

Reopening Buildings after Closure

General Tips for Reopening After Closure

Q: What tips and guidance are there to assist a business or organization reopening a building?

A: Every business and organization can act now to develop policies that will protect against environmental exposure to COVID-19 by protecting employees, educating customers, and keeping your building or environment safe and sanitary. Acting now and gradually adopting new business and organizational practices that reflect the evolving reality of the COVID-19 pandemic will help you maintain stronger operations and a healthier environment for your employees, customers, and partners.

- Clean, sanitize, and disinfect your business or organization's physical location before opening to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect your employees and customers from other diseases. Minimize exposure by involving as few employees in this process as possible. Give special attention to restrooms, food service areas, phones, computers, other electronics, tools, and workstations.
 - **Cleaning:** Using soap/detergent & water to physically remove bacteria, viruses, fungus, dirt, and debris from surfaces. All surfaces should be cleaned. Clean first, because sanitization and disinfection will not work if dirt and debris remain.
 - **Sanitizing:** Using chemicals to reduce infectious agents to a level that can prevent disease transmission. Areas often touched by hands or food should be sanitized (doorknobs, railings, counters, tables).
 - **Disinfecting:** Killing most infectious agents on a surface. Areas that come into contact with bodily fluids (including respiratory droplets) should be disinfected (bathroom, water fountains, etc.).
 - DHS has created a [one page guidance sheet](#) on how to clean, sanitize and disinfect surfaces of COVID-19.
- Replace HVAC air filters following the manufacturer's guidance. Consult with HVAC professionals when considering ventilation changes to reduce the risk of COVID-19.
- Recognize those tasked with cleaning before reopening - janitors, contract staff, or yourself - are most at-risk for becoming infected or ill. Properly protect cleaning personnel by following personal protective equipment guidelines and review leave and incentive policies in case they become ill:
 - Analyze sick leave policies and consider modifying them to make sure ill workers are not in the workplace. Make sure employees are aware of and understand these policies.
 - Analyze any incentive programs and consider modifying them, if warranted, so that employees are not penalized for taking sick leave.
 - Analyze additional flexibilities, which might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.

Best business and organizational practices for COVID-19 may change over time. You are encouraged to visit www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19 or www.wedc.org/reopen-guidelines for the latest information and resources related to Wisconsin's response to this health emergency.

Reducing the Risk of *Legionella* and Legionnaire's Disease

Water System Safety

Q: I'm worried about *Legionella* growth in my building's stagnant water system. How can I ensure my building's water system is safe?

A: Stagnant or standing water in a plumbing system can increase the risk for growth and spread of *Legionella* and other biofilm-associated bacteria. Ensure that your water system is safe to use after a prolonged shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water by following the CDC's eight steps to minimize *Legionella* risk before your business or building reopens:

1. Develop and follow a comprehensive [water management program](#) (WMP) for your water system and all devices that use water.
2. Ensure your water heater is properly maintained and the temperature is correctly set. Review plumbing code, if applicable.
3. Flush your water system following your water management plan.
4. Clean and disinfect all decorative water features, such as fountains.
5. Ensure hot tubs/spas are safe for use.
6. Ensure cooling towers are clean and well-maintained.
7. Ensure safety equipment including fire sprinkler systems, eye wash stations, and safety showers are clean and well-maintained.
8. Maintain your water system.

The [CDC's webpage on Guidance for Reopening Buildings after Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#) elaborates on these eight steps to minimize *Legionella* risk.

Protecting Workers

Personnel flushing, cleaning, and maintaining your water system are at a higher risk of exposure to *Legionella* and other biofilm-associated bacteria. Properly protect personnel from aerosols and follow personal protective equipment guidelines. An N95 mask may be appropriate in enclosed spaces where aerosol generation is likely. Review leave and incentive policies in case personnel become ill.

Other Resources

- Wisconsin [DATCP has a quick fact sheet](#) on preventing *Legionella* growth.
- [Public Health Madison & Dane County](#) and the [Alliance to Prevent Legionnaires' Disease](#) have information on conducting a thorough and safe cleaning before reopening.
- [DHS' webpage on Legionellosis](#) contains general information, resources, and provider information on preventing Legionnaires' disease.

Water Utilities Guidance

Q: Is there anything water utilities can do to aid in the prevention of Legionnaires' disease as buildings reopen?

A: The Minnesota Department of Health has a [fact sheet of recommended short and long-term actions](#) water utilities can take during and after COVID-19 to help ensure water quality in building plumbing.