BOMA recommended Best Practices for Commercial Facilities and Office Building Operations During COVID-19 in King County WA

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Commercial Facilities and Office Building Operations During COVID-19

Recommended Best Practice Considerations:
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Background
There is a broad range of commercial properties types and operations. These include: Year built, type of construction, building size, mechanical systems, etc. Other differential factors include the number and types of tenant businesses, number of daytime occupants, single or multi-tenanted or owner-occupied buildings. Some buildings have a team of on-site personnel while other properties might be a portfolio of smaller buildings managed by just one or two individuals from a central office location.

A one-size-fits-all approach to building operations during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency is not practical. However, many best practices can be deployed across a wide range of commercial building operations.

The following best practices concepts are offered to aid commercial real estate managers in the development of their COVID-19 operating plans. These best practices have been developed by commercial real estate professionals who have been continually operating their properties that provide space for essential services, such as: pharmacies, medical offices and clinics, critical telecommunication infrastructure, the return of professional service businesses in Phase II, etc.

The building owner/manager, or their designee, ensures compliance with CDC and Public Health directives for all building common areas such as: path of travel, ingress and egress, garages, lobbies, elevators, restroom not included inside leased space, vacant tenant spaces, delivery areas, loading docks and common outdoor space.

Tenant businesses are responsible for COVID-19 protocols within their leased spaces such as: workstation spacing, social distancing in the office including conference and breakroom separation. Tenant businesses are responsible for their vendors and visitors to their space, etc.

The property management team and tenant businesses are responsible for their own employees, contractors and vendors in terms of COVID-19 protocols and the well-being of their
employees and visitors. On-site building management offices should practice all the same measures that tenant business should practice.

Building management will post signage that face coverings are required each entrance but building management cannot force compliance. Building management will ensure daily health screening questionnaires are completed for their own staff and contractors, but each tenant business must be responsible for their own employees.

Tenant businesses should be responsible for any contact tracing record keeping and building management for their own employees, vendors and contractors.

Considerable additional resources can be found on the BOMA Seattle King County Website: www.bomaseattle.org or https://www.bomaseattle.org/page/Coronavirus the first document in the list

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Common Areas: Best Practices Recommendations

**Signage**

- Deploy signage at entry locations indicating face coverings are required for entry
- Deploy signage to indicate path of travel that best minimizes close contact
- Place signage in elevator lobbies to indicate capacity limits and where to queue to maintain distancing while waiting
- Place elevator floor markings in elevator cabs indicating where to stand and which way to face (limit to no more than 4 persons at any one time)
- Place signage designed to encourage social distancing and directional travel (e.g., floor markings, directional markings, and signs to indicate where building tenants and guests should queue and direction of travel)

[Link to signage examples](12)

**Physical Distancing**

- Restrict or close common areas where physical distancing cannot be practiced
- Remove lobby seating as needed; reconfigure and reorient common area meeting spaces to foster social distancing
- If a security desk is present, install a physical barrier between visitors and personnel

**Elevators**

- Place signage in elevator lobbies to indicate capacity limits and where to queue to maintain distancing while waiting
- Place elevator floor markings in elevator cabs indicating where to stand and which way to face (limit to no more than 4 persons at any one time)
Place signage indicating how to press call buttons without using fingers

[Link to Elevator Guidelines]

**Cleaning and disinfecting protocols**

- Regularly perform daytime cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces such as: door handles, elevator call buttons, hand railings, restrooms and all other common area high-touch surfaces (frequency dependent on traffic volumes in any particular building)
- Locate hand sanitizer stations in high-traffic areas such as: building entries and elevator lobbies
- Ensure that restrooms stay operational and hygiene supplies are stocked
- Perform thorough cleaning in high-traffic areas during off-peak hours

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**Other Best Practices Recommendations**

**Communications and Notifications**

- Develop a communication plan for employees, tenants, and visitors that includes applicable instructions, training, signage, and a consistent means to provide employees with information. Utilize webpages, text and email groups, and social media as ways to keep as many people as possible informed
- Request tenant COVID-19 safety plans and share the buildings plans with tenants
- Collaborate and communicate with tenant businesses regarding developing information and changes, especially as occupancy increases
- Require tenants to report if an employee or visitor to a space has tested positive. No personal identification or information should be given
- When notified, building management should notify all tenants business that a person working in the building has tested positive and that any common areas they visited have been or are being sanitized

Example of the type of communications with tenants below:

**Lobbies:** Lobby seating has temporarily been removed and/or roped off for your safety. Please keep moving while in the lobby areas; do not loiter.

**Common Area Cleaning:** Please note that the daytime janitorial staff is focused on cleaning high-touch point surfaces (building entries, elevator buttons, escalator railings, elevator tablets, elevator cabs, etc.) throughout the day. In addition, we have hired additional staff to clean building restrooms and elevator tablets/buttons throughout the day in each tower. In the garage, our garage staff helps clean the garage elevators and other high touch points. At night, the janitorial team performs a deep clean of high-touch surfaces, elevators, building lobbies, and restrooms.
HVAC: The building has increased outside air intake to the maximum levels permitted based on current operating conditions. In addition, the building has at least MERV-13 filters and is in the process of replacing all building filters as part of routine maintenance. Additional information can be provided on request.

Water: As the building has remained open, the building domestic water system has remained in use, and has been monitored by our team. In addition, janitorial runs all water taps every night as part of their cleaning regimen.

Hand Washing: Use hand sanitizer provided in the building lobbies, elevator entrances in the main lobby, and the mail rooms.

Regular Cleaning: Wipe down high-touch surfaces in your office multiple times a day, using an approved cleaner.

Restrooms: Practice social distancing and wear a mask. Please limit the number of people using the restroom at one time to three people (if social distancing allows), and only use the restroom on your floor. Wash your hands in warm water with soap for at least 20 seconds. Use a paper towel or your sleeve to open and close the restroom doors.

Elevators: Please use the elevator queueing lines to enter and exit the elevators. Pay close attention to the signage in the lobbies, which will help guide you to your destination. Please limit elevators to four people at a time and wait for the group in front of you to load/unload to/from the elevators before calling and boarding the next elevator. Sanitize your hands using the hand sanitizer at each elevator entrance prior to selecting your floor/calling your elevator. Follow the stickers on the floors in the elevator cabs to indicate where you should stand. Keep six feet between you and the person in front of you while in line. Wear a mask when using the elevators and stand in the corners of the elevator cab. When leaving your floor, do not board an elevator with more than two people. Wait for the doors to close, then call another elevator.

COVID-19 Supervisor
Assign a COVID-19 Supervisor that oversees property management operations, whose duties should include:

- Overall COVID-19 management by remaining familiar with and complying with all requirements set forth by Public Health and any jurisdictions having authority
- Ensures that visitor logs are being kept and maintained of visitors and deliveries to the building management offices and common area spaces, for the purposes of assisting Public Health with any contract tracing efforts that might be needed
- Ensures plans developed to comply with social distancing requirements are being
executed at each property managed by their company

- Ensure that a plan is implemented of daily COVID-19 symptom self-verifications for all building management personnel working on site
- Ensure that all contractors and vendors companies are evaluating their employees that come to the building and that they are excluding anyone with potential symptoms
- Ensure that all onsite company personnel have been trained – topics for employee training listed below

**Topics for Employee Training**

- Provide information on COVID-19, preventing spread, and who is especially vulnerable
- How to self-screen at home, including temperature and/or symptom checks using CDC guidelines
- Identifying COVID-19 symptoms such as: frequent cough, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, recent loss of taste or smell
- Identifying when to seek medical attention
- Require personnel to notify employer if someone they live with has been diagnosed with COVID-19
- The importance of hand washing
- The importance of physical distancing, both at work and outside of work
- How to adequately put on, take off, clean (as applicable) and discard PPE, including but not limited to, appropriate face coverings and other protective gear

**Individual Control Measures & Screening**

- Develop a self-screening questionnaire
- Self-symptom screenings and/or temperature checks before employees arrive at work. Require a daily report from each staff member or on-site contract employee self-certifying they have answered the daily checklist indicating no symptoms of COVID-19 (ex: new apps such as “Smart Sheet” have emerged that facilitate this process and file the daily reports)
- Provide all company personnel working onsite with the appropriate PPE to do the tasks assigned to them
- Require workers who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 to stay home
- Encourage frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer

**Mechanical Systems**

- Ensure any plumbing system that may have been dormant are flushed and fully functional in spaces that have been unoccupied for more than two weeks
- Set HVAC systems to draw as much outside air as possible, for as long as possible, over a 24-hour cycle (Please note: this will conflict with energy conservation objectives)
- Change air filters as recommended by CDC and ASHREA guidelines
- Move to MERV-13 filters as previously used filters are changed out and the new filters are available
- Building maintenance personnel of contractors should wear PPE and perform filter change outs when occupancies are at a minimum. All proper filter disposal protocols should be maintained
- Shut down public drinking fountains

**Other Measures**

- Create a process to identify and isolate workplace contacts of infected employees until they are tested
- Adjust maximum occupancy rules based on the size of the facility to limit the number of people (including both personnel and members of the public) in the Office Facility
- Ensure that visitor logs are being kept and maintained of visitors and deliveries to the building management offices and common area spaces, for the purposes of assisting Public Health with any contract tracing efforts that might be needed
- Make necessary adjustments to the layout of the management and engineering offices to allow for proper social distancing
- Utilize work practices, when feasible and necessary, to limit the number of employees at the office at one time, such as telework and modified work schedules
- Where possible, establish designated areas for pickups and deliveries, limiting contact and travel to the extent possible
- Where feasible, consider opening stairwells to building occupants
- Close smoking areas or move them further away from entrances to avoid gatherings
- Building management ensures personnel using loading docks are following COVID-19 protocols