



COVID-19 Guidance for Multifamily Residential Buildings

May 16, 2020

The following guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by local facilities, and will be posted at <http://www.sfcdp.org/covid19>. This interim guidance may change as knowledge, community transmission, and availability of PPE and testing change.

AUDIENCE: Building owners and managers, staff, and residents of apartment buildings, condominiums, and multifamily unit dwellings.

BACKGROUND: San Francisco currently has community-wide transmission of COVID-19. All San Francisco residents should stay home as much as possible, consider that they can be exposed to COVID-19, and be alert for developing symptoms of COVID-19. People who develop COVID-19 generally experience mild illness and will be able to recover at home. Building residents are not required to inform building management or neighbors if they are sick or test positive for COVID-19. The most effective measures building owners and managers can take to reduce possible exposures and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among residents and staff are social distancing and routine environmental cleaning.

What are specific measures that building owners and managers can take to prevent spread of COVID-19 in the building?

Perform routine environmental cleaning:

- Make sure that common areas such as lobbies, elevators, laundry rooms and stairwells are frequently cleaned and disinfected. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Clean and disinfect daily all frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, stairway railings, elevator buttons, reception desks, push plates and laundry room equipment.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Implement policies and practices for social distancing:

- Increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and residents (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters). Building staff and occupants should maintain social distancing when getting packages or mail, and when entering or exiting the building.
- In a large building where packages may be left in the lobby or with front desk staff, building staff may consider assisting building occupants by dropping deliveries outside of their door.
- Some food delivery services also have a section for "special instructions" where individuals can enter more information and requests, for example, that packages be delivered to the door, or to text/call and leave packages at the door, in an effort to minimize person-to-person contact and touching of surfaces.



- Postpone non-urgent maintenance or showings. Any staff or other people entering a unit should wash their hands, maintain social distancing and clean and disinfect work areas afterwards.
- Close or limit access to common areas such as gyms, party rooms, lounges, and swimming pools as these are areas where it may become difficult to maintain social distancing.
- Limit use of common spaces, like pet relief areas, computer labs, and storage rooms. Only use these spaces if people can stay at least 6 feet apart from each other at all times.
- Residents can continue to use shared laundry rooms. If the room is small, building management should consider posting signage and limiting the number of people using the laundry room at the same time to ensure social distancing. Additional signage for use of shared laundry facilities is available; see <https://www.sfcdcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID19-Using-Shared-Laundry-Facilities-FINAL-04.15.2020.pdf>

What specific measures can residents take to prevent spread of COVID-19 in the building?

- Stay home (especially if you are sick)
- Limit non-essential trips outside the home (groceries, health care, gas)
- Wear a face covering or mask outside your apartment or home
- Limit the number of occupants in the elevator to prevent close contact in an enclosed space. Occupants should stand near the four corners of the elevator and away from each other and wear cloth face coverings. People should consider only riding the elevator with members of their own household, taking the stairs, or waiting for the next elevator.
- If you are not an essential worker, and not leaving the building to go to work, use common spaces after 9 am and before 5PM to help alleviate traffic in those areas.
- Only allow visitors who are providing essential services. This includes services that cannot wait and cannot be done over the phone or online.
- Limit your online purchases to essentials to reduce traffic in mailrooms and lobbies.
- Avoid visits to other tenants except to provide assistance. Consider creative ways to connect with others from a distance. Use phone calls, conference calls, and online video conferencing for work, meetings, and to stay in touch with friends and family.
- Be aware that some construction and emergency repairs may need to continue in your building to address unsafe conditions and other needs that cannot wait. If workers do need to enter your unit for repairs, open windows before they arrive, wear a face covering and maintain at least 6 feet away from them while they are in the unit.
- Call the management office or the front desk rather than coming in person, whenever possible. Maintain proper physical distance if residents need to speak with management or staff directly.

Practice Healthy Habits and Frequent Cleaning

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If handwashing facilities are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands



- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Do not share personal items like drinking glasses, eating utensils, and towels with other people.
- Frequently disinfect and clean high touch surfaces. This includes phones, keyboards, kitchen countertops, toilets, faucets and doorknobs. Standard cleaning products are effective against COVID-19; see section on Environmental Cleaning, above.

Make a plan

- Review CDC's guidance for household members, Get Your Home Ready:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/get-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html>

Guidance for Building Managers and Owners

Encourage residents and staff to practice physical distancing of 6 feet and to wear a cloth face mask or other face covering in common areas of the building.

Support staff in practicing social distancing and in following the Stay Home order.

- Allow staff to telecommute and use flexible leave time wherever possible.
- Post information in staff areas, common spaces, and entry points about actions everyone should take to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Share information about COVID-19 with residents in multiple languages.
- Provide guidance to staff on social distancing, hand hygiene and protective gear for their duties.

Find these materials on SF.gov at: <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>

Manage Use of Common Areas

Post signs in the common areas:

All spaces must post social distance reminders in all Open Common Areas

Find these materials on SF.gov at: <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>

- Lobby
- Bike room
- Garage

Keep Tabs on SF Health Orders

Health Orders and Directives are posted at <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp>

In compliance with the SF Health Order, March 31, 2020, These Areas Should be CLOSED

Common Areas – including but not limited to:

- Library
- Lounge



- Children's Playroom

Exercise Facilities – including but not limited to:

- Gym
- Basketball/Racquetball/Tennis Courts
- Dance Floor
- Yoga Studio

Conference/Meeting Rooms

Private Dining Room

Dog Parks and Dog Runs

Outdoor Amenities – including but not limited to:

- Decks/Roof decks
- Grilling /BBQ/Firepits
- Playground
- Pool Facilities
 - Hot Tub/Spa
 - Sauna/Steam Room
 - Massage/Spa treatment room

Entertainment Facilities – including but not limited to:

- Game Room/Billiards Room
- Movie Theatre/Screening Room
- TV Rooms

These Areas May be OPEN with Restrictions

Business Center/Business Lounge

- Signup sheet with name/unit # to reserve times (to facilitate contact tracing if someone later becomes COVID-positive)
- Provide supplies to clean/disinfect in between use (door handles, keyboards/mouse/mouse pad, desks, chairs, monitors, other equipment, etc.)
- Limit shared usage to comply with social distancing (at least 6 feet between people). Remove excess chairs/computers.

Mail room - Post social distance reminders



Dog Wash/Pet Grooming

- Sign-up sheet with name/unit # to reserve times (to facilitate contact tracing if someone later becomes COVID-positive)
- Provide supplies to clean/disinfect in between uses (door handles, light switches, table and countertops, chairs, faucets, etc.)

Music Practice Room

- Sign-up sheet with name/unit # to reserve times (to facilitate contact tracing if someone later becomes COVID-positive)
- Provide supplies to clean/disinfect in between uses (door handles, light switches, shared musical instruments, other equipment, etc.)

Manage visitors

- Limit access to visitors. Continue to allow essential visitors, like home care workers, healthcare workers, and emergency maintenance.
- Encourage residents to connect with family and friends by phone and/or online and to postpone visits that are not essential.
- If possible, limit visitor access to a single point of entry in your building that staff can easily monitor.
- Post signs at entrances instructing essential visitors to not enter if they are sick or if they have had close contact with a person who may have or does have COVID-19.
- Post signs that tell visitors to limit their movement in the building and their use of common areas.
- Conduct virtual tours of apartments and condominiums using apps such as FaceTime or Google Duo. If that is not an option, send photographs of the living space to potential residents.
- If you must conduct an in-person tour, ensure that all people stay at least 6 feet apart. Do not allow more than two people in a unit at a time. For instance, allow the prospective resident to view rooms while staff stay outside or in a different room.
- Before conducting an in-person tour of an occupied unit, always get full consent from the current tenant. If the tenant refuses, conduct the tour virtually.

Be aware of residential construction guidelines

- Under the new May 5th Health Order, all construction projects can resume, provided they comply with the Construction Project Safety Protocols issued as part of the Order (see <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus-healthorders.asp>)
- Supervisors of construction activity must take steps to protect both workers and residents. Supervisors should ensure all individuals stay at least 6 feet apart, provide handwashing or sanitizing stations between units, provide face protection for workers, and take other steps.



Monitor staff health

- Screen staff in person or by phone for symptoms of the virus at the start of every day. Anyone with a fever, chills, repeated shaking/shivering, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, feeling unusually weak or fatigued, new loss of taste or smell, muscle pain, headache, runny or congested nose or diarrhea should not come to work.
- People at high risk of infection should also not come to work. Risk factors include being age 60 and over, having an underlying health condition (e.g., high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, lung disease), or a weakened immune system, and being pregnant.

Take precautions if you have a case in your housing community

- If you believe someone in your housing community has or may have COVID-19, do not share their personal health information. The person's identity is protected health information.
- Clean and disinfect thoroughly according to CDC recommendations:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- If the identity of a case is known, visitors and staff should not enter the unit. If emergency repairs are needed, the resident should open all windows, wear a surgical mask and stay at least 6 feet from the worker, preferably remaining in another room. Those entering the units should wear face masks and disposable gloves and maintain at least 6 feet from the resident.
- It is not necessary to alert residents about possible cases.

Work safely in residential units

- Limit maintenance work in units as much as feasible. Staff who need to enter a resident's unit should:
- Wash hands or use sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol content) before entering. Wear clean gloves if possible.
 - Keep at least 6 feet of distance from residents.
 - Disinfect all work surfaces before leaving the unit.
 - Wear face protection – cloth facial coverings are sufficient as long as the worker can maintain proper physical distancing. If splashes or spills are anticipated, wear gloves, and eye protection and remove any soiled clothing after the visit.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed to COVID-19?

- Please contact your healthcare provider for advice, and follow guidance from the San Francisco Department of Public Health, which is frequently updated at <https://www.sfcdp.org/covid19>



What if a resident has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or was determined to be the close contact of someone diagnosed with COVID-19, and is known to be in Isolation or Quarantine in their residence?

- These residents may choose to self-identify and may ask for assistance to allow them to isolate or quarantine. However, their identity should not be disclosed to other residents.

Recommended practices in this situation include:

- **Service Requests and Apartment Access:** Suspend access to the apartment for routine maintenance, repairs, and inspections. The apartment should only be entered for emergency repairs. If an emergency repair is needed:
 - Advise the resident to open all windows in the apartment while the repair staff is there.
 - Instruct the resident to remain in a part of the apartment away from where the repair will take place and wear a face covering while the repair staff is in the apartment.
- **Package Deliveries:** Leave packages outside the apartment door to avoid close contact with self-isolating or -quarantining resident. Work out an arrangement for notifying people when packages arrive.
- **Garbage Disposal:** Schedule door-side garbage pick-up. Instruct the resident to leave garbage bags outside the front door of the unit.
- **Pet Care:** Since residents will not be allowed to leave their unit except to seek medical care, they may have to employ services such as dog walkers to care for their pets.
- **Vendor Services:** Vendors who regularly provide services within apartments should be notified that service is suspended to the apartment in question, without advising them of the reason for the suspension. If you offer door-side trash pickup, that may continue.
- **Medical Visits:** If the resident needs to leave the unit for a necessary medical visit instruct them to use a face mask or face covering at all times while in the complex and parking lot and outside of their unit.
- **Contacts to the Case:** Residents who have (or are suspected of having) COVID-19 are required to notify their contacts of a potential exposure and inform them of the need to be in quarantine; this is not a responsibility of the apartment manager. But the apartment manager should take the precautions noted above to prevent staff and others from getting exposed.
- **Resident Wellness Checks:** Consider offering a phone check-in service for tenants who live alone to ensure their health and safety while under quarantine or isolation.
- Continued frequent cleaning of common areas will help to reassure other tenants if a resident chooses to share with others that they are in quarantine or are self-isolating.

Protecting Resident and Employee Privacy.

- Do not share information about the health and status of the self-quarantining/isolating resident or affected employee with other residents or employees. There is also no reason to notify Public Health of any cases in your building, nor will Public Health notify the property or building manager/owner of any cases residing in the building.



Additional Resources

We would like to acknowledge the work of other cities that were useful in preparing this Guidance

Seattle

<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/disease-control/novel-coronavirus/housing.aspx>

Los Angeles

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/GuidanceMultifamilyResidences.pdf>

New York

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-residential-buildings-faq.pdf>

Chicago

<https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/HealthProtectionandResponse/COVID-19%20Guidance%20for%20Residential%20Buildings%2004.01.2020.pdf>