

## Sanitization, Safety And Getting Back To Business

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**You are not alone: operators everywhere are asking themselves what are they going to do? How are they going to get back to business, and fast? How are they going to cost-effectively operate with all the new safety requirements that have arisen as a result of COVID? How are they going to ensure it all gets done for the safety of customers and staff? How are they going to protect their brand from the negative exposure of being identified as a property with a reputation for COVID?**

The economic impact of COVID is expected to hit brick and mortar businesses the worst, as their businesses are dependent on people being physically present. According to a recent report by RBC, it is estimated that 70% of Americans expect to avoid public spaces, 57% of Canadians will be unwilling to attend conferences without a vaccine and 63% of people will prefer to drive vs fly.

This means, that for those of you in the business of travel, conferences, co-working spaces, retail stores, museums, art galleries, restaurants, sports arenas, hotels, cruises, airlines, resorts, theme parks, long-term care, education, etc. in the blink of an eye your approach to on-site safety just changed.

**To ensure your property is safe and secure, it is no longer just about access control, video surveillance and intruder alarms; it is also about sanitisation**

To get back to business and operating at full capacity after COVID, operations must find a way to eliminate the fear, uncertainty and doubt in the minds of their customers and employees.

## **The affect of COVID-19 on safety and security**

**To safely get back to business, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasis that all operations need a pandemic response plan**

Just like cybersecurity has had a direct impact on the IT strategy and budget, COVID will have a direct hit on the operations strategy and budget. To ensure your property is safe and secure, it is no longer just about access control, video surveillance and intruder alarms; it is also about sanitization, the lines between the security and maintenance just blurred.

From customers, to employees, to government regulators, to management, the focus is now on operations and the sanitization policies, procedures and actions of the team. To put this change of priority into perspective, six months ago, sanitisation was not top of mind for people. Why, because it was not a life or death issue, we had other first world problems to garner our attention.

From an operations perspective if we enabled a sanitization issue to become significant enough to impact the safety of customers and staff and therefore the brand, then that was an operational choice versus a mistake.

## Standards for sanitisation

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The issue is, today while the operating priority of sanitization has significantly increased, it is not measured and managed to the same standard as the other safety and security concerns across a business. Also, important to consider, while people may not hold an operation liable during this first wave, we can guarantee they are not going to be as understanding during the second wave or a future pandemic.

To safely get back to business, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Health and Safety regulators emphasis that all operations need a pandemic response plan and should follow these simple guidelines:

- Develop your plan
- Implement your plan
- Maintain and revise your plan

While this sounds simple enough, keep in mind that requirements are constantly evolving and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, or at least until all the research is in. To create an emergency response plan for a pandemic, properties must first determine what needs to be sanitized.

The current requirements dictate that most surfaces and objects will just need a normal routine cleaning, it is only the frequently touched surfaces and objects like light switches and

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doorknobs that will need to be cleaned and then disinfected to further reduce the risk of germs on surfaces and objects.

The challenge is when you step back and consider what people touch in a day; the list quickly grows. After only 30 minutes, I easily came up with a list of over 60 items that one could call 'high touch'! If you think about it, the list is extensive; telephones, doorknobs, drawer handles, counters, pens, keypads, computers, etc. and the list is only going to get longer as the research comes in.

## Operating efficiency

**If we don't change our ways, not only will we be doomed to continue making the same mistakes, but we will continue to be lost in paper and filing cabinets**

To scope the impact on operations as part of the plan, we must then find and identify all of those high touch things across the property. If we then combine that with the fact that CDC requires that all high touch locations must not only be cleaned more often, but that they also require that each location is first cleaned with soap and water, and then disinfected for one minute before finally being wiped down.

This means a one-minute task just turned into a 4-minute task, that must now be completed multiple times a day. From a resourcing perspective this adds up quickly, and operating efficiency must be a priority. Not to mention it is going to get very complicated to measure and

manage especially.

## Post COVID rules

Getting back to business is going to be complicated; lots to do, lots of moving parts and no technology to help. The fundamental challenge to keep in mind is not that the sanitization requirements have evolved, the real issue is that for most businesses this area has been left unchanged for generations.

Still today most rely on checklists, logbooks and inspections to manage the responsibilities of our front-line workers, which might have been fine before COVID. Post-COVID the rules have changed and so should the approach to managing physical operating compliance on the front lines. COVID like most physical operating requirements is tactical, detailed and specific; broad strokes, the honor system and inspections are not going to cut it.

## The digital transformation

COVID has changed the game and made the digital transformation of operating procedures not a 'nice-to-have' but a must-have. If we don't change our ways, not only will we be doomed to continue making the same mistakes, but we will continue to be lost in paper, filing cabinets filled with checklists, never to be seen again. Only with the right data can we significantly improve the operational decisions necessary to accelerate our return to full operating capacity.

At the end of the day, to fully recover, operations must eliminate the fear, uncertainty and doubt in the minds of customers and employees, only then can we really get back to business.

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