Apartment Living & COVID-19 Best Practice Guideline

BUILDING MANAGERS

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease spread between people who are in close contact (1.5m or less) with one another. Apartment buildings and other shared living spaces pose the potential risk of an infected resident spreading the virus to other residents. This is also known as community spread.

Building managers are a strata community's frontline defence and an essential service. It is vitally important that you and/or your company prepare your own contingency plan in case you and/or 40% of your staff contract the virus. The show must go on and how will you see that it can?

COVID-19 for Building Managers

If you haven't already, develop a Pandemic Plan

While planning for a pandemic should begin at the corporate level of any business, a successful approach must involve representatives not only from management, but from human resources, communications, IT, legal and compliance and facilities management.

Taking the Government's latest advice and looking carefully at your role as the building manager, consider how services will be delivered to the building and what your role is in the delivery of services, how you will continue to provide access to the buildings you have responsibilities for by considering:

» Which building systems are mission-critical for your building:

  » Waste collection services
  » Car stackers
  » Cleaning & caretaking of the building (including disinfectant cleans)
  » ESM – Fire Safety Inspections and Servicing
  » Utilities – Common Power, Water and Gas
  » Lift Maintenance and Servicing
  » Garage Door Preventative Servicing
  » Sump Pump Servicing
  » Bulk Hot Water System Servicing
  » Plumbing
  » Emergency Works – Burst Pipes, Weather and Accidental Damage, Roof Repairs, Hot Water System Replacement/Repairs

» What is the bare minimum staff required to support the building operations?

» Which staff are currently trained to operate critical systems and what specific skills make them qualified?

» Which if any critical building operations can be managed remotely? Can other systems be upgraded to allow remote operations, and if so, what would these upgrades cost?

» What would happen if any given facility had to be closed because of quarantine or staff shortages?

» Which employees perform tasks that cannot be performed off-site, and where are these employees located?

The answers to these questions will go a long way toward forming the basis of a pandemic plan.

It is likely they will point to a number of key action steps that include:

» Preparing now to cross-train employees within the facility department to cover one another's responsibilities.

» Ensuring front line staff do the Department of Health coronavirus training online course.

» Collaborating with other companies or sites to provide cross-training for facilities support functions.

» Developing contingency plans for the acquisition of crucial supplies should delivery schedules be disrupted, or for the advance purchase of bulk supplies.

» The development of "how to" notes describing step-by-step execution of critical tasks.

» Preparing for a building to be shut down.

» Sourcing reliable best practice guides from around the world including peak body association guides:

COVID-19: Cleaning in non-healthcare settings (UK)

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-nonhealthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings

Pandemic planning should include any Government directives and address interventions from:

» Minor - whether and when to close coffee stations and water coolers.

» Extreme - building lockdown - how to equip a facility with days or weeks' worth of supplies in case key employees need to quarantine themselves inside.

» Map your dependencies to understand where disruptions might impact your development remembering your building is at maximum capacity. For example:

  » Greater parcel delivery
  » More visitors and parking
  » How mail is delivered
  » How a confirmed case will impact
  » Access to emergency services

How long the new coronavirus can live on surfaces

SURFACE	LIFESPAN OF COVID-19 VIRUS
Paper and tissue paper**	3 hours
Copper*	4 hours
Cardboard*	24 hours
Wood**	2 days
Cloth**	2 days
Stainless steel*	2–3 days
Polypropylene plastic*	3 days
Glass**	4 days
Paper money**	4 days
Outside of surgical mask**	7 days

*At 69.8 to 73.4°F (21 to 23 °C) and 40% relative humidity   **At 71°F and 65% relative humidity

Source: New England Journal of Medicine*; The Lancet Microbe**

BUSINESS INSIDER

» Review the preparedness of your critical third parties based on your building systems mission-critical assessment above and write to each service asking for their pandemic plan to see if their services to you be impacted, especially if you have a confirmed case.

» Create a communication platform to inform residents. This could be as simple as a daily or weekly bulletin in the lobby or using technology platforms.

  » Platforms should be push notifications only, shut down chat features.

  » Remind people to be kind, you will see all extremes of humanity, it's a hugely stressful and anxious time for everyone, and a bit of positivity and kindness goes a long way.

  » Do you have the resources to undertake the extra communication?

» Create a communication plan to suppliers if you are advised of a confirmed case.

» Communications plans should be spelled out well in advance, and email lists established for all staff, suppliers and contractors. You need to know what their pandemic plans are.

» Expect the unexpected, things that wouldn't even occur to you, like people exercising in fire stairwells, and completely ignoring the rules (i.e. parties in the pool area, BBQ's etc).

» Consider the "Perfect Storm" and plan accordingly (power failure, fire, flood) as well as your building becoming a virus hub.

» List the common areas most at risk for contamination and submit a management strategy for each area. For example, some things to think about are below:

Risk Area	Risk Control	Action
On-site staff Surface Contamination Social Gathering	Remove front desk access Increase cleaning schedule Exercise social distancing	Signage to indicate how the on-site staff can be communicated with.
CONTRACTORS Safe work site	Responsibility to maintain a safe worksite when contractors are engaged to work on the common property. Maintain social distancing from contractors working on site. Contractors to use PPE Potential threat of coming into contact with the virus. No entry to any contractors with COVID 19 symptoms, however mild. Provide evidence that they have completed Department of Health coronavirus training online	Committee to avoid contact or approaching trades persons when on site. Work orders to be issued by Committee or strata community management company; continue to require Safe Work Method Statements, which will now include additional processes including PPE and social distancing measures. Instruct all trades to operate as if someone with COVID-19 resides on site. If the strata community is notified of a person who has tested positive to the virus all contractors must be notified.

Risk Area	Risk Control	Action
TOILET & SHOWERS Surface Contamination Social Gathering	Increase cleaning schedule Exercise social distancing Consider shutting down the facilities	Authorise and arrange additional cleaning regime. Notify residents of protocols established and reason for same. Affix signs in area of facility.
FRONT DOOR Surface Contamination Social Gathering	Increase cleaning schedule Exercise social distancing	Authorise and arrange increased cleaning regime; to at least daily or more if high use and/or high infection rate. Consider spray bottle with a light bleach solution to be located at each entry point and signage asking each person who enters to spay and wipe the handle Encourage residents to implement social distancing requirements.
DOOR HANDLES Surface Contamination	Increase cleaning schedule	Authorise and arrange additional cleaning to at least daily or more if a high use area with increased risk of higher infection rate. Consider spray bottle with a light bleach solution to be located at each entry point and signage asking each person who enters to spay and wipe the handle
INTERCOM SYSTEM Surface Contamination Social Gathering From 23/3/2020 Increased Social Distancing Requirements	Increase cleaning schedule Exercise social distancing	Consider hand sanitizer in lobby, request in interest of all that it not be removed. Authorise and arrange additional cleaning regime.
LIFT ACCESS Surface Contamination Social Gathering From 23/3/2020 Increased Social Distancing Requirements	Increase cleaning schedule Exercise social distancing	Consider hand sanitizer in lobby and lift, request for the interest of all that it not be removed. Authorise and arrange additional cleaning regime to at least daily or more if high use and/or high infection rate Encourage residents to implement social distancing requirements. Signage to restrict access to lift to one or two persons based on 1.5 m separation.
VENTILATION/AIR CONDITIONING Airborne contaminants	Increase cleaning schedule Mandatory hot wash of filters Check if HEPA filters, consider upgrade if not	Consider undertaking a review of ventilation (fresh air) rates – increase fresh air rates if possible, to corridors & lobby areas

Risk Area	Risk Control	Action
SHARED LAUNDRY	Increase cleaning schedule Mandatory hot wash	Create a sign or multiple signs and place around Laundry to wash their hands before and after using laundry facility, to use detergent and hot water wash and recommend using the dryer to finish. Consider hand sanitizer in room, request for the interest of all that it not be removed. Authorise and arrange additional cleaning regime to at least daily or more if high use and/or high infection rate. Encourage residents to implement social distancing requirements. A booking system could be implemented to regulate numbers.
WASTE ROOMS and CHUTES Surface Contamination Social Gathering	Increase cleaning schedule Exercise social distancing	Install signage. Consider hand sanitizer in waste rooms, request for the interest of all that it not be removed. Authorise and arrange additional cleaning regime to at least daily or more if high use and/or high infection rate Encourage residents to implement social distancing requirements. If COVID 19 present in the building, consider a separate area for contaminated waste to be stored prior to pick up. Consider a dedicated COVID 19 wheelie bin – leave outside the apartment door at a designated time and remove and quarantine for pick up to dedicated bin room.
PLUMBING Surface Contamination	Use of substitute paper products as toilet paper e.g. Newspaper, tissues or serviettes is to be discouraged Potential blockages, increasing health concerns and access to services	Convey concerns to all residents of potential problems and how it will impact them and ask them to comply. Notify contractors you will need to engage to fix problems that arise. There is a high risk to a plumber who must clear blocked sewer pipe. Needs to be advised if there is a positive case. Keep floor drains and sinks in bathrooms, basements, garages areas filled with water to keep the P- traps full at least once per month.

Risk Area	Risk Control	Action
VISITORS Surface Contamination Social Gathering	Maintain social distancing from contractors working on site. Potential threat of coming into contact with the virus.	Basic premise is "do not enter stay outside the door" Signage required for specific instructions for: » Delivery of goods » Australia Post » Visitors – only essential visitors, no more than 2 people. Consider basic instructions: » No entry – resident comes to door and receives the service outside » Entry – resident touches doors and lift buttons not visitor
MOVE IN/ MOVE OUT Surface Contamination	Only necessary moves should take place Removalists to comply with building entry and exit sanitizing procedures Social distancing applies in all building spaces, including the lifts No entry to any contractors with COVID 19 symptoms, however mild Increase cleaning schedule after each move, including the apartment level	Move in/out booking form should include COVID 19 status of the resident moving on or out. If confirmed COVID 19 in either case a "Environmental Clean" is required. See Department of Health guidelines If not confirmed, then light bleach solution clean of all touch points used throughout the move area.
EMERGENCY SERVICES Surface Contamination	Not subject to the Contractor regime Un-feted access required	If confirmed COVID 19 a "Environmental Clean" is required. See Department of Health guidelines
GYM Surface Contamination Social Gathering From 23/3/2020 Close the Gym	Inform users: » to wipe down equipment with disinfectant before and after use, » shower after exercising at the gym, » sit on their own towels, » wipe sweat with a disposable paper towel and wash their hands after. » stay home if they don't feel well. Consider closing the facility; be guided by Government directives.	Create a sign or multiple signs and place around Gym to wash their hands before and after their workout sessions and other relevant protocols established. Can add hand sanitizer If you have a cleaner, arrange to have the gym and equipment cleaned more frequently. Door could be left open to increase ventilation, if safe to do so. Notify residents of and reasons for closure if this decision is made. Affix signs to advise of closure also.

Risk Area	Risk Control	Action
POOL Surface Contamination Social Gathering From 23/3/2020 Close the Pool Continue maintenance of the pool – legal requirement.	Inform users: » that use of pool is at their own risk » to shower before use » stay in their apartment if they don't feel well. » implement social distancing with other users » sit on their own towels » wipe sweat with a disposable paper towel, dispose of correctly and wash their hands after. » exercise social distancing » increase cleaning schedule Consider closing the facilities; be guided by Government advice.	Create a sign or multiple signs and place around Pool area notifying residents of established protocols Notify residents of and reasons for closure and affix signs advising of same.
BBQ & COMMUNITY AREA Surface Contamination Social Gathering From 23/3/2020 Close the Area	Increase cleaning schedule Exercise social distancing Consider closure of the facility	Authorise and arrange additional cleaning regime. Notify residents of protocols established for use. And/or notify residents of and reasons for closure, if this decision is made. Affix signs to advise of protocols established or closure of facility.
COMMITTEE MEETINGS Surface contaminants Social Gathering From 23/3/2020 Increased Social Distancing Requirements	Exercise social distancing Wipe down tables, chairs etc. before and after use of committee meeting area Request a Committee Member not attend if they have travelled overseas recently, been in contact with someone who has, or has been in contact with someone who has contracted the virus or is known to have symptoms or has the virus themselves. Consider alternative means of communicating to make decisions.	Notify Committee members of the protocols established and request they comply. Consider alternative meeting solutions like Skype, ZOOM or telephone for discussion then use email ballots to capture decisions and create record.
GENERAL MEETINGS Surface contaminants Social Gathering From 23/3/2020 Increased Social Distancing Requirements	Exercise social distancing Wipe down tables, chairs etc. before and after use of meeting area. Request Members not attend if they have travelled overseas recently, been in contact with someone who has, or has been in contact with someone who has contracted the virus or is known to have symptoms or has the virus themselves. Consider alternative means of communication and decision making. Consider deferring meeting.	Notify all lot owners of protocols established and request they comply. Consider other solutions like Skype, ZOOM, Voting on-line platforms, postal ballots etc

Government Information – Useful Links

COVID-19 Government Updates

These sites will link you to the latest Coronavirus news, updates and advice from government agencies:

Australian Government

https://www.australia.gov.au/

https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training

https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf

New Zealand Government

https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus

https://covid19.govt.nz/

Find out what actions your local community, employers and organisations can take to help reduce the risk of infection and slow the spread of coronavirus:

NSW
https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19

VIC
https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

QLD
https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19

WA
https://www.wa.gov.au/government/coronavirus-covid-19

ACT
https://health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/novel-coronavirus-covid-19

SA
https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet

TAS
https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable_diseases_prevention_unit/infectious_diseases/coronavirus

NT
https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/

What you need to know about coronavirus (COVID-19)

Find out what you need to know about the coronavirus here.

- What is COVID-19
- Symptoms
- How to seek medical attention
- Testing
- Self-isolation (self-quarantine)

- Protect yourself and others
- Social distancing
- Who is most at risk
- How it spreads
- Resources

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