



# Pandemic Guide For Real Estate Managers

► April 2020

For those who manage to make a difference.™





# IREM<sup>®</sup> Pandemic Guide

## For Real Estate Managers

April 30, 2020

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# IREM® Pandemic Guide

## For Real Estate Managers

### Introduction

Being prepared is critical to preventing the spread of infectious diseases and minimizing impact should an outbreak occur. From our governments and health systems, to the personal responsibility of each individual, we all must maintain a state of readiness and ability to act.

Property managers inherently have a high standard of responsibility, but especially in uncertain times there are many people who rely on us as leaders to keep them safe and protect their interests. From employees, to owners, investors, residents, and tenants, there are several aspects of preparedness, business operations, and communication needed to address each one of these stakeholders when faced with the threat of a pandemic.

The single most important action to take is to plan now.

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## Planning

### Creating a pandemic plan

A well-designed pandemic plan should allow you to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of severity and to refine your response as needed.

Consider the "Continuum of Pandemic Phases" (shown below.) As a pandemic worsens your strategies and response will need to change accordingly.

The continuum of pandemic phases\*



\*This continuum is according to a "global average" of cases, over time, based on continued risk assessment and consistent with the broader emergency risk management continuum.

Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD)

### Stating objectives

When developing your pandemic plan, decide on your objectives, which might include:

- Reducing spread of infection among your employees, residents, and tenants.
- Maintaining business operations.
- Minimizing impact on your customers, owners, and investors.
- Communicating with transparency.
- Maintaining a calm and controlled leadership.

### Assessing workplace exposure risk

As you develop your plan, you'll want to identify the health risks your employees may face based on their job responsibilities and environment. Ask yourself these questions:

- Are employees, in the course of their duties, likely to:
  - Have face-to-face contact with large numbers of people?
  - Spend time in work sites, like health care settings, where they may come into contact with ill people?
  - Handle materials that could be contaminated, like laboratory samples or health care waste?

Ensure that your plan addresses these higher risk scenarios accordingly.

## Activating your plan

Creating a pandemic team and clearly identifying decision-makers are important first steps in developing a process to activate your plan. The team will decide when and how to activate your plan and should agree on which events will trigger action. Trigger events are those that would initiate implementation. These may be driven by federal, state, or local government agencies – or by actions such as the closing of a business or school district. The team should also lead testing exercises to identify gaps or problems with the plan.

Include representatives from various departments such as operations, information technology (IT), and human resources. Your pandemic team should include members from all teams across the company. Individuals from these departments should be trained on pandemic protocols.

A pandemic plan considers the entire company, its locations and all the levels of business. Site managers will most likely be expected to take the lead on activating your plan at their particular building, so make sure to involve them in the process.

## Getting input and buy-in

Employees will feel empowered if they are invited to help develop and review the plan. You should also reach out to your local health officials and municipalities for a better understanding of their plans and how they can be integrated into yours.

You might also consider sharing your plan and best practices with other real estate management professionals, including your IREM network. This is the ideal time to take part in the generous knowledge-sharing that IREM members are known for.

## Deactivating your plan

The pandemic plan should not only include triggers for action, but also guidance on returning to normal business operations. Similar to plan activation, identify triggers or other indicators that would alert you and staff to return to normal. This could be a slowdown in number of infections reported, guidance from federal, state, or local governments, or other signs that the threat of infection is reduced. More details on reopening your property are found at the end of this document.

## Infection control

Our constant interaction with employees, tenants, residents, and customers in the real estate business means we must be diligent in our actions to prevent the spread of infection. But this isn't just your responsibility, this is everyone's responsibility. You can help those in your companies and buildings to control infection by educating them on the following guidance from the CDC:

### Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette, and hand hygiene

- Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at your workplace and properties where they are likely to be seen.

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Instruct employees to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol.
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations, such as building entrances, common areas, conference rooms, and at all employee workstations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Visit the CDC's [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.
- Routinely cleaning and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces is particularly important with a pandemic respiratory virus.

### Separate sick employees

The CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available). The work area of the ill employee should be cleaned and disinfected upon departure.

### Prepare for social distancing

Social distancing is an intervention to increase the physical distance between people and reduce the spread of disease. If recommended by your local public health agency, consider what policies and procedures your business can implement to accomplish work remotely.

### Anticipate absenteeism

Prepare for employee absences resulting from personal illness, caring for ill family members, and dismissal of early childhood programs and K-12 schools. Be ready to adapt your business practices to maintain critical operations.

- Cross-train employees to carry out essential functions so the workplace can operate when essential staff are out.
- Identify alternative suppliers to meet supply chain needs.
- Consider prioritizing customers with the greatest needs.
- Prepare to temporarily suspend operations if necessary.

### Plan for restricted travel

If there's evidence of an outbreak in the U.S. or to another business destination, you may need to cancel non-essential travel. Consider:

- How can you accomplish work-related meetings or events remotely?

- How can you support employees who are abroad when travel restrictions are put into place, particularly those who become sick? Ensure you have clear policies for obtaining medical care during travel.

## Encourage personal preparedness

Your business is only as healthy as your employees. Encourage employees to take standard steps to prepare for staying at home if needed:

- Store a two-week supply of water and food.
- Make sure to have enough prescription drugs at home.
- Keep non-prescription drugs and other health supplies on hand. This includes pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold aides, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Get copies of electronic health records from the doctor, hospital, or pharmacy.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would like to be cared for if they got sick, and what's needed to care for them at home.

## Considerations for multi-family property managers

Property managers and employees working in multi-family buildings should consider additional precautions. Because public health organizations encourage sick employees to stay home during a pandemic, there may be an increased risk of the spread of disease to employees and other residents. To protect employees and other residents from sick individuals, when maintenance requests are received, it is important to qualify whether or not someone in the unit is ill and then evaluate whether the request is an emergency. If a resident is ill, facilities or maintenance staff should only be dispatched to the unit in the event of an emergency.

If you believe or have confirmation a resident is ill with a pandemic virus, contact your local health department and your national health agency for guidance on next steps.

In the event of a maintenance emergency, staff should follow these precautions:

- Wear a mask and gloves while in the unit and dispose of gloves and mask immediately after work is completed.
- Wash hands in soap and warm water immediately after work is completed or use hand sanitizer.

Leasing staff should also be trained to ask prospective residents to reschedule showings if they are sick and avoid shaking hands.

## Operations

Your pandemic team should identify essential operations, employee skills, supply channels, dependent relationships (i.e. your residents/tenants), and the impact of a pandemic on critical resources. Include evaluation of the absence, disruption or interruption of those key systems.



## Workplace policies

Updating policies to include family, sick and medical leave, and work from home guidelines can help mitigate disruption in business operations, as well as keeping employees well.

- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies. Visit the [Department of Labor's website](#) and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's website](#) for more information.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

Policies may need to be adapted while the pandemic plan is activated, which may mean making policies more flexible than usual while the plan is operational in case current policies are not working with the recommended infection control measures.

For companies that have employees who travel, it would be beneficial to create classifications of travel such as discretionary travel, scheduled travel, critical travel, and emergency travel. Then apply policies to these classifications that will help decide whether the travel should be authorized during the pandemic phase. Consult current [travel guidance](#) on the CDC website.

## Employee skills

Property managers should consider cross-training employees to ensure work continues in the event of high absenteeism in a pandemic. You may also consider outsourcing some tasks through online virtual assistants. You may also want to look at compensation guidelines when job tasks change.

## Vendors and suppliers

With a pandemic outbreak, vendors and suppliers may suffer from a loss of staff, and their on-site team could also be diminished. As a result, they may need to reduce their services. Property managers should review regular building operations including service calls, garbage collection, maintenance, and move-ins and move-outs to identify operational vulnerabilities.

It's always a good idea to find back-up providers for basic building operations. Consider these steps:

- Identify your critical suppliers.
- Identify vendors who could negatively affect your business if they fail to deliver.
- Review current service provider agreements to see if you can use alternate suppliers in the event of a supply disruption.
- Identify backup suppliers and initiate agreements with them, if possible.
- Ensure that "single point" vendors are aware that back-up vendors will be used only if service is disrupted.
- Ask your critical suppliers to share their pandemic plans with you. What does their plan include? Have they tested their plan? When was it updated?

- Set boundaries with suppliers – ask that they do not send staff who may be showing signs of illness to your property.

## IT and security

Most property managers rely heavily on building technologies to support routine operations, including security, payments, and showings. When developing your pandemic plan, explore viable options to help keep your property operational in the event of a crisis. And, make sure your property can manage the capacity of an increase in internet use.

### Remote access for employees

- Identify current remote access capabilities.
- Determine internet capacity required during a pandemic event.
- If remote access capabilities fall short of needs, enhance resources.
- Provide remote access and remote access procedures to staff.

### Phone and computer system support

- Provide voice mail remote access and phone forwarding instructions to employees.
- Determine required computer systems support.
- Identify how much on-site support required you need, or if it can be handled remotely.

## Security

In a severe pandemic, businesses may experience decreased security availability, both private and public, such as police and fire department. To fill this potential gap, include security staff in pandemic plans

Here are a few suggestions:

- Ask about your security provider's pandemic plan, and how they intend to manage staff absenteeism.
- Develop relationships with third-party service providers to fill any security gap during a pandemic event.
- Plan for additional equipment or back-up security staff.
- Include training requirements for back-up security in your pandemic plan.

## Legal considerations

Pandemics can raise many legal issues for property managers that should be evaluated before your building experiences the effects of an outbreak. Your property could be exposed to liability from resident illness, employee exposure to sick residents, evictions, and employee leave of absence scenarios.

Be prepared to manage legal scenarios that may come up during a pandemic. Failure to plan could expose your company to charges like "negligent failure to prepare." Such legal claims are not unprecedented.

Thoroughly review all your leases to make sure they address potential business disruptions in a pandemic. Some tenants may default on their contractual obligations because they are suffering economic repercussions from a pandemic. Create a written policy as an addendum to existing leases to enforce it effectively and quickly.

You should also:

- Review contracts with tenants, residents, and suppliers to determine what rights and remedies they have as a result of disruptions due to “force majeure”, a legal term for unforeseeable circumstances that prevent fulfillment of a contract.
- Provide these key stakeholders with timely notice should a force majeure event occur.
- Prepare for potential litigation for application of force majeure clauses – document the steps taken to mitigate the impact of the infectious disease.
- Update force majeure clauses to consider for diseases, epidemics, and quarantines.
- Consider insurance options for covering pandemic-related losses.

Of course, property managers should engage with counsel when crafting their pandemic plan to help limit potential liability. As laws and regulations change frequently, make sure to update your plan accordingly.

## Communication

Communication is as critical as preparation, and it’s important to be factual and transparent when sharing information with employees, clients, tenants, residents, and suppliers.

Your pandemic team should decide how you will relay information to each one of these stakeholders during an outbreak, and the frequency with which you will communicate. In emergencies employees will look to you for guidance and clients will feel more comfortable knowing you are prepared.

- Establish a communication protocol – key contacts, chain of command, channels, and documentation process.
- When your plan is in place ensure that everyone knows how it works. Include your plan as part of your new hire orientation program and make it accessible by posting notices on your web site and apps.
- Discuss how to prevent and address rumors and misinformation.

Keep your communication calm and fact-based to avoid tapping into individuals’ innate fear. Identify your best local and regional resources for updated and real-time data and advice to help you monitor the situation.

As a pandemic unfolds, prepare communication templates for response to residents, tenants, and guests. Keep it factual and reference your local authority’s recommendations.



## Sample communication template

These are suggested messages only. Please carefully read and edit all information as appropriate to your circumstance. Advice and guidance sourced from the [CDC](#).

### Tenant advisory

Your safety, health, and well-being are of the utmost importance to us. We understand that there are many concerns around [pandemic name] and we want to assure you that we are doing all that we can to protect our [residents/tenants/employees] and prevent the spread of disease.

We are committed to doing our part to keep you healthy and will continue to communicate any changes in service to you as quickly as possible.

In addition to our existing cleaning, disinfecting, and maintenance policies, we are also taking the following measures:

#### Cleaning and education

- Increased frequency and deep cleaning of hard surfaces in common areas – countertops, doorknobs, and the like.
- Increased hand sanitizer dispensers in the lobby and other common areas, including frequent maintenance to ensure the dispensers remain operational.
- Additional signage posted to educate you on how to prevent the spread of infection.

#### Staff precautions

- All staff is equipped with masks, disposable gloves, and disinfectant and are instructed to discard gloves and masks after each use (such as after cleaning).
- All staff are trained on infection prevention and control measures.
- All staff are cross-trained to ensure critical building functions are maintained in an emergency.
- All staff are instructed to stay home if they are feeling sick.

#### Communication updates

- We are increasing the frequency of electronic communications – such as text messaging, email, and social media notifications to eliminate unnecessary touching of frequently used hard surfaces.

#### Building operations

- We've reviewed business continuity plans with all staff and external vendors to ensure critical functions continue to be met in the event of staff absences.

Preventing a pandemic is everyone's job. You can help us prevent the spread of infection by doing the following:

#### (For commercial tenants)

- Develop a business continuity and pandemic plan to prevent the spread of infection in your office and support your business operations in the event of increased absenteeism.

- Provide employees with sanitizing products for their own workspaces or other personal protective equipment.
- Educate employees and visitors on the importance of proper handwashing or using hand sanitizer.
- Recommend that employees stay home when sick.
- Communicate with your property manager if your pandemic plan depends on us to perform specific functions so we can determine if we can fulfill your requests.

(For residential tenants)

- Wash your hands frequently – especially after touching doorknobs or pushing elevator buttons – and follow proper hand-washing procedures:
  - Using warm water and soap, wash hands for 20 seconds.
  - Use hand sanitizer with at least 60-95% alcohol.
- If you feel ill, stay in your unit and let building management know you are feeling sick by (texting, calling, or emailing) us at (insert contact info). Separate yourself from other residents and pets.
  - If you need to leave your unit to go to a doctor, please wear a mask over your nose and mouth (or in the absence of a mask, use a scarf or handkerchief) and disposable gloves. Discard these items upon return and/or wash immediately.
  - Any co-residents should use a face mask and or gloves when in the same room as you.
  - Do not use public transportation, ride sharing, or taxis.
  - Do not enter any public areas in the building.
- Before leaving to go to the doctor, call ahead to let them know if you may have been exposed to a virus.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and discard immediately in a lined trashcan and wash your hands immediately afterwards following the steps noted above.
- Do not share personal items (dishes, utensil, cups, bedding, towels, etc.)
- Clean all high-touch surfaces every day.

### Keeping the lines of communication open

We are monitoring information from the World Health Organization (WHO) and [insert local/national public health agency] for updates. We will continue to be proactive and transparent in our communication to avoid panic, misinformation, and ensure your expectations are managed.

Preventing a pandemic from affecting our building is our job, as well as the job of all our tenants/residents, and we thank you all for doing your part in preventing the spread of disease.

If you need more information, we recommend the following resources for the most up to date news and developments related to [pandemic name]:

- Placeholder – resource #1
- Placeholder – resource #2
- Placeholder – resource #3

Contact us with questions at [phone] or [email].

## Summary checklist

### Planning

- Identify objectives for a pandemic plan.
- Build a pandemic team and identify decision-makers in an activation process.
- Engage employees in the development and review of the plan.
- Share the plan with local health agencies as well as other real estate management professionals and your IREM network.

### Infection control

- Place posters communicating effective hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and staying home when sick at your workplace and properties.
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Instruct employees to wash hands properly and frequently using soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Provide soap and water and hand rubs in multiple locations.
- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces.
- Separate employees showing symptoms of disease from others and send home immediately.

### Operations

- Review and update family, sick and medical leave policies and work from home guidelines.
- Develop guidelines around travel for employees.

- Cross-train employees on critical skills to minimize downtime with employee absenteeism; review compensation guidelines for when job tasks change.
- Create back up plans for service providers; review critical suppliers' pandemic plans and share yours with them.
- Review remote access capabilities for employees and enhance resources where needed; communicate procedures for remote access to employees.
- Determine support needs for phone and computer systems.
- Include security staff/providers in development of pandemic plan.

### Legal considerations

- Engage counsel in development of pandemic plan.
- Review leases and consider creating an addendum to existing leases in the event of tenant defaults.
- Review force majeure clauses and update to include diseases, epidemics, and/or quarantines.
- Review contracts with tenants, residents, and suppliers to ensure they understand their rights in the instance of a force majeure.

### Communication

- Create a communication protocol including frequency of communications during an outbreak.
- Train staff on the communication plan/protocol to ensure everyone knows how it works, including how to prevent rumors and the spread of misinformation.



# Pandemics and reopening your property

Reopening your property responsibly and safely requires preparation, communication, and agility. It also requires coordination and cooperation with your stakeholders, including owners, staff, tenants/residents, and service providers.

Consider the following key points on reopening your property.

## Follow public health department dates and guidelines

First in importance: reopening according to the dates, guidelines, and procedures of the public health department.

Resist pressure from any of your stakeholders, including owners and tenants/residents, to deviate from those dates and guidelines. The financial impact of pandemics is typically severe, so you may face clients or tenants eager to get operations back to normal. Likewise, residents at multifamily communities may be eager to use the amenities available to them and enjoy the property to its fullest.

However, you, your company, your client, your tenants/residents, and the property could be liable for reopening sooner than authorized or without adhering to safety guidelines, such as social distancing measures. Companies and properties could also face reputation impacts for deviating from guidelines.

Many governments release guidelines that reopen their countries in phases. They often provide guidance for different audiences, including employers and business operators, on policies and practices that mitigate the spread of the disease. State/province and local jurisdictions often provide more specific guidance, as well as reopening dates.

You'll need to get up to speed on all the guidance that applies to your property – and follow the most stringent precautions and procedures.

## Use clear and consistent communication

Another key consideration: communications to your staff and tenants/residents. You will likely have been communicating with them throughout the pandemic, and you should continue to be clear and consistent with what you've been doing into the phase of the pandemic where reopening becomes possible. That said, you'll need to assess and reset as you go. Set clear expectations in advance but be flexible to fit the fluid nature of this event.

As you plan to reopen the property, you'll need to work with staff and tenants/residents on roles and responsibilities. Do not make assumptions about who is responsible for supplying equipment or adjusting operations. Some of the responsibilities raised by reopening a property will probably not be addressed in the lease, so you need to do your homework.

For example, if the health department or a tenant's company requires temperature or health checks at the property entrance, who will supply the thermometers or temperature scanners?

Who will do the screening as people enter the building? What party is liable if screening fails to prevent an outbreak? In this case, you would need to consult legal counsel, agree with the tenant on which party is responsible for the screening, and potentially secure equipment and/or service providers.

## Prepare

Preparation before reopening is critical. Different asset types will need different types of planning and preparation. The types of tenants and/or resident populations will also guide what you and your team will do for reopening day and beyond.

Key areas of preparation include:

- Determining your role and liability in preventing the spread of disease
- Participating in planning with your stakeholders, including owner, tenants/residents, and service providers
- Coordinating with staff and service providers on an operating plan
- Setting a cleaning and sanitizing regimen
- Stocking enough cleaning and hygiene products
- Adding signage, barriers, and floor markings for social distancing
- Taking care of any deferred maintenance
- Performing preventive maintenance
- Ready equipment for startup
- Adjusting equipment for new operating conditions
- Making sure building systems support good indoor air quality (IAQ) and do not promote the spread of disease
- Planning for sanitary waste management practices

## Be flexible

It's important to build flexibility into your planning. From the first day of the property's reopening, you'll need to observe whether the systems and processes in place are working as intended.

Regular team meetings, where you assess what works and what doesn't, continued virtually if necessary, can help you be nimble and make changes. So can listening to your stakeholders. Solicit their feedback—virtually, of course—and acknowledge their contributions.

We've all seen how quickly things change and develop during a pandemic. Make sure you keep lines of communication with public health officials open, watch for any new guidance, and respond as conditions warrant.

### Key points on reopening your property

1. Adhere to health department dates and guidelines.
2. Resist any pressure to deviate from those dates and guidelines.
3. Use clear and consistent communications with staff and tenants/residents.
4. Prepare the property before re-occupancy to be ready for reopening day.
5. Be flexible as operations restart and adjust as necessary.

# Resources for reopening your property

The remainder of this guide provides checklists to help you and your team reopen your property.

The following items are included:

- A checklist to help you reopen your property
  - The items in this checklist are divided into sections: communication, disease prevention, and operations and maintenance.
  - Use this checklist for any type of property you manage.
- Additional checklists with items specific to reopening industrial properties, office buildings, multifamily communities, and retail properties
- A workplace checklist for you and your team to use in management and leasing offices and for tenants to use in their offices



# Property reopening checklist

## Basic information

### Key dates

Sector authorized to reopen on	Property to reopen on

### Property information

Property name	
City and state/province	
Owner	
Major tenant(s) as applicable	

### Public health information

Health department in area of property	
Reopening requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> Social distancing <input type="checkbox"/> Public health inspections <input type="checkbox"/> PPE <input type="checkbox"/> Limit on gatherings Max. #: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Temperature/health checks

## Communications

### Staff relations

- Review employee policies and make changes as needed
- Review staff levels and job positions and make changes as needed
- Communicate changes to policies, staffing, and job positions
- Determine which members of team must return to site work versus remote work or other arrangements
- File necessary paperwork to designate applicable employees as essential workers per state/province and local requirements
- Work with staff to develop goals for reopening, such as catching up on outstanding maintenance on a schedule or sticking to the cleaning regimen
- Set clear expectations with team and each team member on their responsibilities

- Decide if temperature/health screenings will be required for staff
- Give clear directions on cleaning, handwashing and -sanitizing, using PPE, and adhering to social distancing practices
- Stress the need for employees to report any pandemic-related illness and stay home if they become sick
- Review what happens when an employee or tenant/resident reports pandemic-related symptoms
- Discuss tenants/residents and their needs, especially those with special requirements or challenging circumstances
- Remain sensitive to employees with health conditions, sick family members, childcare responsibilities, and other pandemic-related challenges

### Tenant/resident relations

- Provide tenants/residents with resources on accessing financial support, as necessary
- Stay updated on rent collections, delinquencies, and lease negotiations and disputes
- Continue to apply company rent collection policy and consult legal counsel on lease issues as necessary
- Determine requirements and responsibilities around temperature/health screenings of tenants/residents and others entering property, as necessary
- Set a plan and schedule for regular communications to tenants/residents upon reopening

### Service provider relations

- Exchange pandemic response plans with key service providers
- Confirm that service providers are operational
- Arrange for backup/replacement service providers as necessary
- Review with service providers social distancing and safety measures they will follow onsite

## Disease prevention

### Cleaning and sanitizing

- Send tenants/residents resources on cleaning procedures and be available to provide support
- Adjust and verify cleaning schedule and methods with cleaning service provider
- Follow [CDC guidance](#) on cleaning and disinfecting
- Check that cleaning products meet [EPA criteria](#) for use against infectious diseases

- Clean and disinfect all management-controlled areas:
  - Entrances
  - Vestibules and lobbies
  - Reception and security desks
  - Restrooms
  - Offices
  - Kitchens
  - Elevator banks
  - Corridors
  - Fitness centers
  - Business centers
  - Other areas as applicable to property
- Disinfect surfaces (e.g., tables, chairs, counters, doorknobs) frequently
- Verify that property has enough cleaning supplies for frequent cleaning
- Verify that property has enough hygiene products, including tissues, disinfectant wipes, hand soap, and hand sanitizer
- Install hand sanitizer stations at entrance and in high-traffic areas
- Install handwashing reminder signs in restrooms
- Remove or disable high-touch surfaces, such as touch-screen kiosks and vending machines
- Install touchless technology where possible
- Provide hand sanitizer or disinfectant wipes near other high-touch surfaces
- Decide if you will require PPE in common areas (may depend on state/province or local guidelines)
- Stock PPE, including masks and gloves, for property team
- Advise team on use and disposal of PPE for cleaning and maintenance tasks
- Advise property team on hygiene protocol, including handwashing and sanitizing

## Social distancing

- Have staff actively encourage social distancing
- Install plexiglass guards where needed (e.g., reception desk)
- Set an occupancy limit for common areas
- Use signage, floor markings, and barriers to create one-way lanes, queues, and zones to support social distancing
- Decide when shared spaces (e.g., fitness center, café) will open
- Adjust security/sign-in practices to minimize contact (e.g., no shared pens)
- Install signs with social distancing guidelines and reminders
- Post visible guidelines for use of elevators, escalators, and stairways
- Create boxes in corners of elevators using decals or colored tape to indicate standing areas and directions
- Set protocols for use of stairways:
  - No passing allowed
  - Stay on side near wall
  - Maintain at least three stairs' distance

## Operations and maintenance

### Equipment startup

- Inspect building systems, as applicable, for damage or problems:
  - Access control
  - Elevators/escalators
  - Lighting
  - Potable water
  - Sewer
  - Fire and life safety
  - HVAC
  - Stormwater management
  - Other systems as applicable to property
- Perform preventive maintenance, as well as any work deferred by shutdown
- Adjust operating schedules, settings, and set points for occupancy schedules and season
- Flush hot and cold water through all points of use—see [CDC guidelines](#) on minimizing risk of Legionnaires' disease associated with water systems after prolonged shutdowns
- Flush and disinfect toilets and urinals
- Consider engaging service provider for water quality testing
- Review utilities billing and usage from months of shutdown for errors and anomalies
- Observe equipment operation on start-up

### Indoor air quality (IAQ)

- Determine current fresh and recycled air mix
- Increase fresh air as possible
- Change filters on outdoor and return air systems
- Determine highest [MERV rating](#) possible with property's HVAC system
  - Install filters with MERV rating of at least 13 (minimum rating required to trap respiratory particles) if possible
  - Check compatibility of HEPA filters (MERV rating 16+) with system
- Have duct system cleaned and disinfected regularly
- Obtain IAQ testing, including analysis of [particulate matter](#), for management-controlled areas
- Explore installation of IAQ monitoring equipment, including CO<sub>2</sub> sensors, which can alert management to malfunctioning ventilation components

### Waste management

- Designate special waste containers for used PPE
- Sanitize waste and recycling receptacles frequently
- Review waste management billing from months of shutdown for any errors or anomalies
- Maintain a clean and orderly trash room/dumpster area

## Ongoing operations

- Send tenants/residents updates on any changes to operations
- Provide tenants/residents with any new health department guidance
- Discuss with legal counsel your responsibilities and liability in cooperating with public health officials, such as contact tracers investigating disease outbreaks
- Follow cleaning and sanitizing regimen and adjust as necessary
- Reinforce social distancing and hygiene practices with staff and tenants/residents
- Respond if illness is reported in the property:
  - Close affected area
  - Flush with fresh air if possible
  - Wait at least 24 hours before disinfecting
  - Disinfect according to [CDC guidance](#)
  - Send tenants/residents appropriate information, while maintaining privacy, if illness is determined



## Reopening an industrial property

- Send tenant(s) resources on resuming business operations and be available to provide support.  
Try to provide information relevant to the tenant's specific business. Examples include:
  - [IWLA](#) (warehousing and logistics)
  - [National Association of Manufacturers](#)
  - [Association for Packaging and Processing Technologies](#)
- Send tenant(s) resources on cleaning procedures and be available to provide support
- Send tenant(s) resources on social distancing in workplaces. Measures include:
  - Distance between workers
  - Staggered work shifts
  - Remote working
  - Physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass)
  - Flexible, nonpunitive leave policies
- Send tenant(s) resources on IAQ management and be available to provide support
- Inspect site for issues and maintenance needs:
  - Landscaping
  - Parking areas and lighting
  - Pavement, asphalt, and other hard surfaces
  - Stormwater management system and site features
  - Other site features as applicable
- Inspect building envelope for issues and maintenance needs:
  - Exterior
  - Foundation
  - Roof
  - Any other components under management control

## Reopening an office building

- Exchange pandemic response plans with tenants
- Send tenants resources on social distancing in workplaces. Measures include:
  - Distance between workers
  - Staggered work shifts
  - Remote working
  - Physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass)
  - Flexible, nonpunitive leave policies
- Support tenants in space reconfigurations that support social distancing
- Decide when to resume in-person tenant engagement events
- Decide when any food courts, convenience stores, coffee shops, and restaurants can open (public health authorities may set different dates for this sector)
- Decide when to open plazas, green space, and other exterior amenities
- Coordinate with contracted services typically on site, such as parking, security, and janitorial
- Use stanchions and decals to set queues at security and concierge desks, elevators, and other areas where lines typically form
- Set protocols for mail and package delivery that limit contact
- Set up temperature/health screenings at management-controlled entrances, as necessary
- Determine if elevators can be adjusted to limit occupancy
- Determine if BMS/BAS allows for tracking of IAQ issues
- Decide when to resume tenant build-outs and any other construction projects
- Require good IAQ management in construction practices

## Reopening a multifamily community

- Decide if you will require PPE in common areas
- Determine requirements and responsibilities around checking temperatures/health of residents, prospect, guests, employees, and others entering property, if necessary
- Decide when to resume resident engagement events. Choose events that meet the needs of the residents at this time (e.g., wellness-related, remote working tips).
- Decide when each shared space will open considering any state/province and local public health department guidelines:
  - Business center
  - Clubhouse
  - Community rooms
  - Fitness center/wellness amenities
  - Grilling areas
  - Kitchen
  - Laundry room
  - Lounges and sitting areas
  - Meeting spaces
  - Playground/children's play areas
  - Swimming pool
  - Other spaces as applicable to the property
- Provide for receipt and contactless delivery of packages. Hold packages in lobby or leave outside unit doors.
- Create and send out guidelines for use of clubhouses, community rooms, fitness centers, kitchens, pools, laundry rooms, and other shared spaces
  - Post social distancing and hygiene reminders in these areas
  - Provide disinfectants for residents to sanitize equipment after use
  - Remove as many high-touch points as possible
  - Increase cleaning frequency for these spaces
- Decide which parts of leasing process to continue virtually
- Create a plan for resuming in-person leasing activities
- Continue a move-in process that supports social distancing (e.g., help residents virtually)
- Perform preventive maintenance on unit HVAC systems
- Decide when to resume routine maintenance requests
- Define process and requirements for maintenance requests:
  - What instructions will you give the resident?
  - How many maintenance staff are required to respond to requests?
  - What PPE should maintenance staff wear?
- Determine when and how to resume unit inspections
- Provide guidelines to contracted resident services on the property regularly, such as dog walkers, valet waste, concierge services, and fitness trainers

## Reopening a retail property

- Exchange pandemic plans with tenants
- Use state/province and local public health department guidelines in setting reopening dates for different types of tenants, including:
  - Bars and clubs
  - Fitness centers
  - Hair salons
  - Kiosk vendors
  - Movie theaters
  - Restaurants
  - Others as applicable to the property
- Support tenants with resources on reopening stores. Best practices for retail operations include:
  - Curbside pickups and returns
  - Store occupancy limits
  - Signage, floor markings, barriers, and one-way lanes to support social distancing
  - Installation of plexiglass guards
  - Changes to hours (e.g., limited hours, hours dedicated to elderly and those with compromised immune systems)
  - Shopping by appointment
  - Distance between guests and workers
  - Staggered work shifts
  - Remote working
  - Flexible, nonpunitive leave policies
  - See National Retail Federation's [Operation Open Doors checklist](#) for other best practices
- Decide when each common area space will reopen considering any state/province and local public health department guidelines:
  - Food courts
  - Lounges and sitting areas
  - Playgrounds/children's play areas
  - Other spaces as applicable to the property
- Plan parking and traffic lanes to support curbside pickups and returns
- Perform deferred and preventive maintenance on exterior equipment, such as irrigation systems and lighting in parking areas, as necessary
- Set up temperature/health screenings on guests entering management-controlled entrances, as necessary
- Support tenants in setting up temperature/health screenings on guests entering stores, as necessary

## Reopening the workplace

- Review inventory of cleaning and office supplies and order supplies as needed
- Identify areas that require heavy cleaning and disinfection prior to reopening
- Set ongoing cleaning and disinfection practices
- Clean and sanitize all appliances and surfaces in kitchens
- Increase space between employees:
  - Limit office occupancy
  - Stagger on site and remote schedules
  - Reconfigure cubicles
  - Convert from open, unassigned seating to assigned seating
  - Create one-way lanes
  - Mark floor with colored tape to designate personal workspaces
  - Install plexiglass barriers between workspaces
  - Convert semi-private and shared offices to private offices
  - Use small meeting rooms as private offices
- Determine if PPE (e.g., masks, gloves) will be required and who will provide it
- Restrict use of conference rooms or limit occupancy. Post signage and remove chairs to reinforce policy.
- Restrict visitor access to essential visits only. Identify single area for meeting all visitors and disinfect area after visit.
- Limit occupancy to:
  - Restrooms
  - Kitchen
  - Copier room
  - Mail room
  - Supply room
  - Other spaces as applicable
- Determine how to handle inbound and outbound mail and deliveries
- Restrict use of shared appliances (e.g., microwaves, coffee machines)
- Flush and disinfect all toilets and urinals prior to reopening
- Remove or restrict access to high-touch surfaces, such as copiers, screens, tablets, light switches, and doors
- Provide hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes near all remaining high-touch surfaces.
- Provide suggestions for commuting to and from work
- Encourage staff to bring their own coffee mugs, water bottles, and kitchenware to avoid sharing
- Establish business travel policies



## Preparing for the next wave

Reopening of properties and businesses will occur during the pandemic, not after it, and the pandemic may continue for several more months. For this reason, you must be prepared for a possible next wave.

- Decide what changes forced by the pandemic will become permanent operating procedures
- Remain vigilant to identify and respond to recurrences of infection
- Check regularly for new health department guidance
- Incorporate lessons learned into your emergency preparedness and business continuity plan
- Build your capacity for remote work and operations

## Conclusion

Unlike companies that have a single or few workplace locations, real estate managers are typically scattered across many regions, offices, and properties. The multi-geographic nature of the real estate industry makes planning, preparedness, and communication essential in the event of a pandemic.

Education and communication for tenants, residents, and employees will be the key factors in preparing for and responding to a pandemic, in addition to keeping business continuity plans and risk assessments as up to date as possible.

Pandemics are unpredictable – we cannot know when the next one will strike or how severe it may be. This guidance is intended to help you evaluate your current policies and procedures, but pandemic planning should be an ongoing process that is revisited as your business grows and changes.

## Resources and references

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[Pandemic influenza](#)

[Environmental infection control guidelines - Air](#)

[Stop the spread of germs](#) (PDF)

[Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#)

[Show me the science – Why wash your hands?](#)

[Unified Process Practices Guide – Contingency Planning](#)

[Interim Guidance for Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in Homes and Residential Communities](#)

[Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Exposures: Geographic Risk and Contacts of Laboratory-confirmed Cases](#)  
[Resources for Businesses and Employers](#)

World Health Organization (WHO)

[Whole-of-Society pandemic readiness](#) (PDF)

U.S. Department of Labor Occupational  
Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)  
[Guidance on preparing workplaces for an  
influenza pandemic](#)  
[Personal protective equipment](#)

National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
[Pandemics: Risks, impacts, and mitigation](#)  
[Preventing COVID-19 spread in communities](#)

National Multifamily Housing Council  
(NMHC)  
[The Pandemic Flu: Are you ready?](#)

Canada Health  
[Canada Health COVID-19 Resources](#)

National Apartment Association (NAA)  
[Guidance for dealing with the Coronavirus](#)

Building Owners and Managers Association  
(BOMA)  
[Security and emergency preparedness](#)

ASHRAE  
[COVID-19 Preparedness Resources](#)

White House  
[Opening Up America Again](#)

Corporate Resources  
[CBRE, AMO® —Reopening the World's  
Workplaces](#)  
[Colliers International, AMO® COVID-19  
Resources](#)  
[Cushman and Wakefield, AMO® —Recovery  
Readiness: A How-To Guide for Reopening  
Your Workplace](#)  
[Cushman and Wakefield Six Feet Office](#)  
[JLL COVID-19 Resources](#)  
[Transwestern, AMO® —Back to the  
Workplace Readiness](#)