



## **NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING SAFETY BY PLANNING FOR A PANDEMIC**

Resident and employee education is key to ensuring the proper preventative measures are taken and that any required reactive measures are appropriately managed. Below is a summary of best practices as outlined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), OSHA, and the National Apartment Association (NAA).

Information on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is evolving and more information is made available daily as healthcare experts learn more about the virus. Encourage your employees and residents to stay informed of any updates by frequently visiting the Center for Disease Control website (listed in the “Additional Resources” section of this document).

### **PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES AND RESIDENTS:**

- Promote and reinforce the practice of everyday prevention actions at all times. Educate employees and residents about nonpharmaceutical intervention (NPIs) actions that are used to help prevent the spread of viruses and bacteria. Per the CDC, “NPIs are actions, apart from getting vaccinated and taking medicine, that people and communities can take to help slow the spread of illnesses like pandemic influenza (flu)” and “are among the best ways of controlling pandemic flu when vaccines are not yet available.” (<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/index.html>)
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects with regular household disinfectant spray or wipes. These include doorknobs, countertops, desks, elevator buttons, phones, etc.
  - Some medical studies of other known coronaviruses have shown that a coronavirus can “remain infectious on inanimate surfaces at room temperatures for up to 9 days” (The Journal of Hospital Infection, Volume 104, Issue 3).
  - Note that these studies were conducted with known coronaviruses, not the novel coronavirus labeled COVID-19. It is not yet known how COVID-19 compares to others in regard to the most effective disinfectant solutions or the lifetime of the virus on inanimate surfaces.
- Provide prevention supplies and materials, such as those listed below:
  - Tissues
  - Trash baskets
  - N95 filtering facemasks
    - These are designed to help filter out airborne virus and bacteria particles better than standard surgical or construction masks.
    - Standard surgical or construction facemasks are insufficient safeguards for viruses, as the particles are small enough to pass through standard masks.
    - Be aware that even the N95 filtering facemasks are not designed to be 100% airtight and things like facial hair will compromise their effectiveness.
    - N95 filtering facemasks are different than a fitted respirator, which are fitted to your face to provide airtight protection when used properly.
  - Alcohol-based sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol)
- Encourage your staff and residents to:
  - Stay home when sick

- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissue
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- A 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be available if soap and water are not available
- Employers should be prepared to do the following:
  - Allow workers to telework, if feasible
  - If possible, increase workspace to at least 6 feet between staff
  - Modify, postpone or cancel large work events
  - Postpone or cancel non-essential work-related travel
- Contact your local OEM office (found in the community resources section of the SecureCore program) to see if they have any additional support or resources they can offer.
- Encourage your residents to stay educated and up to date by visiting the CDC website regularly.

#### **MEDIA CONCERNS:**

- Have a press release statement ready, if needed, to direct residents or employees to follow recent guidance provided by the WHO and the CDC. All questions should be direct to the CDC.
- If the media calls to inquire about COVID-19 at your community or office, ensure your staff is equipped with the proper response. Reference the media section in the SecureCore program to confirm who your media contact is if your corporate office has selected one.
- The National Apartment Association recommends a statement such as below:

"We appreciate your call. It is wise for everyone to remain current and follow the most recent guidance provided by health officials. That is why we request that you direct your question to [Local Health Official] or the CDC, who are on top of this situation."

#### **COVID-19 AT YOUR PROPERTY OR OFFICE:**

If a resident or employee is believed or confirmed to have contracted the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), please take the following actions:

- Notify the local health department and the CDC if any employee or resident is confirmed to have the virus.
- Take any direction from the CDC to ensure the situation is handled appropriately. They will manage and provide guidance on any potential quarantine needs.
- Facilities management and maintenance staff should NOT be directed to enter or clean any areas that may have been exposed. Nothing should be done in the affected areas until the CDC has released the area.

#### **IMPLICATIONS ON WORKPLACE ATTENDANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:**

- The CDC advises that employers should adopt increased flexibility in working location, working hours, absenteeism, and the requirement of doctor's note.
  - Employees may have an increased need to stay home to care for a sick child or family member, or to provide childcare coverage due to school or daycare closings.

- A note from a healthcare provider should not be required, as their offices will be overloaded with the increased amount of patient care needs.
- Employers should be prepared with a flexible policy that will not promote actions that could unnecessarily spread the virus. Employees should be encouraged to stay home if they are showing signs of respiratory illness. According to the CDC:

Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

- Ensure managers within your organization are aware of the guidelines, policies, and any flexibility being offered for remote working or absenteeism. They should also be aware of what their authority is to take the necessary measures and the communication actions they are expected to take.

#### **CREATING AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK RESPONSE PLAN:**

- The CDC recommends 1) identifying the exposure risk within your workplace and 2) taking necessary preventative actions to reduce them. Any procedures or policies should be aligned with any labor and workplace laws, and health department guidelines.
- Consider the essential tasks required to keep the business operational and plan for how to ensure these are completed in the event of increased absenteeism.
  - If these can be completed by remote workers, encourage telecommuting if respiratory illness is present in your workplace.
  - Staggering shifts can also provide coverage while reducing the number of people sharing the same physical space.
- Determine what will trigger the implementation of your response plan and ensure the plan has been thoroughly communicated to your employees and residents. Similarly, your team needs to be aware of what will qualify the termination of your response plan once the risk has been mitigated.
- Be aware that the degree of fear surrounding COVID-19 can lead to panic, misinformation, incorrect actions, and social or racial stigma. Proactive education and communication are key to reducing these secondary risks.
- Your response plan should include action steps for varying degrees of COVID-19 spread. Be prepared for minimal interruption, as well as maximum interruption if public health officials implement a community-level response due to high infection rates in the local area. Contact your state and local health departments in advance so you are aware of how key information will be communicated for your locale.
- Communicate your plan to all staff and residents so they are informed and prepared to follow it if and whenever necessary.

PUBLISHED: 3/3/20

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

Information on COVID-19 is still developing, so it is important that you, your staff and your residents stay as informed as possible. Below are additional resources for your reference:

### ***Center of Disease Control (CDC)***

- **Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), February 2020** - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>
- **CDC Update and FAQ page** – [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index/html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
- **Frequently Asked Questions About Respirators and Their Use** – [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirator-use-faq.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirator-use-faq.html)

### ***OSHA***

- OSHA – COVID-19 Overview - <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

### ***National Apartment Association (NAA)***

- **National Apartment Association Guidance for Dealing with the Coronavirus** - <https://www.naahq.org/news-publications/guidance-dealing-coronavirus>

### ***The Journal of Hospital Infection***

- **Persistence of coronaviruses on inanimate surfaces and their inactivation with biocidal agents** - [https://www.journalofhospitalinfection.com/article/S0195-6701\(20\)30046-3/fulltext?referringSource=articleShare](https://www.journalofhospitalinfection.com/article/S0195-6701(20)30046-3/fulltext?referringSource=articleShare)

**NOTE:** RestoreCore & SecureCore are not health care providers. This information was gathered from the sources listed above and was compiled to provide only general precautionary measures. The CDC and other qualified officials have the qualifications to provide specific guidance.