

RETURN TO SAFE WORKPLACES: REENTRY AND RE-OCCUPANCY OF COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Please note that this developing document represents ideas and concepts about reentry of tenants to commercial buildings and does not, and will not, be a BOMA recommended protocol authority. The intent is to provide BOMA Seattle King County members with a helpful list of considerations for property management group as they develop their own reentry protocols for their own specific properties.

Each property is unique and while there will be some commonalities across different properties each property team should seek their own legal counsel.

By the fourth week of April, BOMA International will publish a more formal, complete, better organized and certainly more professional guidance publication on reentry. The CDC, federal, state and local governments will continue to issues guidelines and orders describing reentry conditions.

As circumstances improve and government orders are relaxed, some of the initial reentry operational procedures that each property develops will be eased back to pre-COVID practices while others might endure for some time or even become part of new regular operational procedures.

Disclaimer:

Every commercial building is different. What is feasible and appropriate for any specific building will vary upon the nature of tenant businesses, size, location, and other characteristics. This document is intended to provide general list of ideas and concepts and should not be construed to represent a definitive statement of the protocols and procedures that are applicable to any building. This document is not legal advice, is not a BOMA Best Practices policy. Consult your own legal advisors. New and better information will continuingly supersede the information included in this document. BOMA Seattle King County does not warranty any of the information contained in this document.

Principles: Building owners and managers should not be placed in a position of a health and safety compliance authority with tenants, visitors to tenant spaces or vendor's employees. These requirements and the responsibility for compliance with CDC guidelines are covered in the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA). Building mangers should not be placed in the position of policing the wearing of masks nor deciding which masks are approved and which are not approved for entry nor be required to supply and hand out masks to those that do not have them at entry.

While building managers will work to enact measures that encourage social distancing protocols, compliance rests with the personal responsibility each person has to safeguard their own health and that of others. Tenants and tenant businesses should remain responsible for all compliance and distancing matters with their own employees and inside their leased space.

Landlord and tenant should share their reentry plans with each other and keep communication open and often.

Still unknown are the possible or probable CDC Recommendations that will apply to reentry to the workplace: Possible Reentry Conditions from Government might include:

- All building occupants, visitors and vendors may be required to wear face masks in some or most circumstances.
- Social distancing guidelines are likely to continue for some time and only modified after the continuing public health treat is known.
- There will be a probable phase in of limits to numbers of people in near proximity in common areas, workspaces and meetings
- Unknown if there will be a voluntary option for those that have recovered from COVID 19 to self-identify and even if they could the understanding for reinfection and the infectious state of recovered persons make such self-identification meaningless
- Training requirements with a certification test or recorded keeping on CDC protocols could be required related to the proper use of personal protection equipment and worker safety issues for all person in the workplace
- Reporting requirements might be modified (employers responsibility)
- Existing OSHA worker safety regulations continue to apply and continue to be the employers responsibility

Reentry Protocol Ideas:

Access Control & Security

- Some buildings might reduce entry points, but not if this causes people to gather or jam up at choke points where they cannot maintain distancing.
- Greater security staffing at entry points as needed. (Need to define their duties and roles especially if they for some reason should turn someone away from building)
- Greater front desk staffing if applicable
- Installing shielding paneling at concierge and greeting desks
- For some properties, a requirement for tenants to meet and escort visitors or report their expected arrival to security
- Consider using path of travel control and guide stanchion system to direct and separate building travelers in common areas and encourage distancing (also helps focus cleaning areas)
- To avoid people massing and waiting in the main lobby, consider exterior staging and markers placed on the ground/sidewalk to pace and distance people during peak hours of arrivals, similar to how grocery stores have kept the social distancing by staging areas outside with fresh air. If needed consider exterior temporary canopy for areas where there is no awning.
- Directional lobby flow signage to stairwells, elevators, and through lobbies
- Building management and very large tenants might negotiate the use of a vacant retail space on the entry floor where the tenant's employees report for whatever evaluation that tenants establishes with and for their employees.
- Single tenanted and corporate buildings will have more access control options
- Consider an elevator lobby patrol person during peak foot traffic times whose presence will encourage social distancing practices

(See additional security notes on last two pages)

Additional notes volunteered by BOMA Members: Door hardware and automating doors:

- Copper push plates and/or door hardware resist germs.
- Reduce door touched using an ADA operator. If this is a door with a latch, an electric strike would have to be installed as well.
- Adding touchless options for opening doors to manage the hands-free and better for HVAC control by minimizing propping the door open:
 - Card readers in and out of room to make it touchless – some access control solutions can be set to open when the user is near the reader by a few feet.
 - REX sensor on the inside of the door to open the ADA operator just by walking up to the inside of the door. This could be done on the outside too e.g. unsecure, high traffic areas if both directions are using this, elevator lobby to loading dock, etc.

Building Operations

Worker Safety

- Require vendor firms to maintain adequate supply of personal protection equipment for their staff. Amend vendor contracts as necessary.
- Create a cost profile and confirmation within janitorial contracts to clean, disinfect and/or sanitize space where future cases of an infected worker having been present are identified.
- Tenant and vendors education and worker safety is in the control of their employers.
- Confirm steps each vendor should take to allow their employees to work within the building (i.e. check-in prior to ensure they will follow required vendor safety protocols.
- Confirm Local, State and Federal requirements be followed should vendor personnel become ill (i.e. 14 day self-quarantine period plus a doctor's note to re-enter facility).
- Building management maintains adequate supply of PPE for their staff.
- Building personnel trained on proper use of personal protection equipment.
- Preventive maintenance tasks/work orders that can be done after hours when traffic counts in tenant spaces are reduced, if not responded to during the day.
- Rebid service contracts to account for any manpower changes and that vendor is adequately supplying their personnel with PPE.
- Consider the emotional stresses of employees and how they can support them

Vertical Transportation: Elevator, Elevator Lobbies, Stairwells

Perhaps the toughest challenge

- Depending on number of elevators and size of your property and CDC recommendations, consider placing signage with CDC language encouraging limits. Set a capacity limit for each elevator. This remains a personal honor system responsibility of each person.
Challenge – pick up from additional floors when an elevator is at new capacity limits.
- One concept would be to place markers such as an “X” in removable tape standing points as a visual reminder of spacing inside the cabs. Note: Upon the initial increase in building

foot traffic this might be somewhat helpful but as the building's population increases and with more people wearing masks, the numbers using elevators will increase.

- For buildings with multi-floor tenants that have internal stairways; work with those tenants to encourage employees to use those stairs and not the elevators to the extent possible.
- Place queuing marks in elevator lobbies to reinforce distancing along with social distancing signage
Challenge – without an elevator lobby attendant/security presence this will be difficult to enforce or ensure compliance
- Opening stairwells for use if and where practical
Challenge – security issues, air pressure issues, extra cleaning issues, possible increase in injuries from trips and falls
- Disinfect elevator hi-touch surfaces often: Warning, chemicals sprayed onto elevator buttons can penetrate and damage the call hardware result in expensive repairs and elevators out of service. Elevator companies recommend against any spray on elevator buttons in the car and in the elevator lobby.
Challenge – cost. No touch alternatives have emerged, but the cost is very high. This option might best be deployed at time of modernization and new installation and become part of new normal operations in the future. Also on escalators, if the wrong chemical is used, it can dry out handrails. The wrong chemical can also remove the paint on braille and key switch collars – and render the elevator out of code compliance
- Employ dedicated elevator operation where practical and helpful
- Employ signage throughout the elevator system and on all floors and tenant lobbies. Use floor guidance tape or stanchion rope for queuing purposes
- Account for destination dispatch systems vs standard systems

New and future technologies for the marketplace:

- Emergence of voice activated elevator commands (Expensive and long lead times)
- Elevator cab ion generator
- Escalator handrail sterilizer (Available now)
- UV light escalator handrail product (Available now)
- Anti-microbial lacquer for metal services, especially touch points (works but can cause mechanical button failure)

Group Meeting and Gathering Spaces: Develop Policies to Address Uses:

- Lobby seating and gathering places – more spacing – possibly even removing furniture in lobbies for some period of time
- Social distancing signage in all gathering spaces
- Hand sanitizers in more places with discarding containers
 - Entry ways
 - Elevator lobbies or cabs
 - Restrooms
 - Parking areas – near elevators and doorways leading to main lobby
 - Mail rooms, etc.

- Consider possibly not opening building run conference rooms for a period of time and then limiting to a portion of previous capacity
- Mail room access – spacing markers – counter cleaning
- Fitness areas – only open if all CDC protocols and cleaning requirements can be met. Perhaps delay opening these facilities until circumstances allow
- If practical an idea might be to employ sensors to monitor occupancy or CO2 levels that can trigger alerts to reduce occupancy or adjust ventilation in conference rooms, etc.
- Signage to encourage social distancing in restrooms and to wash hands etc.

HVAC and Plumbing System Operations

- Air circulating and filtration system adjustments – such as operating at maximum fresh air volume
- Increasing air exhaust and outside air intake = will have energy impacts. Note: Some buildings are not designed to increase outside air and exhaust rates)
- If needed, consider using life safety supply or exhaust fans for ventilation, stair pressurization – but in no way compromise fire life safety systems.
- Flush all potable water systems. Buildings that have had dormant spaces should flush systems to remove stagnant water – not so much a virus issue as a good PM thing to do after prolonged period of non-use
- Ensure any p-traps that might have evaporated in unused restrooms are refilled
- Tenant responsible to flow water in all their sinks, coffee makers that are plumbed, dishwashers, ice machines and to change filters in fridges, ice machines, plumbed coffee makers.
- If systems have been adjusted for very low occupancy - readjust HVAC equipment back to regular hour operations – when occupancies require or as noted above
- Consider system air filter changes – avoid changing prematurely to avoid unnecessary disturbance – but when necessary or as PM – consider after hours and full PPE utilized.
- Shut the system down before changing air filters
- Equipment and mechanical room: Consider disinfecting as personnel work in those areas or on a daily schedule anyway.
- Consider new plumbed hand washing station installations with soap dispensers at loading docks, mail pick up, for delivery drivers, security stations, contractors. Perhaps replace drinking fountains – if allowed by code – with hand washing stations.

New and future technologies for the marketplace: Note: many of these products are untested or unproven and might cause other issues. Effectiveness and cost benefit are often still unknown.

- Plasma generators
- Ionization machines
- UV lights
- Ozone machines

Example of recommendations from vendor-contractors:

- *Increase outside air ventilation: This time of year (mild temps) the energy cost is modest, but most systems will be overwhelmed at greater than 50% OSA as the temp gets below 50 or above 75*
- *Override demand control ventilation (CO2). DCV will reduce ventilation in an unoccupied/low occupancy space.*
- *Keep HVAC maintenance at a high level: Filter changes, drain pan and condensate cleaning, coil cleaning, etc.*
- *Consider UVC light systems for HVAC coil disinfectant, and water disinfectant. This technology has been around for decades. Note: Limited studies that UVC will kill Covid-19, but it has been shown to be very effective on similar viruses and the evidence is starting to mount on Covid-19.*
- *Consider bi-polar ionizing cleaning systems. Also well-established technology, although not as widely used. Bi polar ionization sends positive and negatively charged ions into the air, helping to conglomerate particles making them easier to filter, and kill pathogens by robbing them of hydrogen. Note these systems have been known to generate Ozone, which many people find objectionable. PSR has had one of these systems operating in our conference room since 2017 without any issues.*
- *Consider running off hours and duct cleaning before daytime operations.*
- *Posture the OSA dampers to 100% open and don't allow the equipment to use any return. There will be huge energy cost impacts especially moving into the summer months but this avoids recirculating air and is another tool against an airborne virus. Keeping the equipment occupied during "unoccupied" times keeps air moving and might be another tool against the virus.*
- *We are also adding UV lights in equipment for clients. Ionization is another proven product for combating bacteria and viruses..*

Cleaning and Sanitizing Surfaces

- Greater scope and focus on sanitizing spaces and surfaces
- Locating hand sanitizer in many more places, especially common areas outside their offices.
- More regular cleaning of high touch surfaces and areas – adjust contracts to allow for increased cleaning in contracts
- Increased day cleaning in common areas
- Dedicated cleaning of elevator interiors and elevator lobbies
- Increased cleaning and disinfecting of entrance doors and lobby areas
- Deployment of touch free fixtures in restrooms
- Use disinfectant should someone vomit on property - possible COVID 19 contaminated
- Consider toilet overflows as possibly COVID 19 contaminated
- Consider electrostatic sprayers to treat common and high traffic areas after hours
- Again – consider what cleaning contract changes need to be made for labor and materials that also considers adjustments as tenant numbers increase over time
- Disinfect all equipment and mechanical rooms on a regular basis
- Consider engagement of an Environmental Hygienist or similar to verify cleaning and disinfecting procedures are adequate and be accomplished

Notes from one of BOMA's vendor contractors:

- *The primary focus should always be to clean and disinfect touch point surfaces and if disinfecting isn't an option then sanitize. As of right now the EPA has not approved a sanitizing process for killing SARS-CoV-2 that said sanitizing will still help reduce other harmful pathogens.*
- *When looking at what disinfectants should be used there are 100's of options readily available in the commercial market and a lot of misconceptions. One of these misconceptions is the ability to simply spray the product onto a surface and wipe it off, this will help clean the surface but it is not disinfecting. The majority of disinfectants have a 10 minute required dwell time meaning that that the disinfectant must remain wet on the surface for the full 10 min. There are shorter dwell time options available that offer 30 second, 1,2,3,5 minute dwell times but the use of these isn't as widespread use due to the higher costs. My thought process is labor is expensive and you're already purchasing disinfectant, use the ones that offer you the fastest dwell times for the facility's needs.*
- *Focus on cleaning for health instead of only for appearance or smell. This is an issue that has been prevalent in our industry for a long time. The old adage is if it looks clean or smells clean then it must be clean, this couldn't be further from the truth especially when we are trying to eliminate bacteria and virus. For example, the Coronavirus is .12 microns. This means that a single dust particle can easily shield a few virus cells. The responsibility of cleaning for health falls on all of our shoulders, building tenants should require it of the building owners, the owners should require it from the janitorial service provider and the service provider should require it from their distributor partner.*
- *In regards to cleaning vomit or any bodily fluid. This should always be a 2 step process, mixing disinfectant with an absorbent will achieve very little. The process should be to physically remove the solids and liquids from the floor using a non-clay absorbent then disinfect the hard surface or sanitize the carpet (soft surfaces cannot be disinfected). Companies like Purell have done a great job at creating complete bodily fluid spill kits that have everything that you would need to tackle a spill.*
- *Hand hygiene is obviously one of the easiest things that we can all do to reduce our exposure to pathogens. Per the CDC, hand washing should be the primary focus, but we have so many areas in buildings that hand washing isn't always a feasible option so we rely on alcohol sanitizer. Best practices should be to have sanitizing stations either wall mounted or on floor stands when entering a building and by common touch point areas like outside of elevators or congregation areas inside of offices. In a utopi, we would hand sanitizer bottles on every desk which helps prevent the spread of pathogens inside of the tenant's offices. On a side note regarding soap, something that is still very common in our buildings is bulk fill soap dispensers, these are typically used because bulk soap is cheap. The issue with bulk soap or even sanitizer is the fact that bacteria enters the dispenser as soon as its opened and contaminates the soap. Studies show that about 1 in 4 dispensers have measurable levels of bacterial growth including but not limited to fecal matter and often leaving hands with 25 times more germs on them then before they washed. The commercial real estate market helps lead trends and I believe that one of those trends should be to move towards hygienically sealed soap and sanitizer refills/dispensers wherever possible. This ties into the cleaning for health, our ultimate goal should be a create a clean hygienic work space that keeps everyone healthy, this will improve the reduction of workplace illness ensuring better productivity and create better relationships between tenants and building owners.*

Communications & Signage

- Work with tenants businesses to encourage them to share their reentry plans and seek updates and regular communications. Share building plans with tenants.
- Workers have a right to receive information and training (from their employer) about any potential workplace hazards.
- Establish communications with all building vendors discuss expectations about CDC compliance behavior and practices and PPE use

- Continue the notification practices to building tenants when a person with a confirmed case has been identified as having been in the building.
- Advise all tenants to flow water in all their sinks, coffee makers that are plumbed, dishwashers, ice machines, etc.
- Advise tenants to change filters in fridges, ice machines, plumbed coffee makers, etc.
- Consider the use of posters, printed materials, elevator readers boards and screens to reinforce personal safety practices.
- Consider elevator signage that asks riders to avoid talking while on the elevator ride
- Consider signage in English and Spanish

Note: A BOMA project is underway to identify the possible location or signage throughout the building and sample messaging. The list will be shared when complete.

Operational Supplies and materials

- Procure supplies of personal protective equipment, masks, gloves, etc. for your own employees
- Procure your own supplies of sanitizers (vendors procure those that are included in contracts)
- Order crowd control and social distancing staging equipment

Other Operations

- Adjust and rebid contracts to allow for additional costs to locate, procure and supply PPE and other necessities

Other Operational Impacts

- Parking impacts (hesitation to use public transit and ride share)
- Tenants negotiating for split shift access to workplaces (accommodate for HVAC new operating costs)
- Retail and restaurants operating at reduced capacities due to social distancing
- Proper disposal of PPE equipment should be accounted for

Tenant Responsibilities – limited control by Landlord/PM groups

Modifications to existing tenant spaces

- More space between workers – new seating arrangements – possible split shifting of people
- Shielding between desks that face each other – good idea
- Different lunchroom or in office cafeteria seating
- Conference rooms limiting to half previous capacity
- Tenants phasing in or alternating how many workers in offices at any one time
- Tenant directly contracted cleaning or through property management
- Enlarging typical 6 x 8 cubical spaces
- Hoteling, hot desking and shared desks changes
- Teams workgroup and all hands meeting changes
- Deployment of split shift work hours

- Return to more individual office designs vs open space
- Building rules and regulations will get modified for visitors and deliveries etc.
- Cleaning of desks by tenants – (consider suggesting fewer items on desk tops)
- Tenant responsible to flow water in all their sinks, coffee makers that are plumbed, dishwashers, ice machines and to change filters in fridges, ice machines, plumbed coffee makers, etc.

Longer Term Impacts:

- The need for office space is diminished as a higher percentage of remote working sticks and reduces office footprints over time. However, if more spacing in the offices occurs, this might mitigate that impact somewhat.
- Some higher risk tenants will remain on stay at home and some will just choose not to reentry the workspace
- Design and architectural shift to smooth cleanable surfaces over textured surfaces
- The industry trend for collaborative gathering spaces in building public spaces will be impacted.
- Deployment of touch free fixtures in restrooms
- Door openers that are touch free (foot activated)
- Motion sensor door openers

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