

Coronavirus Outbreak: What Real Estate Managers Need to Know

Cleaning and preparedness

What does it mean to “deep clean” the space? What products are being used?

Please refer to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on environmental cleaning and disinfecting [here](#).

How would you recommend addressing a senior property where several residents have returned from traveling and have not been tested? Should I take additional precautions at senior properties in general?

All communities should be treated the same in terms of taking precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of germs and disease throughout the entire community. Communicating information to residents on sanitary best practices provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) may be beneficial. Because of privacy laws, owner/managers cannot ask a resident if they are infected or have been tested for COVID-19.

Is it becoming common among building operators to close common spaces in their properties?

As information is updated daily for COVID-19, recommendations are changing accordingly. Precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by following guidance provided by the CDC to include disinfecting surfaces such as doorknobs, tables, desks and handrails regularly. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a [list](#) of effective disinfectant products to reference.

How are you addressing inquiries regarding antiviral filters for HVAC systems or similar questions?

Filters should be changed on a consistent schedule in accordance with your company policy. If a multifamily resident requests a specialized filter, it may be encouraged to have the resident purchase the correct size filter and for a member of maintenance to properly install the filter.

Business Operations

Have you considered the impact of school closings for employees that are parents? Or other cases of absenteeism due to the virus?

In order to prepare for employee absences resulting from personal illness, caring for ill family members, and dismissal of early childhood programs and K-12 schools:

- Cross-train employees to carry out essential functions so the workplace can operate when essential staff are out.
- Identify alternative suppliers to meet supply chain needs.
- Consider prioritizing customers with the greatest needs.
- Prepare to temporarily suspend operations if necessary.

How are you advising employees on travel?

Advisement on travel will vary by company policy in accordance with recommendations from the CDC and WHO.

Do you have an example of a business continuity plan?

Please refer to guidance from [ready.gov here](https://www.ready.gov) for information on creating a business continuity plan.

Resident/Tenant Relations

Am I allowed to ask a resident/tenant if they have COVID-19?

In general, a resident/tenant is not required to inform the building owner or landlord. Because of privacy laws, owners/managers cannot ask a resident/tenant if they are infected or have been tested for COVID-19. However, if a tenant/resident requests maintenance or other staff to their unit, confirming whether there is anyone in the unit with cold or flu like symptoms can be a necessary precaution.

What do I do if a resident/tenant is suspected of being exposed to the virus or has tested positive for it, how do we address this?

In this case, put your pandemic plan into action – [refer to this guide](#) for creating a pandemic plan.

How should maintenance requests or inspections be handled if a resident/tenant is known to be infected/quarantined?

Once management is notified of a quarantine, owner/managers must respect the quarantine and take reasonable steps to respond. It is reasonable to send a notification to the staff that they must not enter the space without a manager's approval and seek legal advice on how to handle all interactions and responses with the resident or tenant.

Is anyone preventively planning for payment arrangement parameters in the event a multifamily residents' income is impacted and they cannot timely pay rent?

Rent is to be paid in accordance with the residents' lease agreement. If your company offers payment plans, it is recommended that consistency is followed for all residents regardless of circumstances such as COVID-19.

How do you protect multifamily staff from being potentially infected when collecting rent if a resident potentially has COVID-19?

Rent should be collected in accordance with your lease agreement and company policy. If online rent payments are accepted at your community, residents can be reminded and encouraged to use this service. If you accept checks or other forms of payment, you may explore setting up contact free drop boxes where tenants can drop off their checks.

If we have been notified that a resident is suspected of having or has tested positive for the virus, what type of notification to remaining residents would be appropriate?

If you have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 at your property, notify your local public health department immediately for guidance and next steps on communicating to residents.

How do we proceed with leasing tours, and meeting residents, prospects, vendors?

If your property can facilitate virtual tours, it is recommended to host tours virtually until further notice to minimize contact. If virtual tours are not available, it is encouraged that you communicate to prospective tenants to reschedule or cancel if they are feeling ill.