



Independent workplace compliance



# 36 ways to help give your health, safety and environmental compliance 20-20 vision in 2020

Issue 8 - August 2020



## Coronavirus - COVID-19 cleaning information and guidance

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Cleaning, as well as social distancing and effective hygiene, is a fundamental part of the Government "COVID-19 Secure". With organisations in various stages of remobilisation – particularly building occupancy and usage - what needs to be done, when and how, is subject to both change and development.

So our three considerations for this month are looking at aspects of cleaning and reflect some of the more common questions we are being asked by customers.

Below are three questions for you to consider by investing 10-15 minutes of your time to review your processes and procedures. In addition to the questions supporting information is provided for you on each of the topic areas.

Please read on for some points to consider:

- 1. Where is advice available on COVID-19 cleaning?**
- 2. What should I be doing to establish a suitable COVID-19 cleaning regime?**
- 3. To fog or not to fog?**



## 1. Where is advice available on COVID-19 cleaning?

Because of the prominence of cleaning, it is not surprising that there is a considerable amount of guidance and advice available. As well as the information provided by GOV.UK, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and NHS there has also been a host of supplier and industry based guidance produced.

In reviewing the main elements of this guidance we are considering non-clinical settings and the primary advice from the Government and government agencies.

The GOV.UK "Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)" sector guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>) "Cleaning the workplace" cover the subject as a specific topic under the headings of:

- Before reopening;
- Keeping the workplace clean;
- Hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets;
- Changing rooms and showers; and
- Handling goods, merchandise and other materials, and onsite vehicles.

This document provides information in the context of your overall return to work strategy. Also from GOV.UK is "COVID-19 cleaning in non healthcare settings outside the home" (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>).

This document provides general advice on principles and practises, locations and waste, etc. for your cleaning in three main sections, these being:

- Background;
- General principles of cleaning during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Principles of cleaning after an individual with symptoms of, or confirmed COVID-19, the case has left the setting or area.

The HSE have also produced various reference to and guidance on cleaning. As part of "Working safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak", section 7 of this document covers "Cleaning, hygiene and hand sanitiser" as one of the a topic areas.

Greater detail is provided in their "Cleaning your workplace to reduce risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)" (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/cleaning/index.htm#:~:text=Provide%20cleaning%20staff%20with%20their,water%20when%20they%20finish%20work.>)

As would be expected, this document covers cleaning from a more health and safety based perspective including information on risk assessment, products and cleaning staff. It also highlights "As an employer, you must protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect your workers and others from coronavirus."

## 2. What should I be doing to establish a suitable COVID-19 cleaning regime?

As with any building related management issue, while the overarching requirements are the same, what and how you adopt will depend on your individual circumstances. This is echoed in the GOV.UK information, which highlights for “COVID-19 cleaning in non healthcare settings outside the home” that “this guidance is of a general nature. Employers should consider the specific conditions of individual places of work and comply with all applicable legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974”

The HSE advise “before you can decide what cleaning is suitable for your situation, you’ll need to do a risk assessment to help you manage risk and decide how best to work safely and protect people during coronavirus” and “Your risk assessment will help you to identify what your cleaning regime will look like, but there are some general things that you should consider.”

There are two dominant ways that the SARS-CoV-2 virus – as well as many others - can spread. An infected person coughing, sneezing or talking etc. and producing fine droplets (>5-10 µm in diameter) containing the virus that contaminate the immediate atmosphere (typically not further than 1-2 metres). Illness is then caused as a result of this “close contact” with an already infected person, where:

1. Someone else then respire these contaminated droplets directly: or
2. Someone else contacts a surface contaminated by infected droplets, secretions or other body fluids (fomites) and then touch their mouth, nose or eyes.

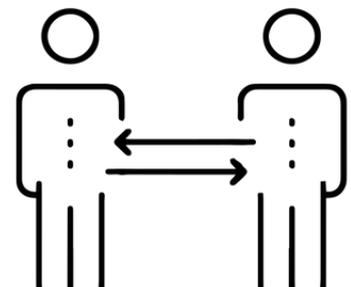
The risks associated with cleaning and SARS-CoV-2 therefore include factors such as the amount of virus spread, the surfaces it lands on and the time and amount of contact others have with these surfaces.

GOV.UK indicate “The infection risk from a COVID-19 contaminated environment decreases over time. It is not yet clear at what point there is no risk from the virus, however, studies suggest that, in non-healthcare settings, the risk of residual infectious virus is likely to be significantly reduced after 48 hours.” And “In situations where someone has symptoms of COVID-19, we continue to advise storing personal waste for 72 hours as an additional precaution.”



Factors to consider as part of your cleaning assessment and procedures could include:

- The type of cleaning you need to employ for different situations, for example:
  - Routine cleaning
  - Additional cleaning for high traffic or touch point areas
  - Specific cleaning for the workplace following a confirmed case or individual with symptoms
  - Cleaning of shared facilities, tools, vehicles etc.;
- Agreeing with your cleaning staff/contractor what procedures you are going to use and the levels of service expected (e.g. deep cleaning, periodic cleaning, disinfection), frequency of cleaning as well as any necessary PPE;
- Identifying areas of high contact and what further cleaning is needed or the procedures used to reduce risk (i.e. avoiding contact/usage)
- The type and suitability of the cleaning chemicals and style of cleaning you will be adopting including COSHH risk assessment, control details and storage requirements;
- Also make sure you check the efficacy of any cleaning chemical or treatment you are using for the purpose you are using it for.
- A system for designating whether particularly shared or frequently used areas are of have/ have not been cleaned (i.e. changing shifts, restaurant tables, shared vehicles);
- Guidance for cleaning frequently used/changing occupancy areas such as toilets, showers, kitchenettes, restaurants, canteens and changing facilities, etc.;
- The procedures for collecting and removing cleaning or other potentially infected waste;
- What information you'll provide to staff regarding cleaning and the procedures you have in place to facilitate this or alternatively those in place to reduce risk;
- Specific procedures for cleaning areas where a suspected or actual case of COVID-19 has occurred in the workplace, this should include a relevant risk assessment, method statement and safe operating procedure for the work;
- That your procedures are regularly reviewed and updated in line with any changes, in guidance, occupancy levels or other use of the workplace.



### 3. To fog or not to fog?

In addition to, or as a replacement for, physical cleaning, fogging/misting with chemicals and the use of ultraviolet light (UV) has been proposed and used in a number of workplaces.

Such treatments while sold as offering benefits in terms of, for example speed, the rapid cleaning of large areas and the ability of droplets to penetrate and settle in more inaccessible areas, they do not come without additional health and safety considerations, as with any aerosolised disinfectant.

The first question to ask is whether such a treatment is needed and will benefit your particular situation? For example it may have an application in disinfecting areas where a confirmed case of COVID-19 has occurred, but not for the routine cleaning of regularly occupied areas.

In answering these questions and what you need to consider the HSE have produced some specific guidance titled "[Disinfecting premises using fog, mist, vapour or ultraviolet \(UV\) systems during the coronavirus outbreak.](#)"

In introducing the guidance the HSE say "[During the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak, fog, mist, vapour or UV treatments may be suitable options to help control the spread of the virus, by cleaning and disinfecting a larger space or room. Any use of these treatments for these purposes should form part of your COVID-19 risk assessment. Users must be competent and properly trained.](#)"

The full advice can be found at - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/disinfecting-premises-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm>



For information on the services Assurity Consulting provide, please get in touch.



Call us on  
+44 (0)1403 269375



Email us at  
[info@assurityconsulting.co.uk](mailto:info@assurityconsulting.co.uk)



Visit our website  
[assurityconsulting.co.uk](http://assurityconsulting.co.uk)