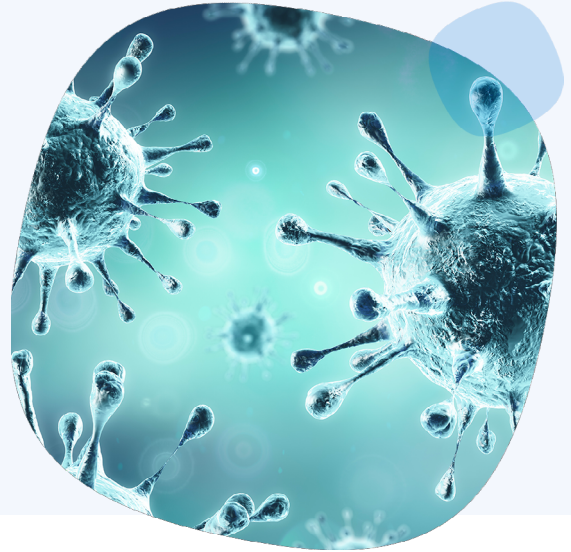


**WHITEPAPER**

# Dealing With Coronavirus (COVID-19) as a Facility Manager

**What's this?**

This is a best practices guide for facility management professionals looking to know more about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and how to deal with the outbreak in the workplace, both in terms of prevention, and containment in case of infection.

**About the virus**

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness in humans, ranging from a common cold to more severe diseases, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). The novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain, not identified in humans until 31 December 2019, in the city of Wuhan, China.

They're zoonotic viruses, meaning that they are transmissible between animals and humans — the origin of this outbreak is likely a mutation of the virus that circulated in a range of animal species, and/or due to increased human contact with those animals, which originated the first infection in h

Although the exact dynamics of its transmission are still under investigation (at the time of writing of this guide), it is known that respiratory viruses in general are transmitted through droplets created when a carrier coughs or sneezes, or through surfaces that have been contaminated with the virus.

The symptoms of infection can range from mild to severe, though most cases present fever, cough, shortness of breath and, in more severe cases, pneumonia or even kidney failure.

## **So... What's the role of facility management in dealing with the virus?**

Being in charge of the maintenance of buildings, organisations and, most importantly, people, it is the responsibility of facility managers to take action towards implementing the right prevention and containment strategies in the workplace. Not sure how you can do this? We're here to help! Here's how you can be better prepared for COVID-19:

### **1. Reducing concentration of personnel**

According to the guidelines recently released by Beijing's city government, you should reduce concentration of personnel. This can be achieved by assigning (or adjusting) shifts, installing measures for remote working, and other flexible work arrangements. It's especially important to encourage employees who exhibit symptoms of a cold to stay at home.

### **2. Reducing physical proximity of staff**

Facility managers should take measures to reduce the density of staff in the same space. For instance, employees should not exceed 50% of the maximum capacity of elevators, nor should they be working in spaces smaller than 2.5 square meters each.

Avoid greeting staff, clients, suppliers or other people you may need to interact with in the workplace with handshakes to reduce the risk of hand-to-hand contamination (which can also be reduced by distributing alcohol gel in places such as meeting rooms, cafeteria or resting areas).

### **3. Cleaning and disinfecting**

Cleaning routines should be reinforced during the outbreak in order to reduce the likelihood of survival of the virus on surfaces and objects. The team responsible for cleaning should be educated on the subject, and the procedures and specific products to be used should be specified by the manager.

Air circulation through centralised air conditioning or ventilation systems should be disabled, and key components that may pose a threat of infection should be cleaned, replaced or disinfected on a weekly basis.

### **4. Avoiding international trips**

We know that international business trips, events and fairs are an important part of many facility managers' jobs. However, it's smart to avoid them during an outbreak that's affecting

dozens of countries around the world, given the higher risk for contracting the infection and possibly bringing it back to your country, your city or your workplace.

## 5. Keeping everyone informed

Make sure that the policies for sick leave in your workplace are flexible and in accordance with your national healthcare recommendations and ensure your staff knows about them.

Place posters with rules and recommendations about hand hygiene, coughing and sneezing, as well as instructions on what to do in case an employee suspects of an infection.

### What to do in case of an infection

If one or more members of your staff think they might be infected with the virus, it's imperative that they do not come to work and immediately go to a hospital or healthcare centre to get tested.

All co-workers who have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 should stay at home and get tested and treated as soon as possible. In case of an active outbreak, regular temperature checks of your staff can be a good way to assess their likelihood of having contracted the pathogen.

## References and Useful Links

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

<https://www.thebeijinger.com/blog/2020/02/25/heading-back-office-not-without-taking-these-measures-say-beijing-government>

<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

<http://apfm.pt/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/o-papel-do-fm-face-ao-covid-19.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

<https://www.sns24.gov.pt/tema/doencas-infecciosas/coronavirus/covid-19/> (PT only)

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