

Employee registration and tracking rules should be considered. Many organizations are introducing daily health checks to be done before arrival to work and for managers to keep a register or logbook, so they know who is in the office at any time. This may help your own contact tracing in the event of an outbreak of coronavirus in or among your staff.



# Office Management



**Why this matters?** Managing our office spaces and the people who work within them will look very different in the post-pandemic world. We need to prepare our employees for a range of new safety protocols and guidelines on how, where and when we can work. As we plan our new office set-up, we will need to be agile in tweaking plans to reflect how the reopening of our businesses progress. The following outlines considerations around new floor plans, office density caps, physical distancing, controls around access points, and more.

1

### **Social Distancing Plan:**

The 6ft (2 metre) office is now our reality, at least for the moment. Density caps will support social distancing. Consider changes such as one-way traffic flow, restructuring open-plan workstation areas, limiting the number of people attending in-person meetings, assigning permanent work stations and/or ending hotelling/benching and creating new protocols for common areas such as kitchens.

2

### **Controls around access points:**

In your own offices, consider installing plexiglas sneeze guards at reception. Where possible, create separate entry and exit points, establish one-way flow of foot traffic throughout offices, post signage throughout all access points. Consider sign-in sheets/digital sign-in to track which individuals were present at what times so that you can quickly respond if necessary.

3

### **Office and workstation hygiene:**

Consider a “clean desk policy,” which is common in government and provide employees with an ample supply of disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer.

4

### **Minimize touch points**

- Keep doors open to reduce handle manipulation, where possible
- Define lunch schedule to reduce number of people in common areas and/or assign seating areas respecting social distancing measures
- Stop providing communal snacks, restrict access to toasters, regulate coffee machine/microwave use. Implement mandatory hand washing/hand sanitizing before accessing kitchen areas
- Limit Use and access to coat closets, social rooms, lounge rooms
- Culture and Etiquette: It's more important than ever that our employees be mindful of their behaviours and actions around others. Leaders need to lead by example. Everyone will have a different reaction and viewpoint on this pandemic, but even with our different viewpoints we



# Office Management cont'd



are all reminded to maintain respect, dignity and fair treatment of others. Consider ways in which you can promote creative, digital based team building activities to help employee morale and uphold workplace culture

5

## **Safety Considerations:**

Employers should create a sense of safety for employees. Promote availability of preventive resources (e.g. face coverings, hand sanitizers, and other PPE). When necessary, schedule and promote training sessions (which can be online) to cover topics such as operational changes, using technology, health and safety. Provide support for mental health and general well being through an Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) or government support agency.

6

## **Hours of Work:**

In some cases, returning employees can be assigned arrival and departure times. If possible, these should be staggered to avoid large groups of employees arriving at once. Depending on needs, arrival and departure times can be within a time range (for example: between 7AM-10AM and 3-6PM) to ensure social distancing is respected.

It is important that staff respect these times as much as possible - those working late may think they are contributing, but may in fact make it harder for their colleagues to come and go safely. For similar reasons, employees who are going to be late (due to traffic, etc.) must notify their designated workplace representative to advise them of the late arrival and to receive instructions on when to arrive. Of course, in special cases employees who need to leave work early and/or stay late can coordinate prior to making any changes to their schedule.

7

## **Breaks / Mealtimes:**

Employees can be assigned break and meal times during which they may use designated common areas as long as social distancing is respected and hand washing is followed.

Assignments are to be coordinated with other staff to ensure the maximum capacity for common areas is not exceeded and social distancing is respected. Employees staggered start and end times should be taken into consideration.

Employees must still follow social distancing when using bathrooms, walking in hallways, using stairs, elevators etc.

# New Policies and Practices



**Why this matters?** The post-pandemic return to work will require us all to proactively update our work-based policies as well as create new ones. There will be many changes in how, where and when we work and there will be a requirement to adhere to new health and safety guidelines. Updating or introducing new policies and procedures will protect both your organization and employees while ensuring everyone clearly understands their individual and team responsibilities. Below is a summary of the key ones that may need updating:

1

## **Work from Home (WFH)**

Update WFH policies to reflect any new considerations you have added since the pandemic. For example, do you now provide a subsidy for purchasing home office equipment, do you have rules around being available during core hours? Are you providing accommodation for employees with children who are no longer in school?

2

## **Health & Safety**

Review policies with a focus on long periods of WFH. Ensure you are providing your employees with an appropriate level of support for considerations like ergonomics, break time, hours of work, etc.

3

## **Guest and visitor policies**

You may want to implement restrictions on who can access your buildings and under what circumstances (e.g. couriers only at certain hours, staggering business meetings, etc.). In-person meetings may need to be put on hold until social distancing restrictions are lifted, and guests may or may not be eager to enter your workplace.

4

## **Vacation Use policy**

Employers need to consider how they are going to manage vacation for the balance of 2020, including avoiding mass requests for vacations in December. In most provinces, vacation pay falls under the definition of wages and unpaid wages claims can be brought against companies who are unable to pay them out. Timing of vacation is the decision of the employer, not the employee. Determine when vacation can be taken in 2020 and if any carryover will be allowed into 2021. Remind staff that even though they may not be able to travel for their vacations, they still need vacation time for their own wellbeing.



# New Policies and Practices cont'd



5

## **Employee Mental, Physical and Emotional Well-Being**

We all have our own personal experiences and reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic and many of us are concerned about our personal health and the health of those we care about. One of the most important aspects of the return to work is the readiness of employees mentally, physically and emotionally.

For that reason, it is critical that you communicate the health and wellness support your employees can tap into from your Employee and Family Assistance Providers (EFAP) and health benefit providers. The majority of benefit providers have a good library of well being webinars, podcasts and tools available. Think about offering support via digital and virtual platforms, something which may be a key employee request as well.

Consider adding a specific page to your intranet or newsletter to promote mental health and well being and include links to your EFAP, resources to cope with anxiety, tips on coping with work from home, etc. Also, add some social and community pieces, such as links to fun activities for families like virtual tours of art museums and zoos. If you don't have a community page for employees, consider social networking platforms such as Yammer.

There are a multitude of free workouts and health blogs that you can post to your company intranet to help promote physical health and well being. If your organization has a corporate membership with a fitness provider, you should see if they can provide any free resources. For example, Goodlife which is a major national fitness provider is providing corporate members free access to its suite of Les Mill fitness programs which usually incur an extra cost.

6

## **Pandemic Leadership**

For a people manager, it is critical to understand how the pandemic has impacted an employee's connection to the culture of the organization. It is also important as a leader to understand if your employees feel their organization cares about them, as well as understands how to improve that care during the return to the workplace.

In communicating with your employees, consider the following:

- Be sensitive and understanding about what is on their mind. In times of change and uncertainty, employees will react differently – some will be scared and some will be excited.
- Be sensitive to health concerns, dependent care needs, financial worries, job security etc. These fears are real. If required, provide resources and support for employees to manage through those challenges – that can be just as important as changes in the workplace. Contact your Human Resources representative for guidance

# New Policies and Practices cont'd



- Advise any employee with questions regarding health insurance coverage to contact their benefits provider for more information

7

## Recognition

Everyone, whether senior management or entry level, responds most positively to personal recognition and feel that it is one of the most important factors in job satisfaction.

Pure and simple, this is the single most powerful motivator you can give your team members, both individually and collectively, to show that you recognize their hard work during COVID-19.

It is strongly encouraged that you provide recognition to your team members for areas such as: i) going above and beyond during COVID-19, ii) successfully following new social distancing protocols and health and safety measures and/or iii) being diligent in finding creative ways to help the enterprise during COVID-19. Recognize the bravery, leadership and dedication your employees may have demonstrated during this difficult time. Remember that some of your employees are frontline workers who require special recognition, though all are working hard to drive your organization forward in a difficult moment.

8

## Managing Absenteeism

Some of your team may be nervous to return to the workplace. With that in mind, you may experience some challenges with an increase in absenteeism due to sickness or various other reasons.

There may be situations in which employees refuse to return to work. Employees often have the right to refuse work if they reasonably believe there is a risk in the workplace to their health or safety. In the workplace, this typically involves concerns over the usage of machines and/or work processes. However, in this unprecedented time, an argument may be made that risk of exposure to COVID-19 is a reasonable health and safety concern. In the event of a health and safety work refusal, an employer is required to investigate the concern and follow the work refusal guidelines outlined in relevant health and safety legislation and regulation.

In the event an employee refuses to return to work because of personal circumstances beyond health and safety, you can probe for the reason(s) of the work refusal and treat every situation on a case by case basis. Employers will need to consider the implications of Human Rights and/or Job Protected Leaves as several provinces/territories have introduced legislation that protects employees due to COVID-19 related issues.

# New Policies and Practices cont'd



If an employee remains absent from work not due to shortage of work, you may wish to amend a Record of Employment code to “N-Leave of Absence.” This may ensure employers are no longer bound by the layoff and recall parameters.

Keep in mind that each absenteeism situation is different. For support and guidance how to deal with absenteeism in your workplace, contact your Human Resources representative.

9

## **Employee Celebrations**

Your team lunches, birthday and life milestone celebrations are a critical part of a workplace culture. However, until otherwise informed, all in-person celebrations are probably best prohibited. Teams may still recognize a significant event with a card, gift card, phone call, video chat, etc.

10

## **Workplace Harassment**

You need to ensure that respect in your workplace is maintained. An employer should not tolerate employees mistreating, gossiping or in any way potentially harassing coworkers, guests or visitors as it relates to COVID-19 (or anything else).

For support and guidance how to deal with harassment issues related to COVID-19 contact your business Human Resources representative.

11

## **Candidate Interviews and Onboarding**

If you are hiring new employees, consult with your respective Human Resources representative regarding video conferencing for interviews. You can be provided with tips on how to manage a phone and video interview.

All onboarding material and processes for new hires should be provided electronically.

# Appendix

## Resources

### General Resources

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)  
[Center for Disease Control - Coronavirus](#)  
[John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center](#)  
[WHO - Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)  
[Government of Canada - Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

### Back to Work Guidance

[Retail Council of Canada - Recover Playbook](#)  
[Retail Council of Canada - Retail Recovery Checklist and Templates](#)  
[Cushman and Wakefield - Recovery Readiness](#)  
[WHO - Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19](#)

### Building Operations

[Public Services and Procurement Canada \(PSPC\) Building Water Systems Minimum Requirements – \(COVID-19\)](#)

### Industry Resources

[BOMA Canada 2019 Pandemic Guide](#)  
[BOMA International](#)  
[BOMA BC](#)  
[REALPAC](#)  
[ASHRAE](#)  
[Center for Active Design](#)

## Version Table

Version	Date	Section Updates
Version 1	Thursday, May 7th, 2020	N/A
Version 2	Thursday, June 18, 2020	<b>New Sections Added</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roadmap to Cleaning</li><li>• Contact Tracing</li><li>• Security and Life Safety</li><li>• Human Resources</li><li>• Resources Table</li></ul> <b>Updated Section</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elevators, Escalators and Staircases</li><li>• HVAC, Ventilation and Filters</li><li>• Thermal Imaging</li><li>• Washrooms</li></ul>
Version 3	Tuesday, November 10th, 2020	<b>New Sections Added</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protocol for Management of a Confirmed Case after Reopening</li></ul>

We encourage your feedback so we can keep this document current and relevant in future versions! Please email your comments and send any questions to [info@bomacanada.ca](mailto:info@bomacanada.ca)

For additional information visit

[www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.bomacanada.ca/coronavirus)

Stay safe and healthy!

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