Indoor Air Safety and COVID-19

Indoor gatherings can increase the risk of spreading COVID-19. However, some people may need to spend time indoors as part of their work. There are steps to take that can reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in these environments.

Steps that everyone should take

- Wear a face mask.

- Watch your distance - stay at least six (6) feet from others at all times.

- Wash your hands with soap and water as needed.

- Do not touch your face unless it is immediately after washing your hands.

- Cough and sneeze only into your sleeve or a napkin/tissue. Wash your hands if you use a napkin/tissue. Do not cough or sneeze into your mask if you can help it.

Steps that employers and building owners can take

- Use natural air movement (i.e., opening windows and doors) to move outdoor air inside when environmental conditions and building requirements allow.

  - Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk for occupants, including children (e.g., a risk of falling or of breathing outdoor environmental contaminants such as carbon monoxide, molds, or pollens).

- When adequate natural air movement is not possible, employers and building owners can take steps to improve building ventilation in consultation with an HVAC professional, based on local environmental conditions.

  - Work with heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) specialists to optimize your building's system.

    - Ensure filters are in good working order and the system has regular maintenance.

      - Increase air filtration as much as possible without significantly reducing design airflow (MERV-13 or better).

> ➢ Inspect HVAC system for appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass.

- ◆ Increase the percentage of outdoor air, (e.g., using economizer modes of HVAC operations) as high as 100% to increase fresh air input. However, during periods of wildfire smoke, do not use outside air.

- ◆ Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, if possible.

  - Do not use fans for cooling indoor public spaces.

    - ◆ Fans recirculate air, which can spread germs across the indoor space. Fans are OK if inside a home with regular household contacts.

    - ◆ If fans must be used, work with an HVAC professional to install the fans so that air from one person's workspace is not blowing into another person's space.

  - Work with an HVAC professional to create the movement of air from clean to not-so-clean areas.

  - Have staff work in "clean" ventilation zones that do not include higher-risk areas such as visitor reception or exercise facilities (if open).

- Use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to enhance air cleaning (especially in higher-risk areas). This should be done with oversight from an HVAC professional to minimize the risk of blowing air from one person to another.

- Ensure exhaust fans in restroom facilities are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.

- With professional help, consider use of duct- or air-handling-unit-mounted, upper room, and/or portable ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) devices in high-density occupation spaces.

- To minimize the risk of Legionnaire's disease, follow the OHA recommendations on this topic for re-opening.

For more information, please see

- The CDC COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings

- The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Position Document on Infectious Aerosols

- OHA Guidance for Reopening Building Water Systems after Prolonged Shutdown

To Report a Hazard

If you observe a hazard in the workplace, you can file a complaint through Oregon OSHA in English or Spanish on the OSHA website.

Accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide documents in alternate formats such as other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact Mavel Morales at 1-844-882-7889, 711 TTY or OHA.ADAModifications@dhsoha.state.or.us.