

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Updated COVID-19 Operational Considerations for Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures in College and University Settings for the Spring 2021 Semester

The success of continued operations of colleges and universities in Connecticut during the majority of the Fall 2020 semester is due in large part to the extensive planning and careful execution of mitigation strategies for COVID-19 on campuses by the Higher Education Reopen Committee, college and university administrators, faculty, and staff, and the hard work of students to keep everyone as safe as possible. At the time the Higher Education Reopening Guidance documents were developed in early-May 2020 (https://www.ctohe.org/Docs/2020/ReopenCT_HigherEducation.pdf), they were based on considerations for the current state of the pandemic at that time, the best projections available for the future of community case rates, and a blend of applying what we knew about how SARS-CoV-2 affects individuals and groups and making educated guesses about what we did not know. Although the mitigation strategies appear to have been very effective at controlling the spread of COVID-19 on our campuses, their implementation would not have been possible without significant resource expenditures in the form of increased staff time and effort as well as costs associated with testing, cleaning and other supplies, signage, quarantine/isolation space, and much more.

With planning underway for a return to campuses for the Spring 2021 semester, some of the specific recommendations concerning mitigation strategies and other guidance has been revised. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) offers the following updated operational considerations related to cleaning and disinfection procedures for use by our college and university partners when planning for campus reopening for the Spring semester.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Consistent and proper cleaning and targeted disinfection of surfaces is just one part of a system of procedures that will safeguard the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff during the upcoming Spring semester. As we have learned more about the virus and how it spreads over the past several months, it has become more evident that contaminated surfaces are not likely to be a very effective mode of transmission for SARS-CoV-2. The virus has shown the ability to survive for 24 hours or more on surfaces (depending on the surface materials and environmental conditions), however the risk of enough virus being deposited on a surface and surviving for a long enough period to allow

another individual to take up the virus and expose themselves to a sufficiently infectious dose appears exceedingly small, at least in comparison to the most common route of direct respiratory droplet transmission between individuals. As such, careful attention to proper routine cleaning schedules and procedures, coupled with appropriate spot disinfection of high-touch areas and good hand hygiene, is sufficient to protect the spread of COVID-19 via surfaces.

Based on the relatively low risk of surface transmission, the following updated recommendations are offered:

Fall 2020 Guidance	Updated Spring 2021 Guidance
Hand sanitizer available at entrances to all buildings, classrooms, and dining halls.	Hand sanitizer stations should be made available in common areas of buildings to the extent possible.
Disposable wipes available in all bathrooms, classrooms, and other shared facilities (e.g. copy machines, coffee stations, etc.) for wiping down surfaces touched before and after every use.	Disposable wipes, spray bottles, or other cleaning products or disinfection are not needed for general use in shared areas. Shared areas and equipment should be included in a cleaning and disinfection plan. Good hand hygiene (frequent hand washing with soap/water or alcohol-based sanitizer) should be encouraged after use of shared equipment and common areas.
Frequent hand-washing and frequent deep cleaning of bathrooms and other high touch areas	Routine cleaning and spot disinfection of bathrooms and high touch areas at least twice daily is recommended, as is continued good hand hygiene.
Disinfectant wipes should be placed near sinks, shower stalls and toilets in residence halls. Users should wipe sinks/toilets/showers/soap dispensers following use.	Disposable wipes, spray bottles, or other cleaning or disinfection products are not needed for general use in shared bathrooms. Shared bathrooms should be included in a cleaning and disinfection plan. Good hand hygiene (frequent hand washing with soap/water or alcohol-based sanitizer) should be encouraged after use of shared bathrooms.

Having in place written standard protocols and procedures for the cleaning and disinfection of surfaces within each campus building, and visibility in the implementation of those procedures, will help to alleviate some of the fear that students, faculty, and staff may be feeling about entering campus buildings. DPH recommends the following for campus facilities managers:

1. Perform routine cleaning in all buildings prior to the start of the semester. Any areas inside buildings that have been unoccupied for seven (7) or more days need only routine cleaning, not disinfection. The virus that causes COVID-19 cannot survive outside of the body for long periods and after seven (7) days, no viable virus is likely to have survived on any type of surface, even under ideal conditions.
2. Review Written Plans. Review the cleaning and disinfecting plan for each campus building in light of your experience during the Fall semester. Reaffirm what areas need cleaning, what areas need cleaning and disinfection, the appropriate schedule for cleaning and disinfection, what cleaning and disinfection products are needed, what personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed, and the person responsible for the cleaning and disinfection.
3. For each campus building, consider which areas need only cleaning and which need cleaning, followed by disinfection.
 - Areas needing only routine cleaning include:
 - Outdoor areas such as benches, tables, and railings. Do not spray disinfectants on these surfaces, as it is a waste of disinfection products, unnecessarily exposes individuals to potentially harmful disinfectant products, and is not shown to provide any additional protection above routine cleaning alone. Cleaning of wooden surfaces outdoors is not recommended.
 - Areas or items located indoors that are not routinely touched with the hands or used frequently by many different individuals, such as desks, floors, walls, windows, carpeting, light fixtures, and air vents.
 - Areas needing cleaning, followed by disinfection include:
 - “High-touch areas”, which refers to hard surfaces indoors that are routinely touched by the hands of different individuals. Examples may include (but not limited to) doorknobs, bathroom surfaces, shared equipment, locker rooms (benches, showers, and toileting areas), and hand rails.
 - Porous materials are not as easy to disinfect as hard surfaces, so it is recommended that porous surfaces that may be contacted by many different individuals throughout the day but are not easily cleaned (such as cloth-upholstered chairs) be removed from shared use areas.

4. Review schedules for cleaning and disinfection.

- Daily
 - Routine cleaning of all areas of buildings that have been used on a given day.
 - Cleaning and disinfection of “high-touch” areas that you have targeted in your plan.
- Twice Daily (or more)
 - Plan to fully clean and disinfect bathroom surfaces twice per day, especially during times of potential heavy use (e.g. weekdays during usual class hours) and in high-traffic bathrooms that are in areas where they are more commonly used.

5. Ensure a sufficient supply of appropriate cleaning and disinfection products for your facilities.

- Cleaning Products:
 - Detergent products (soap) and water are recommended for surface cleaning and are very effective at removing the virus that causes COVID-19 from surfaces.
 - Instead of soap and water, commercially prepared cleaning products may also be used.
- Disinfection Products:
 - Select products listed on the [Environmental Protection Agency’s List N](#). These products are approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - If you use an EPA List N Product stating that it is both a cleaner *and* disinfectant, you must use the product twice on surfaces that need both cleaning and disinfection. First, use the product to clean the surface. Let air dry then use product again, allowing it to remain on the surface for the contact time stated on the label.
 - Most products are for use on hard surfaces but there are a limited number of products approved for use on soft and porous surfaces.
 - Be sure to double-check products being sold that claim that they are on the EPA List N. EPA recently disseminated a [Compliance Advisory](#) related to fraudulent claims by product sellers about their ability to kill the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - The Connecticut Department of Public Health published a circular letter (#2020-48) strongly advising against the use “Foggers” (also known as misters or electrostatic sprayers) for dispensing disinfection products. The volume of disinfectant and small droplet size generally associated with these devices are potentially dangerous to the custodial staff responsible for disinfecting surfaces, as well as the other occupants of the building. Spraying or fogging of disinfectants in large quantities inside buildings may lead to increased adverse respiratory and dermal issues for occupants, unnecessarily wastes disinfectant

products, negatively impacts budgets, and does not replace the need for regular manual cleaning.

6. Ensure training of staff regarding how to use cleaning and disinfection products safely.
 - Ensuring proper ventilation during cleaning and disinfecting will reduce exposure to the chemicals in these products.
 - Custodial or other staff performing cleaning and disinfecting activities must receive appropriate training on how to properly use, store, label, transfer, and dilute (if appropriate) the specific products being used at each facility.
 - Cleaning staff must be equipped with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended by the product manufacturer, which may include gloves, eye protection, respiratory protection, and other protective equipment. See the product label and SDS (Safety Data Sheet) for each product used to identify specific PPE recommendations.
 - Follow the manufacturer’s instructions about how to apply disinfectant products, including dilution instructions (if product is not “ready to use”).
 - In order to be effective at killing viruses, disinfectant products generally must be left on surfaces for the amount of time stated on the label (also known as the “contact time”).
 - Allow disinfected surfaces to air dry. Do not use fans or other mechanical means to shorten product drying times.
 - If custodial or other staff who will be assigned cleaning and disinfecting tasks have asthma or other underlying respiratory problems, they should be given safety data sheets for the products that the school intends to use and receive medical clearance from their health provider before using any industrial or commercially-available cleaning or disinfection products.

Additional resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- University of Washington, Safer Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Strategies to Reduce and Prevent COVID-19 Transmission:
https://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/FactSheet_Cleaning_Final_UWDEO_HS_0.pdf



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